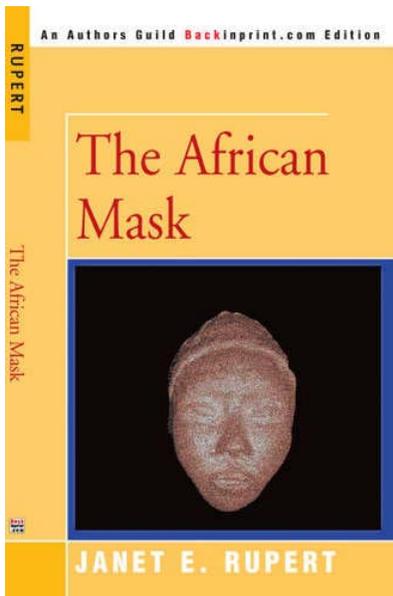


**Title:** Africa is Not a Country  
**Author:** Margy Burns Knight & Mark Melnicove  
**Language:** English  
**Grade Level:** Primary/Elementary  
**Year:** 2000  
**Type:** Picture book

**Illustrations:** illustrations, maps

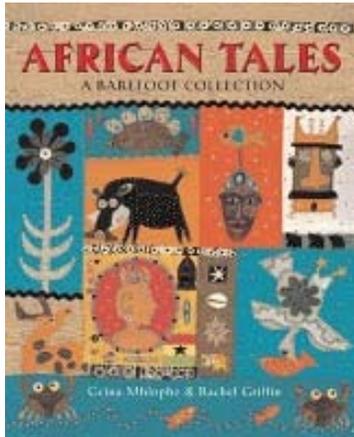
**Description:** Africa is Not a Country is perhaps the first picture book about the African continent to respectfully present the diversity of people living in its 53 countries. These authors have created a book that explicitly describes and illustrates the multi-dimensions of the continent. The authors and illustrator

subsequently have chosen 25 countries from all the regions of the continent to depict its diversity. A physical map with current country and capital names and a description of the continent follows. They begin with Eritrea, most recently independent. In addition, they feature often forgotten children from Cape Verde, Lesotho, Mauritania, and Madagascar. Moreover, it focuses on children's activities and not those of adults. The appendix provides basic information for each African country to enable children to compare data.



**Title:** The African Mask  
**Author:** Janet Rupert  
**Language:** English  
**Grade Level:** Middle school  
**Year:** 1994  
**Type:** Novel  
**Illustrations:** No

**Description:** 900 years ago in the Yoruba land of present-day Nigeria, 12-year-old Layo spends her time working on her craft and honing her skills in pottery, a gift passed on to her from her grandmother. However, in this time and place, a woman must adopt the craft of her husband. When she is betrothed to a bronze worker, Layo works hard to prove the match is a poor one. Rupert's work with a Yoruba anthropologist enriches the text with meaningful accounts of ancient Yoruba culture and life.



**Title:** African Tales, One World, One Planet

**Author:** Gcina Mhlophe

**Language:** English

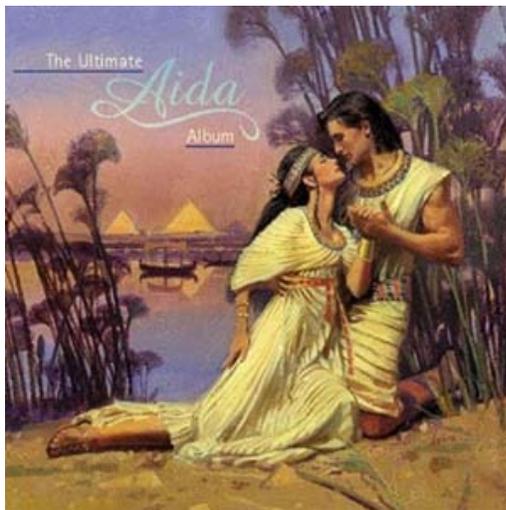
**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle

**Year:** 2009

**Type:** Folktales

**Illustrations:** Collages

**Description:** African Tales is a collection of eight folktales from eight different African countries: Namibia, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland, Senegal, Ghana, Sudan, and Ethiopia. The volume starts with a four-page introduction to Africa, including a map of the continent (which helps with locating the stories' countries of origin) and a few interesting facts. Each story also is contextualized with a similar two-page introduction to that country. The stories include: Welcome to Africa! -- Masilo and Masiloniyana (Lesotho) -- Nolwandle, girl of the waves (Namibia) -- Makosi and the magic horns (Malawi) -- The great hunter (Swaziland) -- Sea wind (Senegal) -- Ananse and the impossible quest (Ghana) -- The story of the wise mother (Sudan) -- Everything changes, everything passes (Ethiopia). Both the author and the illustrator have added a personal note at the beginning, and a list of sources for the continent and each country appears at the end of the collection.



**Title:** Aida

**Author:** Leontyne Price

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle school

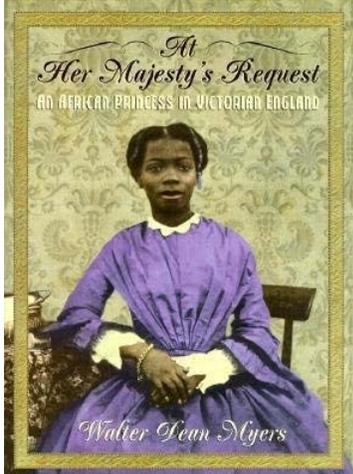
**Year:** 1990

**Type:** Storybook

**Illustrations:** Yes

**Description:** An exquisite, picture book retelling of Verdi's famous opera about an Ethiopian princess who falls in love with her Egyptian captor. It treats the universal concepts of patriotism, love, and the conflict of loyalty in simple and beautiful language. The plot is so well constructed and presented that, in spite of its familiarity, there is a desire to read it again and again. Here are two persons from two warring nations, patriotic to the core to their own countries and yet willing to give up their lives for the sake of love. The theme transcends love and brings to the fore the questions of devotion and courage which are so necessary for human existence. Lavishly illustrated with colorful scenes, it is the kind of book that will appeal not only to children of African descent but to all humanity.

UW-MADISON African Studies Book List



**Title:** At Her Majesty's Request

**Author:** Walter Dean Myers

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Middle school

**Year:** 1999

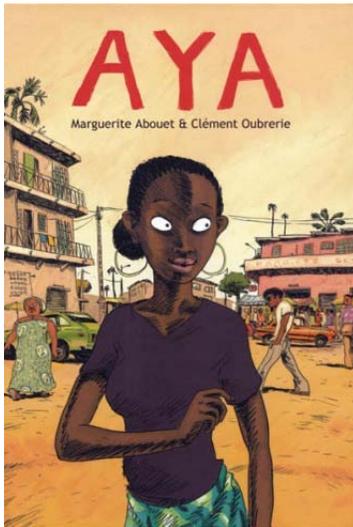
**Length:** 142 pp.

**Type:** Biography

**Illustrations:** Some

**Description:** Walter Dean Myers discovered a body of letters concerning Sarah Forbes Bonetta, a princess from the 19th century kingdom of Dahomey. Orphaned by war, she was rescued by a British naval officer and taken to England where she became a protégée of Queen Victoria

before marrying an African missionary.



**Title:** Aya

**Author:** Marguerite Abouet

**Language:** English

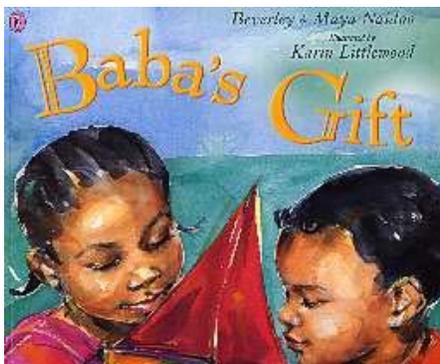
**Grade Level:** High school

**Year:** 2007

**Type:** Graphic novel

**Illustrations:** Yes

**Description:** 19-year old Aya in Cote d'Ivoire is smart, focused with her eye on medical school. Her party animal girlfriends think she is too serious. Will they pull her off the path she is following? This graphic novel will be enjoyed by older teens.



**Title:** Baba's Gift

**Author:** Beverley Naidoo & Maya Naidoo

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Primary

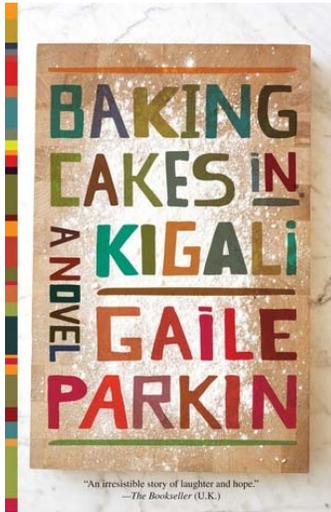
**Year:** 2006

**Type:** Storybook

**Illustrations:** Yes

**Description:** In South Africa, Lindi and her brother go to the sea with their grandmother, taking with them a little wooden boat their grandfather has made. They quickly make a new friend and play together with the boat in the sea and then have a picnic. No one notices the sea creeping in until it has taken their boat away. The

children are upset but find a special shell to take home for their father to make up for the loss of the boat he had given them. He says he can always make another boat but that he could never make anything as beautiful as the shell.



**Title:** Baking Cakes in Kigali

**Author:** Gaile Parkin

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** High School/Teachers

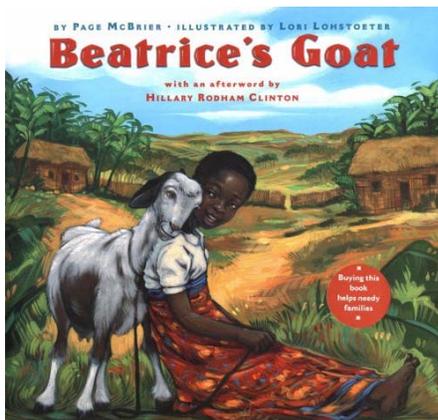
**Year:** 2009

**Type:** Novel

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** Set in an international apartment complex in Rwanda, heroine Angel Tungararza has moved from Tanzania with her husband, Pius, who's taken a job at the local university; before long, she develops a reputation as a masterful baker and a sagacious friend. Though haunted by the deaths of her grown daughter and son, Angel plunges back into motherhood, caring for her five grandchildren, tending to Pius, baking

cakes and dispensing advice. Meanwhile, the sour undercurrents of AIDS and genocide play quiet but instrumental parts in shaping Angel's world.



**Title:** Beatrice's Goat

**Author:** Page McBrier

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Primary

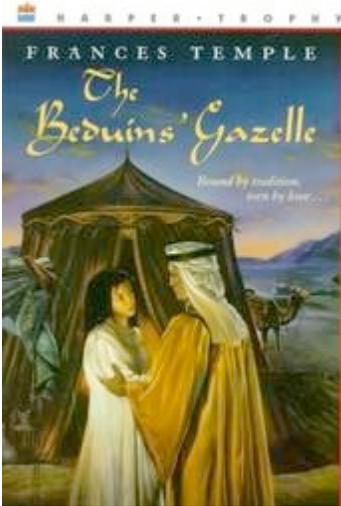
**Year:** 2004

**Type:** Storybook

**Illustrations:** yes

**Description:** Beatrice's Goat is the result of the Heifer Project director's request for Page McBrier and Lori Lohstoeter to create a children's book. In order for the author and illustrator to comprehend the linkages between rural Perry, Arkansas and

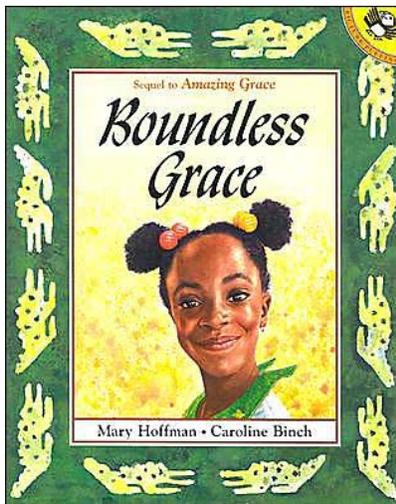
Kisinga, Uganda, they traveled to Uganda to document the true story of Beatrice and the Heifer Project goat. Beatrice's goat, Mugisa, has brought many new things to the family. The story describes how the sale of Mugisa's milk and two kids financed a new house, roof, furniture, and schooling for Beatrice. The steady income from the goat enables the family to buy medicines, clothing, and needed supplies. Soon Beatrice's friend will also have a goat. The book illustrates positive results of a non-profit organization; since so much news from Uganda is negative, it is important for readers to learn that Ugandans are working to improve their lives. The book also focuses on children, their schooling, and responsibilities, rather than on what adults do to or for children.



**Title:** The Beduins' Gazelle  
**Author:** Frances Nolting Temple  
**Language:** English  
**Grade Level:** Middle/High school  
**Year:** 1998  
**Type:** Young-adult novel  
**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** Few books for adolescents portray Islamic culture. And fewer books describe the struggles of adolescents of the fourteenth century in North Africa. As the book opens, Atiyah prepares to leave the desert life of southeastern Berber Morocco to study Arabic, jurisprudence, and Islam at the university in Fez. This period of intellectual inquiry among the Arabs occurred at a time when

Europeans were languishing in disease, poverty, and war. Despite his efforts to stay with his extended family, Atiyah must bid his beloved cousin Halima farewell as she will remain in the village to learn domestic activities. While his family continues to move through the desert with their herds of goats and camels, Halima becomes lost in a sandstorm. She is found by men of the family's rival Beni Shummar and subsequently betrothed to their sheik. Atiyah must find her before the impending wedding ceremony.

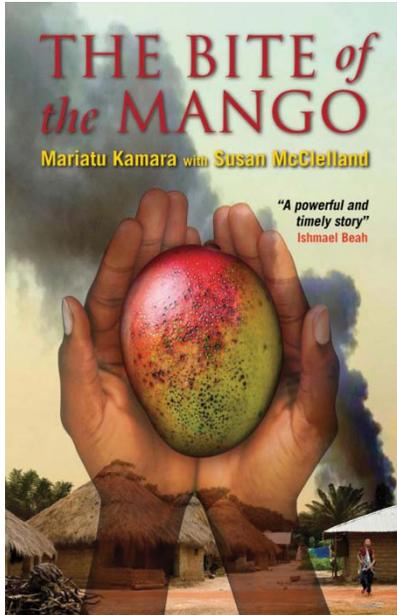


**Title:** Boundless Grace  
**Author:** Mary Hoffman  
**Language:** English  
**Grade Level:** Primary/Elementary  
**Year:** 1995  
**Type:** Storybook  
**Illustrations:** yes

**Description:** In the picture book *Amazing Grace*, children were introduced to a spunky little African American girl named Grace. In this sequel, she travels to Gambia, West Africa to visit her father and his new family. This is a simply told story with the subtle message that parents should maintain family bonds despite divorce. The pivotal issue for Grace is the absence of her father. Grace lives in a

warm extended family with a mother, a grandmother and a cat called Paw-Paw. Yet, as she tells Nana, "Our family's not right. We need a father and a brother and a dog." At times, Grace even denies that she has a father. A trip to Banjul, Gambia helps Grace come to terms with her father and understand that there are many types of families. At the conclusion of her trip to Gambia, she resolves to find books about families like hers and write her own story. Teachers will have to help students see commonalities between Gambia and the U.S. as Grace focuses on activities and objects that are different from home.

Teachers should encourage students to study the illustrations for similarities (e.g. there are trucks, sodas, telephones, an airport). The Gambian setting is not essential to the events in the story.



**Title:** The Bite of the Mango

**Author:** Mariatu Kamara with Susan McClelland

**Language:** English

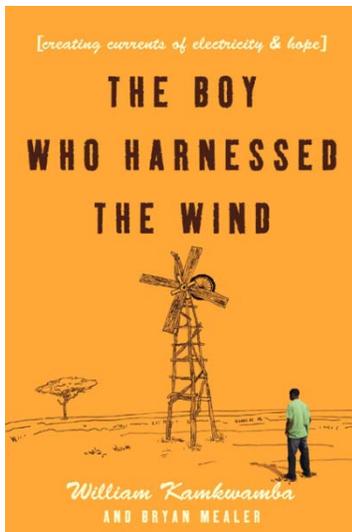
**Grade Level:** High school

**Year:** 2008

**Type:** Biography

**Illustrations:** Maps

**Description:** As a child in a small rural village in Sierra Leone, Mariatu Kamara lived peacefully surrounded by family and friends. Rumors of rebel attacks were no more than a distant worry. But when 12-year-old Mariatu set out for a neighboring village, she never arrived. Heavily armed rebel soldiers, many no older than children themselves, attacked and tortured Mariatu....As told to her by Mariatu, journalist Susan McClelland has written the heartbreaking true story of the brutal attack and its aftermath...



**Title:** The Boy who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope

**Author:** William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer

**Language:** English

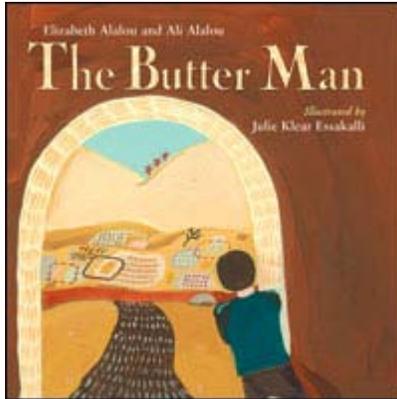
**Grade Level:** High school

**Year:** 2009

**Type:** Autobiography

**Illustrations:** Photographs

**Description:** This autobiographical work shares how an enterprising teenager facing famine in Malawi builds a windmill from scraps he finds around his village and brings electricity, and a future, to his family.



**Title:** The Butter Man

**Author:** Elizabeth Alalou & Ali Alalou

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Primary

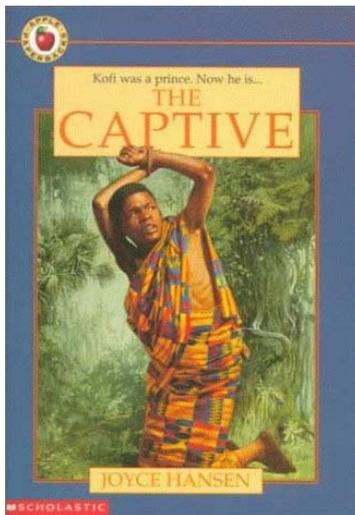
**Year:** 2008

**Type:** Picture book

**Illustrations:** Yes

**Description:** Nora, a young girl of Moroccan heritage, hears a story about her father's childhood in a small Berber village in the Atlas Mountains of southern Morocco while her father prepares her

family's usual Saturday dinner, couscous. She hears how her father and his family, and his village, lived through both drought and plenty in their agricultural region. Reflecting the contemporary realities of the Moroccan Diaspora around the world, the book suggests the passage of family history and tradition within a modern household. Elizabeth and Ali Alalou balance the two worlds without relying on sensationalism or an orientaling of rural Morocco. Includes educational notes on Berber culture in Morocco.



**Title:** The Captive

**Author:** Joyce Hansen

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Middle school

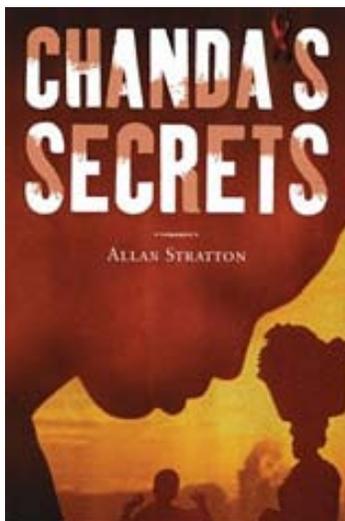
**Year:** 1994

**Length:** 195 pp

**Type:** Young-adult novel

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** This perceptive historical novel won the 1995 African Studies Children's Book Award for Older Readers. It contrasts two cultures, the Asante kingdom of Ghana and New England during the era of slavery. Inspired by the life of Olaudah Equiano.



**Title:** Chanda's Secret

**Author:** Allan Stratton

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** High school

**Year:** 2004

**Type:** Young-adult novel

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** Sixteen-year-old Chanda Kabelo has secrets. She loves

school and dreams of winning a scholarship one day, but people are dying around her. Everyone is afraid to say why, but Chanda knows: it's because of AIDS. Chanda's Secrets takes place in a nameless country that accurately resembles a place where over a quarter of the population is living with HIV. Chanda's struggles are similar to millions of other children living in Sub Saharan Africa. Having lost her father, stepfather, three older brothers, sister and several community members, Chanda quickly moves from the playful ignorance of youth to an adult life, even though it is difficult for her to understand some of what is happening around her. Though the Hollywood ending makes the story slightly unrealistic, Chanda gives a face and a story to connect teen readers with the statistics they hear in the news.



**Title:** Child of Dandelions

**Author:** Shenaaz Nanji

**Language:** English

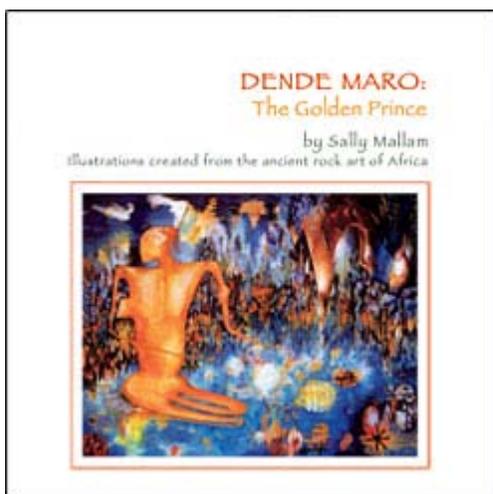
**Grade Level:** Middle/high school

**Year:** 2008

**Type:** Young-adult novel

**Illustrations:** No

**Description:** This work of historical fiction tells the story of Sabine, a 15-year Ugandan citizen of Indian ancestry whose life of luxury falls apart once Idi Amin comes to power. Her father thinks they'll be safe because they are citizens, but they soon realize that they are not safe from the terror, violence, and prejudices that dominate the times. The story is a suspenseful tale with realistic, yet loveable characters.



**Title:** Dende Maro: The Golden Prince

**Author:** Sally Mallam

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** All Ages

**Year:** 2009

**Type:** Creation Tale

**Illustrations:** Illustrations and map

**Description:** Mallam's spare tale describes how existence began with a single shape that, over a great length of time, eventually became all other shapes the universe, the world, and every life form within them. In this tale, human beings appear last. After they are formed, they desire more than mere existence and yearn for someone to guide them.

Eventually their longing grows so strong that it generates Dende Maro's birth. He shows humans how to

## UW-MADISON African Studies Book List

live in the world and instructs them to take care of themselves and each other. He teaches them language and mathematics, and introduces them to the arts--drawing, painting, carving, writing, playing music, and dancing. Since her story transcends continents and cultures, it emphasizes human commonality. Dende Maro provides rich fodder for lessons about artistic expression, history, Africa, social studies, multiculturalism, and inspiration. After the story ends, Mallam provides a few short paragraphs about prehistoric African rock art.



**Title:** Egyptian News

**Author:** Scott Steadman

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle school

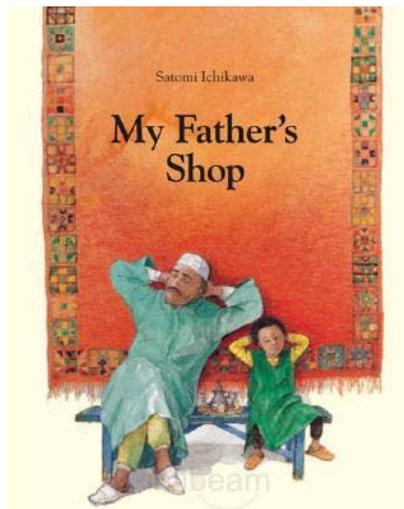
**Year:** 1997

**Length:** 32 pp.

**Type:** Illustrated history book

**Illustrations:** Yes

**Description:** Written in newspaper format, this colorful and engaging book presents an overview of Egyptian history and culture from 3000 BCE to 1100 BCE.



**Title:** My Father's Shop

**Author:** Satomi Ichikawa

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Primary

**Year:** 2006

**Length:** 28 pp

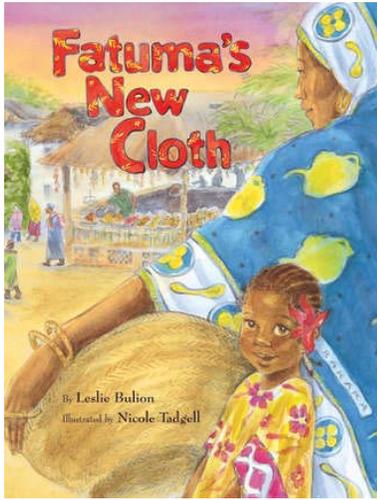
**Type:** Fictional picture book

**Illustrations:** Yes

**Description:** In My Father's Shop, we follow the adventure of young Mustafa as he learns about his father's trade as a rug seller in a southern town in Morocco and about communicating with others, in this case tourists from around the world. After asking for and

receiving a rug of his very own, Mustafa goes through the village to show his friends his new acquisition. However, in the company of a local rooster, he meets up with friendly tourists who teach how to "speak rooster" in French, Spanish, English and Japanese. Excited to share his new knowledge with his father, he returns to the rug shop, bringing all of his new friends along with him. The rich colors and patterns of Moroccan carpets mix with vivid drawings of local village life, snapshots of the marketplace and the

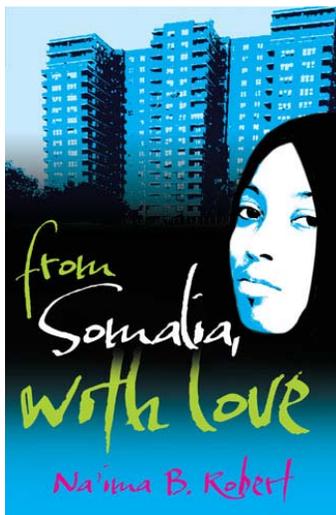
presentation of a variety of international tourists who make up the customers of the rug shop. Click [here](#) for a lesson to accompany the book.



**Title:** Fatuma's New Cloth  
**Author:** Leslie Bulion  
**Language:** English  
**Grade Level:** Primary  
**Year:** 2002  
**Length:** 30 pp  
**Type:** Fictional picture book  
**Illustrations:** Watercolor illustrations

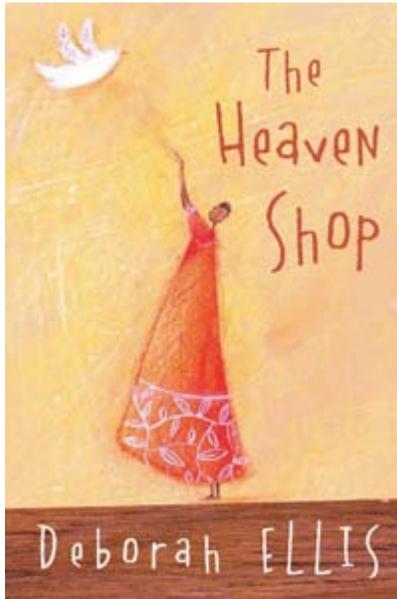
**Description:** Fatuma's New Cloth is a charming story about a little East African girl who visits the market with her mother in order to purchase kanga cloth for a new dress. During her trip to the market, Fatuma helps

us explore the East African perception of the world as she learns about her people's culture and traditions. Fatuma also comes to learn that different people have different opinions and that they may interpret things very differently. This is especially apparent in her experiences in buying the kanga cloth and her favorite drink, chai, a tea that is commonly prepared and served amongst East Africans. We learn the importance of the market in the life of Fatuma's community and see how she interacts with each of the vendors at the market, where in time, she will learn the skills she needs to bargain and purchase goods to take home to her family. We also learn about the social importance of kanga cloth in East Africa. Kanga cloth is a colorful printed cotton cloth with traditional motifs that is usually bought in pairs to be worn by both women and men in East Africa (predominantly Kenya and Tanzania) as part of their daily dress. Click [here](#) for a list of books on Kiswahili, Kenya, Tanzania, chai, and kanga.



**Title:** From Somalia with Love  
**Author:** Na'ima B. Robert  
**Language:** English  
**Grade Level:** Middle/High school  
**Year:** 2009  
**Type:** Young-adult novel  
**Illustrations:** No

**Description:** Twelve-year old Safia Dirie was born in Somalia, but she is a London-girl through and through, with few memories of her life before emigration. When her father suddenly joins the family after years spent fighting in war-torn Mogadishu, Safia is unprepared for the culture clash. Safia must struggle to figure out who she is as a Muslim, a teenager, and a daughter.



**Title:** Heaven Shop

**Author:** Deborah Ellis

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Middle school (older teens might also enjoy it)

**Year:** 2004

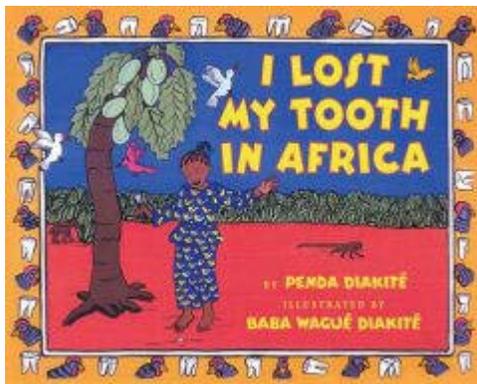
**Type:** Young-adult novel

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** Binti and her siblings are orphaned when their father dies of AIDS. Split up and sent to relatives all over Malawi, they suffer increasing hardship. Binti learns the hard way what is most important in life, and is forced to take a hard look at her own.

Historically and culturally sensitive, *The Heaven Shop* is respectful and informative. It doesn't shy away from dealing with difficult issues, nor does it sugar coat them. Instead, the story deals realistically with customs of inheritance without making gross

generalizations or judgments about what is done. It is easy to envision life in Malawi because the story is filled with rich description of the Malawian landscape and day-to-day life, from second-hand clothing being sold on the side of a road to lines of women and children waiting to get water in rural areas.



**Title:** I Lost my Tooth in Africa

**Author:** Penda Diakite and Baba Wague Diakite

**Language:** English with Bambara

**Grade Level:** Primary

**Year:** 2006

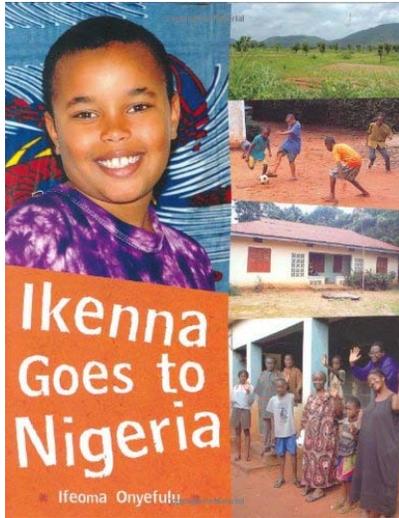
**Type:** Storybook

**Illustrations:** Yes

**Description:** *I Lost my Tooth in Africa* is a vibrant, lively story about eight-year old Amina, who takes a long journey from Portland, Oregon to West Africa, to visit her father's family in

Mali. When Amina loses her tooth in Mali, places it under a gourd and tangles with the African tooth-fairy, she learns that growing up is also about responsibility. Teachers can benefit a great deal from using this book, especially in their Social Studies classes, when teaching about African culture (food, family, language and traditions) or celebrating Black History Month. The book's appendix includes a glossary of the Bambara words, a goodnight song in Bambara and an authentic recipe for African onion sauce from Mali. Click [here](#) for a lesson to accompany the book.

UW-MADISON African Studies Book List



**Title:** Ikenna Goes to Nigeria

**Author:** Ifeoma Onyefulu

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Primary

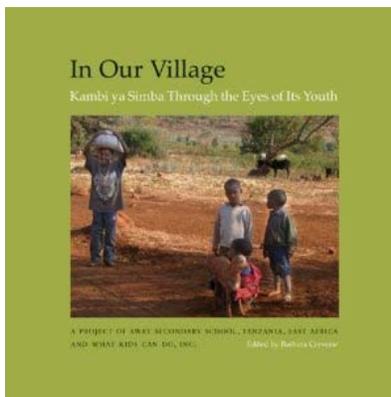
**Year:** 2007

**Type:** Storybook

**Illustrations:** Photographs

**Description:** Ifeoma Onyefulu is the award-winning writer of various children stories. In this story the reader sees the sophisticated images of a Nigerian urban setting with its architecturally complex landscapes, and also the less sophisticated pictures of the local culture, with flea markets, chickens running around in the village and the barefooted adherents of the river goddess. It is very rich in

cultural contents and aesthetically appealing.



**Title:** In Our Village

**Author:** Barbara Cervone (Ed.); Students from Awet Secondary School, Tanzania

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle school

**Year:** 2006

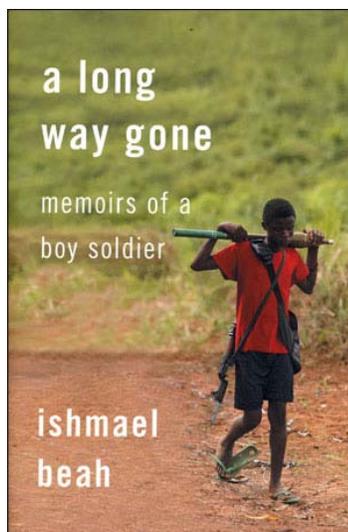
**Length:** 74 pp

**Type:** Non-fiction chapter book

**Illustrations:** Photographs (taken by students in the village)

**Description:** What Kids Can Do, a U.S.-based NGO, and students at

Awet Secondary School in the village of Kambi ya Simba, Tanzania collaborate to show and explain life in their village.



**Title:** A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier

**Author:** Ishmael Beah

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** High school

**Year:** 2007

**Type:** Autobiography

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** This memoir offers an inside view of how lives are transformed when war sweeps through a country. Beah was living an ordinary life in a loving community with no personal knowledge of armed conflict. The only wars he knew of were those he heard about on the BBC, read of in books or saw in movies like Rambo. When war found Beah, he

## UW-MADISON African Studies Book List

was traveling to a nearby community to perform rap music in a talent show. He and the other members of his group were abducted and forced to fight alongside other young teens in the government's army. Beah details the difficult situation that the child soldiers face when released from the army, their homes destroyed and family members dead or missing. At fifteen Beah was selected to represent the children of Sierra Leone at a United Nations conference on children in conflicted countries.

**Title:** The Middle of Somewhere

**Author:** Sheila Gordon

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle

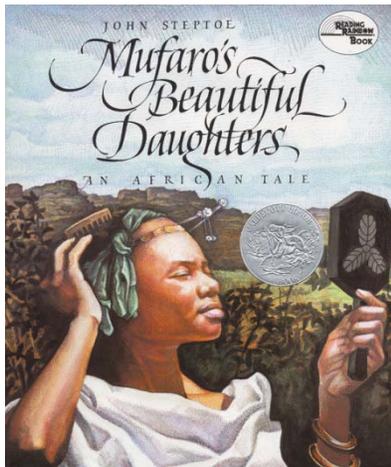
**Year:** 1990

**Length:** 152 pp

**Type:** Chapter book

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** The story of a young girl, Rebecca, whose village is threatened in apartheid-era South Africa in order to make way for a new 'whites-only' town. Together with her family and community, Rebecca joins the struggle to save her home and her village.



**Title:** Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters

**Author:** John Steptoe

**Language:** English

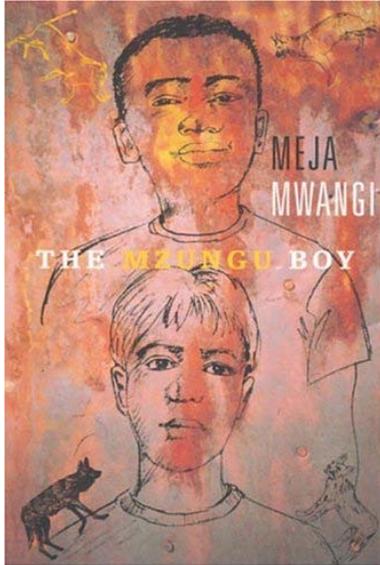
**Grade Level:** Primary

**Year:** 1987

**Type:** Storybook

**Illustrations:** Yes

**Description:** Steptoe's last offering is an adaptation of a Xhosa tale from South Africa. Steptoe has changed the setting of the story from Xhosa land to old Zimbabwe. As in the old tale, the focus is on sisters with opposite natures. One is kind and gentle, the other bad-tempered and selfish. Each hopes to be chosen by the king to be his wife. In addition to learning that good behavior is rewarded and ill deeds are punished, children soak up the atmosphere of rural and city life in an ancient African kingdom. The book can serve as a useful means of introducing children to the variety of architectural structures in ancient Zimbabwe. Thatched houses and massive stone structures are both featured in the illustrations. The drawings of buildings and people are detailed and stunningly realistic. Storytellers searching for a good read aloud will find this book ably fills the bill.



**Title:** The Mzungu Boy

**Author:** Meja Mwangi

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle school

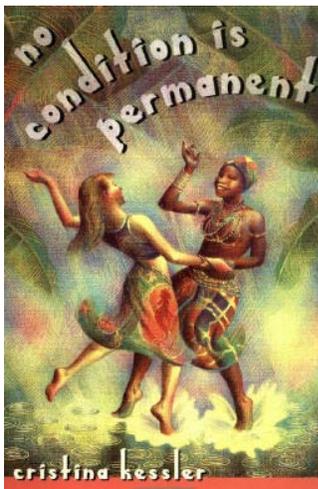
**Year:** 2005

**Type:** Young-adult novel

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** This book tells an important story of settler colonialism in Kenya. Mzungu Boy offers a tonic to the disturbingly widespread Out of Africa syndrome, where the whites are strong pioneers out there alone facing an unforgiving environment. In Mzungu Boy we learn the same story, but from the opposite perspective, that of a young boy whose father works long harsh hours as the cook for a white settler family. We still see the strong white pioneer, but now as

a deeply feared, cruel and seemingly omnipotent stranger. The novel is set in the early 1950s as the MauMau movement was gathering strength in the "White" Highlands. When the boy Kariuki meets "mzungu" (white guy), the grandson of the plantation owner, the story takes off. As the boys become closer friends, their surrounding world becomes more fearful and violent. Still, the two boys try to have fun together and understand each other's strange ways. Ultimately, their friendship is one of several causes of the brutal murder of Kariuki's brother by the settler police. Yet the boys' friendship somehow perseveres because they aren't old enough to understand that colonialism is irredeemably distorting their lives and will undoubtedly end up destroying their friendship.



**Title:** No Condition is Permanent

**Author:** Cristina Kessler

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Middle/High school

**Year:** 2000

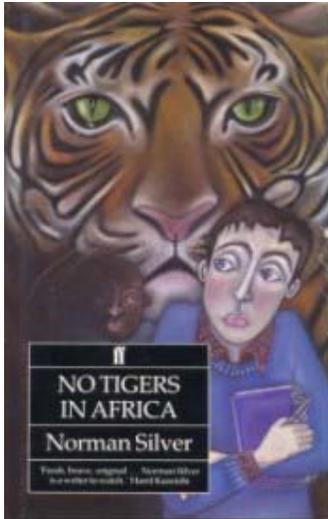
**Type:** Young-adult novel

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** This is the story of Jodie, a 14-year-old white American girl who unexpectedly finds herself living with her mother half way around the world in Sierra Leone. Jodie's mother, a college professor is granted a sabbatical and provided with funding to conduct field research in Bukama a small fishing village. Despite her mother's delight at returning to her old

Peace Corps village to study the activities of the village women, Jodie is not pleased by the prospect of leaving her new California home and friends to go live in an unfamiliar place. Soon after she arrives in Bukama, Jodie develops a friendship with Khadie a girl her own age. While Khadie teaches Jodie about some of the customs and language of her people, and about how to work like the girls and women of the village, Jodie reciprocates by teaching Khadie how to read and write in English. Although the special relationship they develop seems to transcend most of the boundaries of race, nationality and culture,

eventually their friendship is severely tested by the boundaries imposed by Sande--the women's secret society in Sierra Leone.



**Title:** No Tigers in Africa, A Novel

**Author:** Norman Silver

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** High school

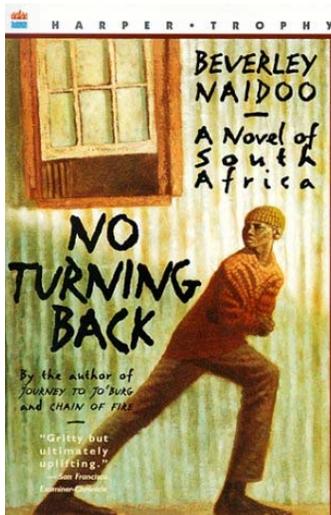
**Year:** 1990

**Length:** 138 pp

**Type:** Young-adult novel

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** Newly arrived in England from South Africa, a fifteen-year-old's family deteriorates as the effects of living under apartheid take a toll on every aspect of the family members' lives.



**Title:** No Turning Back: A Novel of South Africa

**Author:** Beverley Naidoo

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Middle school

**Year:** 1995

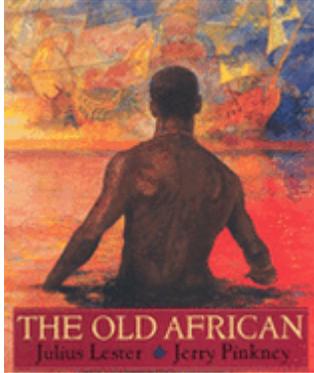
**Length:** 185 pp.

**Type:** Young-adult novel

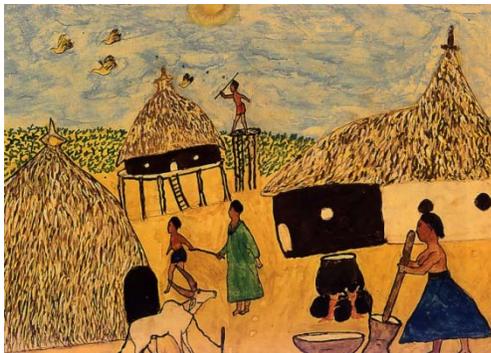
**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** No Turning Back addresses the problems of post-apartheid South Africa. Although a new regime governs the country, changes in the economy, society, and education have not filtered down to the poor as quickly as anticipated. Young adolescent boys still find that poverty and crime in the townships are too much to endure. Siphon like other boys flees Soweto and goes to middle class neighborhoods in Johannesburg where he can live with a group of young sidewalk entrepreneurs. His payment is in kind (food, lodging, and schooling) rather than money. Despite his improved lifestyle, this arrangement keeps him still dependent. Finally, Siphon goes to a shelter where he can live and attend school, he returns to Soweto only to visit his mother. No Turning Back contains a hopeful message for South African youth, portraying Nelson Mandela's vision through Siphon for a more tolerant country.

UW-MADISON African Studies Book List

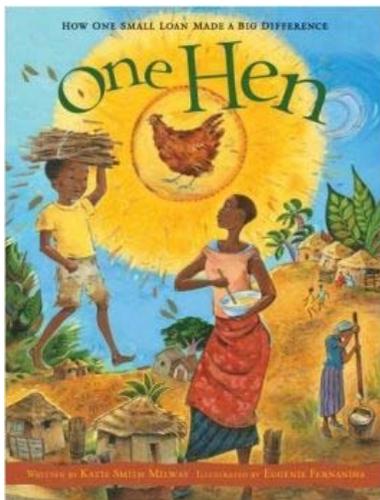


**Title:** The Old African  
**Author:** Julius Lester  
**Language:** English  
**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle school  
**Year:** 2005  
**Type:** Storybook  
**Illustrations:** Yes  
**Description:** An elderly slave uses the power of his mind to ease the suffering of his fellow slaves and eventually lead them back to Africa. Based on an actual incident from Black history.



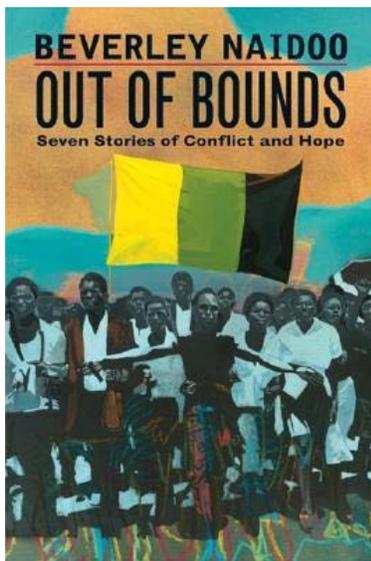
**Title:** One Day We Had to Run: Refugee Children Tell their Stories in Words and Paintings  
**Author:** Sybella Wilkes  
**Language:** English  
**Grade Level:** Middle/High school  
**Year:** 1994  
**Length:** 61 pp  
**Type:** Non-Fiction  
**Illustrations:** Children's drawings, photographs, maps

**Description:** This book covers three African countries: Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia, with a brief commentary on Rwanda, and notes on refugees throughout Africa. Each country is described in a brief essay on its past and present. A second essay introduces one refugee child, who then tells his or her own story. A short folktale or story rounds out each section. Illustrations are paintings done by the children, photographs in color or black and white, and very clear maps which show the routes taken by each child as well as placing the site's names in the broader context of Africa. This is a tasteful and surprisingly positive treatment of a serious situation. Ways of using this book in the classroom are suggested. It can clearly supplement curricula in a number of ways. The only faults to be found are a few terms used, such as "hut" to describe photos of quite nicely constructed refugee homes. This is an exception; most of the terms used are accurate and free of cultural bias.



**Title:** One Hen: How one small loan made a big difference  
**Author:** Katie Smith Milway  
**Language:** English  
**Grade Level:** Primary/Elementary  
**Year:** 2008  
**Type:** Storybook  
**Illustrations:** Yes  
**Description:** Milway's book does a wonderful job of presenting a positive, simple story of Kojo, a level-headed, hard working boy happy to lend a helping hand to his family and his extended village. Latching

on to a loan his mother obtained, he is smart enough to figure out a way to multiply the little his family has, and later share with others around him. Kojo seems to have created a modern variation of the 'susu,' an economic and cultural practice among the Akan in Ghana where several people contribute to a joint fund which is then loaned to one of the group. As this person pays back the loan, someone else in the group then benefits from the expanded loan. This continues with everybody at some point benefiting as the pot grows. It is a form of what is now popularly called 'microfinance,' a way for usually poor and moderate income people to have access to small, sustainable credit as a way to live decently. Kojo uses the small loan to buy one hen and sell the eggs that the hen lays. Soon, there are more hens and more eggs, and the rest is an appreciable experience in success and growth for everybody connected with Kojo.



**Title:** Out of Bounds: Seven Stories of Conflict and Hope

**Author:** Beverley Naidoo

**Language:** English

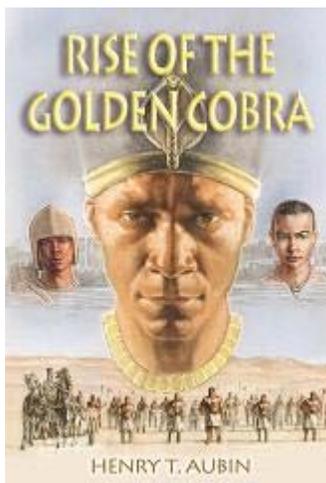
**Grade Level:** Middle school

**Year:** 2003

**Type:** Book of short stories

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** Seven stories, spanning the time period from 1948 to 2000, chronicle the experiences of young people from different races and ethnic groups as they try to cope with the restrictions placed on their lives by South Africa's apartheid laws.



**Title:** Rise of the Golden Cobra

**Author:** Henry T. Aubin

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Middle/High school

**Year:** 2007

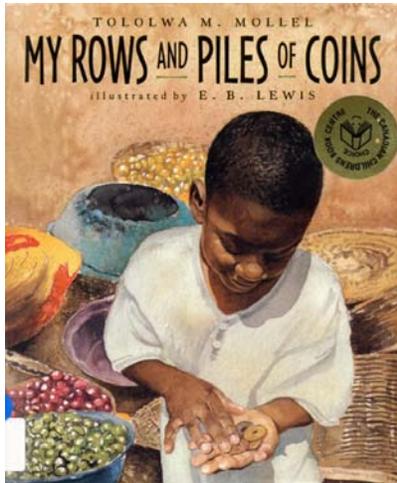
**Type:** Young-adult novel

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** Set around 700 BCE, this historically accurate but fictional story focuses on Nebi, an Egyptian teenager who by chance learns of some politically important information that has the potential to change the course of history. After witnessing a murder, Nebi escapes to Kush in Nubia, modern-day Sudan, to tell king Piankhy what he has witnessed.

Consequently, the king decides to launch a military campaign to liberate northern Egypt from the rule of the Libyan king Tefnakht. Nebi joins the army on this adventure, befriending Piankhy's nephew and

Egypt's future king Shebitku. The novel follows the campaign northward as both young men participate in various skirmishes and learn valuable lessons along the way. Click [here](#) for a lesson to accompany the book.



**Title:** My Rows and Piles of Coins

**Author:** Jay Kitsao, illus. E.B. Lewis

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Primary

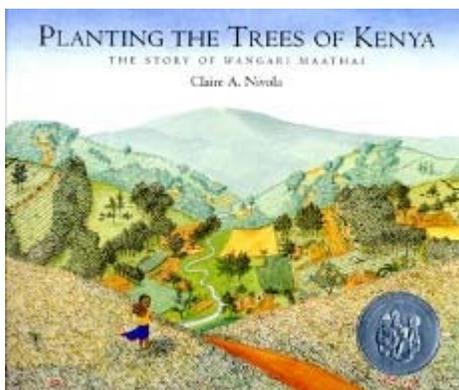
**Year:** 1999

**Type:** Picture book

**Illustrations:** Yes

**Description:** In this story set in Tanzania, the protagonist is a Maasai boy, living in a rural northern area. His father grows an export crop (coffee), his mother markets other crops, and he, Saruni, helps them both, especially his mother. Using an old squeaky wheelbarrow he hauls his mother's beans, corn, pumpkins and other crops to market.

Industrious and thrifty, he saves the coins he earns helping mother, patiently waiting for the day he can buy the bicycle he has his heart set on. Eventually, he gets a bike but it is not new and it comes to him in a surprising way. He shows no disappointment. He is delighted he has a bike of his own, one that he can use to help his mother. The story presents opportunities for discussing a number of topics. We learn, for example, that some parts of Africa are chilly during North America summers, that women play important economic roles in the family and community, and that a bicycle can be an important economic asset. A glossary of Maasai terms and author's note about Tanzanian currency complete the book.



**Title:** Planting the Trees of Kenya

**Author:** Claire Nivola

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Primary/Elementary

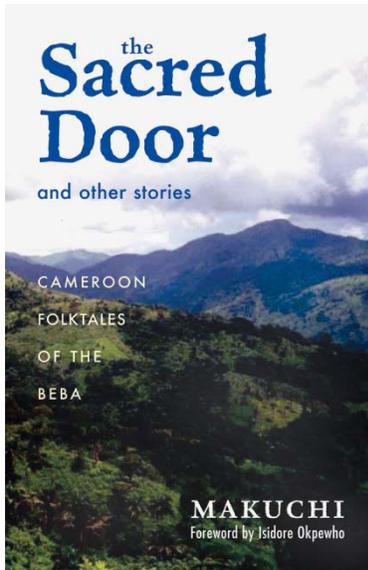
**Year:** 2008

**Type:** Storybook

**Illustrations:** Yes

**Description:** Wangari Maathai, winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize and founder of the Green Belt Movement, grew up in the highlands of Kenya, where fig trees cloaked the hills, fish

filled the streams, and the people tended their bountiful gardens. But over many years, as more and more land was cleared, Kenya was transformed. When Wangari returned home from college in America, she found the village gardens dry, the people malnourished, and the trees gone. How could she alone bring back the trees and restore the gardens and the people?



**Title:** The Sacred Door and Other Stories

**Author:** Makuchi

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** High school/Teacher

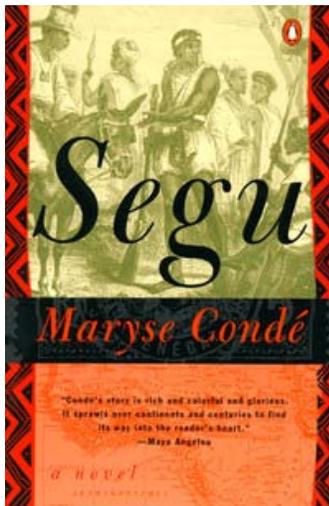
**Year:** 2008

**Length:** 177 pp.

**Type:** Folktales

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** Makuchi shares the oral narratives from her childhood in Cameroon, infusing them with riddles, songs, proverbs, myths and legends. The 33 tales in this book cover universal themes, but acknowledge the differences between human cultures.



**Title:** Segu, a novel

**Author:** Maryse Conde

**Language:** English

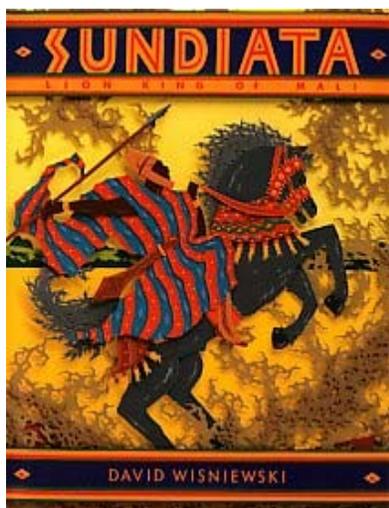
**Grade Level:** High school

**Year:** 1998

**Type:** Historical novel

**Illustrations:** Maps, family tree

**Description:** Based on actual events, his novel captures the coming of Islam to the kingdom of Segu in Mali and the disruptive forces of the Atlantic slave trade.



**Title:** Sundiata: Lion King of Mali

**Author:** David Wisniewski

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** Primary/Elementary

**Year:** 1992

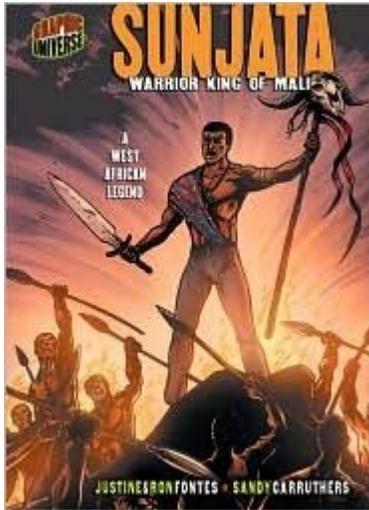
**Length:**

**Type:** Storybook

**Illustrations:** yes

**Description:** The story of Sundiata, who overcame physical handicaps, social disgrace, and strong opposition to rule Mali in the

thirteenth century. Winner of the 1993 African Studies Association's Best Children's Book on Africa



**Title:** Sunjata: Warrior King of Mali

**Author:** Ron and Justine Fontes

**Language:** English

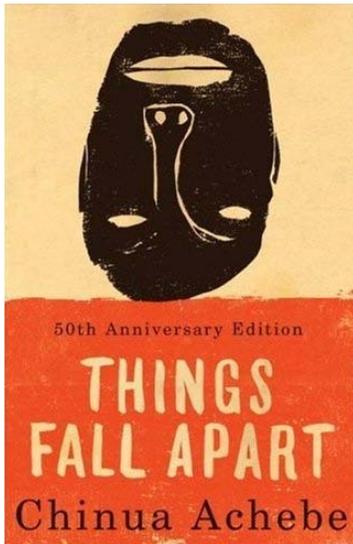
**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle school

**Year:** 2008

**Type:** Graphic Novel

**Illustrations:** Yes

**Description:** Sunjata, the founder of the Mali empire, is celebrated in Sunjata : Warrior King of Mali. The legend is retold in graphic novel format by Justine and Ron Fontes and illustrated by Sandy Carruthers. The Fontes based their retelling of the Sunjata epic on tales in Epic Ancestors of the Sundjata Era recorded by David Conrad.



**Title:** Things Fall Apart

**Author:** Chinua Achebe

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:** High school

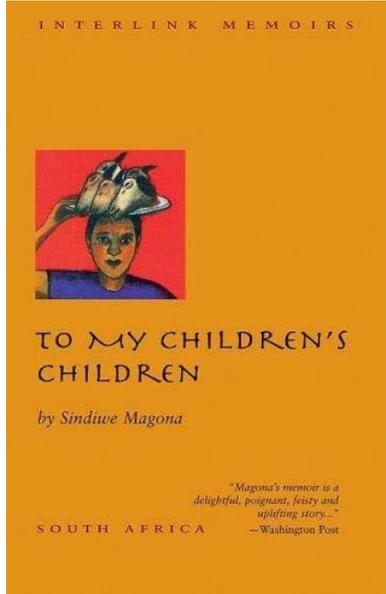
**Year:** 1958

**Type:** Novel

**Illustrations:** No

**Description:** Things Fall Apart is Achebe's classic novel of colonial intrusion and the disruption of Igbo society.

UW-MADISON African Studies Book List



**Title:** To my Children's Children

**Author:** Sindiwe Magona

**Language:** English

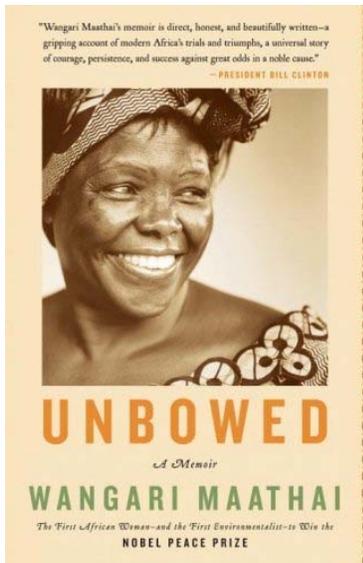
**Grade Level:** High school

**Year:** 2006

**Type:** Autobiography

**Illustrations:** No

**Description:** This powerful autobiography provides a vivid, personal snapshot of what it was like to grow up under apartheid in South Africa. Her life exemplifies the challenges and defeats as well as the power of personal courage and determination as this book introduces readers to her early years as a child, and later as a student, a teacher, a domestic worker and a single mother.



**Title:** Unbowed: A Memoir

**Author:** Wangari Maathai

**Language:** English

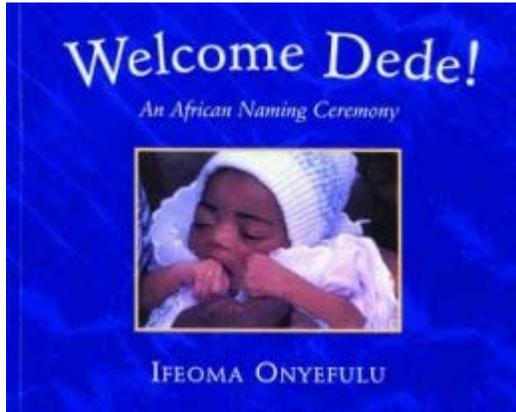
**Grade Level:** High school

**Year:** 2007

**Type:** Autobiography

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** Maathai, a single mother of three and the first African woman and environmentalist to win the Nobel Peace Prize, recounts her life as a political activist, feminist, and environmentalist in Kenya.



**Title:** Welcome Dede! An African Naming Ceremony

**Author:** Ifeoma Onyefulu

**Language:** English

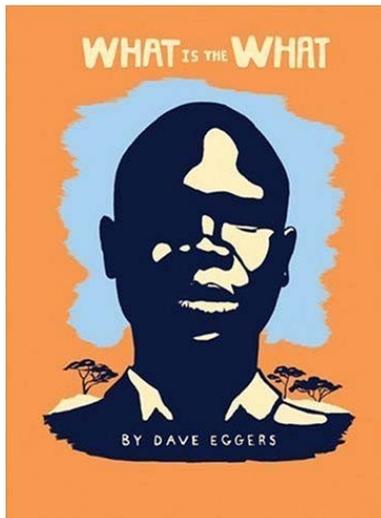
**Grade Level:** Primary

**Year:** 2004

**Type:** Picture book

**Illustrations:** Photographs

**Description:** This photo essay describes the cultural significance of West African naming ceremonies. Click [here](#) for a lesson plan to accompany the book.



**Title:** What is the What

**Author:** Dave Eggers

**Language:** English

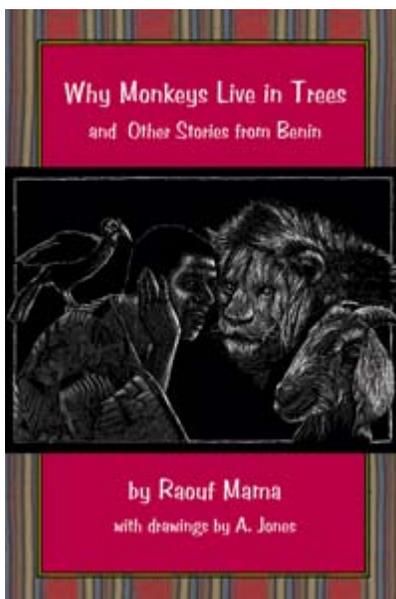
**Grade Level:** High school

**Year:** 2007

**Type:** Fictionalized biography

**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** The heartrending but remarkable story of one of Sudan's Lost Boys. It is a somewhat fictionalized version of the life of a real lost boy, Valentino Achak Deng. He eventually made it to the U.S., finding that the U.S. offered its own obstacles and problems for immigrants.



**Title:** Why Monkeys Live in Trees, and other stories from Benin

**Author:** Raouf Mama

**Language:** English

**Grade Level:**

**Year:** 2006

**Type:** Folktales

**Illustrations:** No

**Description:** Benin, formerly Dahomey, is in West Africa. It is a country rich in oral stories, passed on from generation to generation. Raouf Mama, a storyteller himself as well as a teacher and orator, draws on this rich tradition and includes stories from many of Benin's indigenous groups. Mama is wise enough to include many types of stories in his collection, tricksters, fables, heroes,

sacred stories and other types of stories, each with its own moral. The stories include: Come and hear my story -- Blessed are the storytellers, for they are the keepers of the word -- Why monkeys live in trees -- Why the sun shines by day and the moon by night -- Why bee makes honey and snake crawls on its belly -- How goat got out of trouble.



**Title:** Year of No Rain  
**Author:** Alice Mead  
**Language:** English  
**Grade Level:** Middle school/high school  
**Year:** 2003

**Type:** Young-adult novel  
**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** Stephen, a young Dinka, lives in a village in Sudan with his mother and his elder sister, Naomi. His father has vanished, gone off to the war. Stephen's concerns are those of any older child in such a village: his family, the cows he tends and on which the village depends, and his sister's impending marriage. The echoes of the distant war build, until suddenly the village is raided by soldiers looking for food. Stephen and two other boys escape to the forest; his sister Naomi hides. The next day, Stephen and the other boys return to find the village destroyed, Stephen's mother dead, and Naomi vanished. The book ends on a hopeful but realistic note as the children start to try to re-establish life among the ruins.



**Title:** Yoruba Girl Dancing  
**Author:** Simi Bedford  
**Language:** English  
**Grade Level:** Middle/high school  
**Year:** 1991

**Type:** Young-adult novel  
**Illustrations:** None

**Description:** This book is a coming-of-age story about Remi whose life growing up in Nigeria is a celebration of love and family, eccentricity and old ritual. She feels confident in her privilege and grounded in the heart of her culture. But when she turns six, as if by some awful spell, she is sent away to a boarding school in England where she must learn to navigate her race and culture among strangers and figure out who she really is.