

Copper sun

by Sharon m. draper · Language: EN

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Overview

"Copper Sun" by Sharon M. Draper is a powerful and harrowing historical novel that chronicles the brutal journey of a young Ashanti girl named Amari, from her peaceful village in West Africa to the horrors of slavery in America. The story begins in 1758, depicting Amari's idyllic life in Ziawi, where she is preparing for marriage. Her world is shattered when her village is attacked by white slave traders and their African collaborators, resulting in the massacre of her family and her own capture. Amari is then forced onto a slave ship, enduring the unspeakable atrocities of the Middle Passage, a journey marked by disease, death, and dehumanization.

Upon arrival in Charles Town, South Carolina, Amari is sold at auction to Mr. Derby and taken to his sprawling plantation. There, she is subjected to the cruel whims of his sadistic son, Clay, and forced into a life of servitude. Amidst the despair, Amari forms an unlikely bond with Polly, a white indentured servant, and finds a surrogate family with Teenie, an older enslaved woman, and her young son, Tidbit. Together, they navigate the daily brutalities of plantation life, witnessing profound injustices and experiencing personal tragedies. The novel vividly portrays the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable suffering and the enduring quest for freedom.

The novel matters because it offers a visceral and unflinching portrayal of the transatlantic slave trade and plantation life through the eyes of a young protagonist. It highlights themes of survival, friendship, the loss of innocence, and the persistent hope for a better future. Draper masterfully crafts a narrative that educates readers about a dark period in history while emphasizing the strength and dignity of those who endured it. It serves as a stark reminder of the devastating impact of slavery and the importance of remembering historical injustices to foster empathy and understanding.

Key Takeaways

- The human spirit possesses an incredible capacity for resilience and hope even in the face of unimaginable suffering.
- True friendship and solidarity can emerge from the most unlikely circumstances, transcending race and social status.
- The pursuit of freedom, though fraught with peril, is a fundamental human drive that can inspire extraordinary courage.

- Understanding history, particularly the horrors of slavery, is crucial for fostering empathy and preventing future injustices.
- Even in the darkest times, small acts of kindness and connection can provide vital strength and a reason to continue.
- The loss of innocence is a profound consequence of trauma, but it does not diminish one's inherent worth or potential for growth.

Chapter Summaries

The Village of Ziawi

Amari, a fifteen-year-old Ashanti girl, lives a vibrant and peaceful life in her village in Africa, anticipating her marriage to Besa. Her world is violently shattered when slave traders, aided by rival African tribes, attack. Her family is brutally massacred, and Amari, along with other villagers, is captured. She is then forced on a grueling march to the coast, witnessing unimaginable brutality and the complete destruction of her former life and identity.

The Coffin Ship

Amari endures the horrifying and dehumanizing Middle Passage aboard a slave ship. Crammed into unsanitary and suffocating conditions below deck, she witnesses rampant disease, starvation, death, and unspeakable cruelty from the crew. She forms a fragile but vital bond with Afi, another captured girl, and together they struggle for survival, clinging to the smallest glimmers of hope amidst the overwhelming despair and trauma of the journey across the ocean.

Arrival and Auction

After months of unimaginable suffering at sea, Amari arrives in Charles Town, South Carolina, emaciated, sick, and deeply traumatized. She is subjected to a brutal process of being cleaned, oiled, and branded, stripped of her dignity. She is then paraded at a public slave auction and, to her horror, is purchased by Mr. Derby, a wealthy and cruel plantation owner, as a "gift" for his equally sadistic and entitled son, Clay.