Dapo Adeleke

Adamu and His Horse

Nigeria (2004)

TAGS: African Storytelling African Traditions Archetype Odyssey Slavery in Africa



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General information	
Title of the work	Adamu and His Horse
Country of the First Edition	Nigeria
Country/countries of popularity	Nigeria
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2004
First Edition Details	Dapo Adeleke, *Adamu and his horse.* Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria: Lantern Books: A Div. of Literamed Publications (Nig.) Ltd., 2004, 135 pp.
ISBN	9789781429873
Genre	Didactic fiction, Fiction
Target Audience	Children (13–16 years old)
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Creators



Dapo Adeleke , b. 1956
(Author)

Dapo Adeleke was born in Ile-Ogbo, Osun State, Nigeria but he grew up in Onipanu, Ondo State, Nigeria where he attended St. Matthew's Anglican Primary School, Onipanu. He studied privately for the West African Examination Council examinations which he passed in 1981, then proceeded to the University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri, Borno State Nigeria. He graduated in 1985 with Honours Degree in English. After his National Service he had worked for various organisations, national and international as an administrator. It was during this period he wrote *Adamu and His Horse, Akano and his Golden Ring, The Newcomer, Thrills and Trials, The Day After Tomorrow, The Legend: Nelson Mandela* and *The Legend: Kwame Nkrumah*. In 2011 he enrolled for a PhD Degree in creative writing at the University of New England, Australia, graduating in 2014.

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Additional information

Summary

Adamu and His Horse is a Children's fiction, didactic and with thematic thrusts yarned from oral tradition. Adamu is a young and ambitious young man. His parents migrated to Garinlafiya long time ago from their ancestral village where they were relatively wealthy but had to leave because of famine. His father had a retinue of slaves but trusted one. On the night of their departure from Garinlafiya, he tied together most of his property and money which were too heavy to carry on the back of his many horses.

THE HORSE OF MYSTERY

Adamu has a horse, which his father gave him before his death. The horse is big and well-fed. Its brown color dotted by white speckles makes it attractive to the eye. Adamu's father, before his death, had initiated the horse with the power of double vision so that it could see beyond what ordinary eyes of man or animal could see. The horse was also endowed with the power to communicate with man. Adamu bathes the horse every morning. Bathing the horse is a ritual which he performs with awesome reference. In the horse, Adamu sees the figure of his dead father. Therefore, anytime he is at crossroads, and in need of fatherly advice, he communes with the horse in silence. Adamu would bend low before the horse and gaze thoughtfully at it. In response, the horse would sway its long full tail and stare hard at Adamu. This communion would last a while, then the horse would either paw the earth with its left hoof a number of times or just walk away. It is a good thing when the horse paws the earth with its hoof but a bad omen when it just walks away. So, it follows that whatever thought comes to Adamu's mind soon after the horse has pawed the earth is the answer to his question or the solution to his problem. Even when the time came for Adamu to take a wife, the horse chose for him out of the three girls which he had lined up before the horse. Adamu communed with the horse as usual. Then the horse neighed and pawed the earth thrice and rubbed its wet nose on the chest of one of the girls. Adamu believed the girl was his father's choice for him as a wife.

ADAMU'S FATHER AND HIS DEATH

Now Adamu's father has been sick for some time. Sensing that he might not survive, one early morning he sends for Adamu to tell him

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about their ancestral village and the treasure of immeasurable value he has with his slave there. He tells him that here in Garinlafiya, I am not wealthy, and if I die, I will leave no inheritance for you here. He tells him that the treasure of immeasurable value is the inheritance he is leaving for him as a father to his son. But Adamu has to travel through the tortuous and dangerous route to his father's ancestral village to collect the treasure of immense value from the slave. However, if you can make it to our ancestral village and locate my slave, he will hand over to you the treasure of immensurable value. But to do so, you have to show him the hidden mark on the horse for him to know that truly you are my son. Without the hidden mark, he would not let you have the treasure of immense value, so it is important I show you the hidden mark on the horse. His father tells him to go bring the horse that he might show him the key to the box of immense value, but Adamu was preoccupied with the thought of his father's imminent death, so he delayed to go for the horse. His father rebuked him for wasting time. However, by the time Adamu eventually went to bring the horse, the father died without showing Adamu what exactly was the key and where it was located on the horse. Adamu is ambitious and hardworking, but a very poor young man. He decides to go after the box of immense value with his father's slave in their ancestral village. But there is a problem: the hidden key on the body of the horse. For many days he searched for a clue to the key but found nothing. All the same he decides to go for the box. He embarks on the journey.

THE JOURNEY

There are three rivers to be crossed to arrive at his ancestral village. He has too many encounters on the long journey; he had been warned that the road was hazardous. He meets an old man at the bank of the first river on his journey who advises him to pass the night with him. The old man talks to him about life, the danger along the ancient route. He advises him to be focused and not deviate from the ancient route because of the inherent danger on the route itself, let alone veering from it.

Although Adamu promises to be guided by the Oldman's advice, he fails the first test when he veers from the ancient route because he fears an attack by a roaring lion. He suffers greatly for this not only with the loss of his way in the desert, but also the temporary loss of his dear horse that is a key to his success on this journey and the recovery of the treasure of immense value. Adamu learns from this

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horrific experience and promises himself to always be guided by the advice of the Old man. This obedience pays off when he helps a stranded blind man on the back of his horse to a neighboring village along the ancient route. His encounter with the blind man is a testy experience and the watershed of his journey that almost cost him his life. He picks up a stranded blind man at the bank of the last river on the journey. The blind man claims he is going to the next village not too far away. The blind man keeps asking many personal questions that seem to evince information on Adamu's horse. At first Adamu is careless in divulging many secrets about the horse before but the voice of the old echoes in his head warning him to "trust no one about your horse." The blind man springs in surprise when they arrive at his destination. He claims he is the owner of the horse and that he has only helped Adamu to the village. The mob is moved by the condition of the blind man, and his claim that Adamu has robbed him of his only treasure in life which is the horse. The mob wonder why an able-bodied man should be so heartless to rob a wretched disabled blind man. Adamu's desperate attempt to explain to the mob that he is the owner of the horse falls on deaf ears as the mob would not believe him and they are ready to avenge him of this crime against him by stoning Adamu to death. They are incensed against Adamu and beat him up almost to death before leading him, the horse and the blind man to the palace of the Emir of the village who is to judge the case. The Emir wonders how a blind could ride a horse. Therefore, he asks the blind man many questions about the horse to unravel the mystery. The blind man relying on his initial conversation with Adamu on the horse answers all the Emir's questions without fault but one: "what is the color of your horse?" Adamu is saved from imminent death which is the punishment for cheating a disabled person. The wise Emir compensates Adamu's experience in the hands of the mob with valuable gifts and have his wounds treated before allowing him to continue his journey.

ADAMU'S ARRIVAL AT HIS ANCESTRAL VILLAGE

Adamu's travails continue as he journeys on horseback on the ancient route. The horse becomes seriously ill that Adamu could no longer ride. The deeply depressed Adamu locates the house of his father's slave who has the treasure of immense value which Adamu has come to claim. He goes inside to find the man and introduce himself. The man is curious wondering about the veracity of Adamu's claim to be the son of his former boss. "Have you come on a horse?" he asks. He led the man to where he has left the horse only to find it already dead.

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	His sorrow multiplies. He feels the journey has been in vain. He finds the hidden mark under the left earlobe of the horse. “Truly you are the son of my boss,” he told Adamu. He eventually delivers to Adamu the treasure of immense value which changes Adamu’s life on his return home, though on another horse.
Analysis	*Adamu and His Horse* is a didactic novel with a universal message of adventures and the filial bond between father and son, good for children and young adults. It is a book used in primary schools in West Africa and available in many bookshops and libraries in Europe and America. The story echoes the oral tradition common with many African communities. *Adamu and His Horse* is created from a short Yoruba proverb: *The man who does not have eyes and claims he owns a horse should be asked how he rides on the horse without eyes.* The recurring motifs which have bearings in the classical and ancient world include the journey motif and breaking through many hurdles; treasure of immense value, oneiric symbolism and the character of obedience, endurance, patience and resilience in the protagonist.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Storytelling African Traditions Archetype Odyssey Slavery in Africa
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Animals Family Magic Magic powers Parents (and children) Relationships Travel Treasure-hunting
Further Reading	Griswold, Wendy, *Bearing Witness: Readers, Writers, and the Novel in Nigeria*, Princeton University Press, 2000. Jones, Rebecca, *At the Crossroads: Nigerian Travel Writing and Literary Culture in Yoruba and English,* NED-New edition, Boydell &

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