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Review: A Long Walk to Water

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A Long Walk to Water

By Linda Sue Park

Clarion Books, 2009

DESCRIPTION:

This is a story of Africa and the terrible wars in 1985 that force Salva, an eleven year old boy, to flee his home when rebel soldiers attack his village. For many years Salva walks from place to place with other refugees seeking food, water, and safety. As he walks he is exposed to much hardship and cruelty from both man and nature. His friend is killed by a lion and his uncle by raiders, but Salva keeps walking and eventually leads 1,200 boys to Kenya where they are given shelter in a refugee camp. Miraculously, he is among 3,000 young men chosen to come to America where he is adopted by a family in Rochester, New York. This is also a story of Nya, a young Sudanese girl who must walk eight hours a day to retrieve water for her family. One day when Nya returns to her village with water she is surprised to see the men digging a well for water right in their own village. It is the work of Salva who has returned to the Sudan to help others obtain the water they need.

CRITIQUE:

This is a tremendously moving saga based on the true story of the Lost Boys of the Sudan who were casualties of the rebellion in the Sudan in the 1980's. Details of their suffering may be difficult for young people to hear, but it should be remembered that these boys were very young when they experienced these things. Their courage, endurance, and determination to survive are good examples for all to follow. The two stories of Salva and Nya run parallel through this book until they are expertly woven together in a very satisfying ending.

RELATED SUBJECTS:

Africa, Escapes, Ethiopia, Good vs. Evil, Kenya, Refugees, Sudan, Survival, War, Water

CHARACTER THEMES:

Compassion, Coping, Courage, Endurance, Leadership, Perseverance, Resilience, Survival

AWARDS:

100 Magnificent Children's Books, Booklist Top 10 Historical Fiction for Youth, NYPL 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing, Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, Smithsonian Magazine's Notable Books for Children Black-Eyed Susan Book Award, Flicker Tale Children's Book award, Garden State Teen Book Award, Golden Sower Award, Cybils Award, Great Lakes, Great Books Award (MI), Indian Paintbrush Book Award, Iowa Children's Choice Award, Kentucky Bluegrass Award, Lamplighter Award, Maine Student Book award, Nutmeg Children's Book Award, Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book award, Magnolia Award, Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award, Nene Award (HI), North Carolina Children's Book Award, Pennsylvania Young Readers' Choice Award, Sasquatch Reading Award (OK), South Carolina Junior Book Award Sunshine State Young Reader's Award (FL), Virginia Readers' Choice Award, Volunteer State Book Award (TN), Wisconsin Battle of the Books, Young Hoosier Book Award (OH), Jane Addams Children's Book Award,