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Sundiata: Lion King Of Mali



Synopsis

In the thirteenth century, Sundiata overcame physical handicaps, social disgrace, and strong opposition to rule the West African trading empire of Mali.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 820L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Clarion Books; First Edition edition (October 19, 1992)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 9 x 0.1 x 10.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 21 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #174,223 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Africa #14 in Books > Children's Books > Fairy Tales, Folk Tales & Myths > African #26 in Books > Children's Books > Fairy Tales, Folk Tales & Myths > Other

Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

In the oral tradition of the griots (minister-like functionaries "with the wisdom of history"), Wisniewski brings to life a story of courage from the African country of Mali. Sundiata, born to the King and his second wife, "proved unable to speak or walk," and despite glowing predictions for his future he is hounded from his country. After years of exile, he is invited back to oust a tyrant and return his land to prosperity and peace. This retelling, though imbued with dignity and intelligence, proves somewhat confusing. Children may not be able to follow the convoluted series of events, while the multiplicity of characters--most with strange, hard-to-pronounce names--could well befuddle even the most assiduous reader. Wisniewski's stunning cut-paper illustrations, however, introduce to the text a striking vitality and beauty. Historically accurate images are sharp without starkness, expressive of raw power and delicate fragility by turns, and full of strong dynamism and motion. Bright rainbow colors capture the fabrics of Africa, and the text's patterned borders are suggestive of kilim rugs. An unremarkable narrative redeemed by inspired artwork. Ages 5-9. Copyright 1992

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Grade 2-4-- An appealing biography of Sundiata, credited as the founder of the Mali empire. A lengthy author's note informs readers as to how little firsthand information on the topic is available, and that what is known has been handed down orally by griots , or African storytellers. Therefore, the narrative has the distinctive, if somewhat mystical, flow of an oral history. Sundiata neither walks nor speaks for the first seven years of his life, but is still named heir over his older brother.

Regardless of the pronouncement, following the king's death, Sundiata and his mother are forced into exile. How the Lion King of Mali defeats his enemies and becomes the rightful ruler makes for an exciting tale. Wisniewski's characteristic artwork (vivid colored paper designs that have been intricately cut, arranged, mounted, and then photographed) add to the drama of the tale and are consistent with the folkloric tone. The characters have personality and vitality, and the setting has a texture and richness that heightens climactic moments of the story. Neither straightforward biography nor folktale, this is an interesting combination of the two. While some younger listeners may have difficulty following the somewhat choppy nature of the narrative as years fly by between the major events, older children will appreciate both the flavor and intrigue. All in all, another fine effort from a talented author/illustrator. --Linda Greengrass, Bank Street College Library, NYC
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This book only gets three stars because there is little out there (beyond the spectacularly good Shaka, King of the Zulus) on African historical stories for children. The illustrations are "beautiful", if you're an adult interested in woodcut art. They are not very helpful to children trying to follow a story. The text is overly broad and vague. It tells the story in broad strokes, without the detail and imagery that interest children. Still, it is better than nothing and I'll definitely use it to tatters.

Great!

This book has some of the most beautiful illustrations I have ever seen and brings to life a culture not usually appreciated in the western world. Any child, whatever the color, would find the tale and life lessons of Sundiata moving and the art of Leo and Diane Dillon inspiring.

Oh my God, this is a beautiful book and the story was so well told. I have shared it with other homeschooling parents and they all loved it enough to purchase their own copies to add to their

personal home libraries. Beautiful!!

My sons favorite all time story

This is a unique and interesting book for children with lovely illustrations. It focuses Arab culture and history in an objective manner.

Great story to read with the kids.

I have a friend who will be moving to Ghana, so I bought him this book. It tells the tale of a legendary hero, told with beautiful paper cut out illustrations.

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