

Children of Blood and Bone

Written by Tomi Adeyemi

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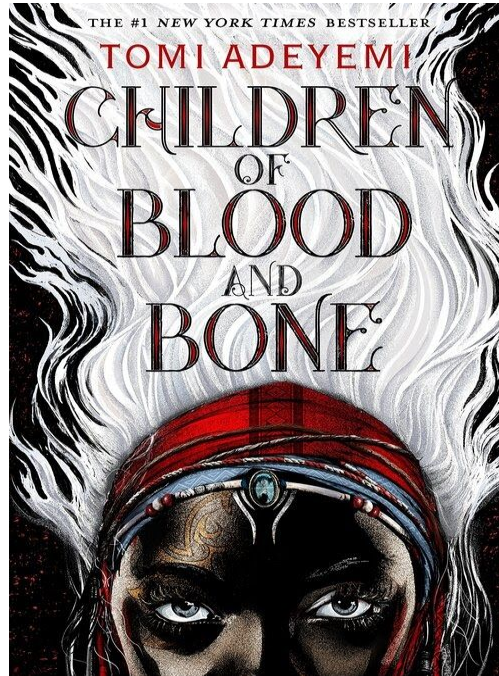
Book Talk by Saraah Dickens

About the Author



Tomi Adeyemi is a Nigerian-American New York Times Best-Selling and Hugo Award-winning author. Her debut novel, *Children of Blood and Bone* and its sequel, *Children of Virtue and Vengeance* have both been the #1 New York Times Best-Seller, with *Children of Blood and Bone* having spent over 2 years on the list. As soon as she learned to read, Adeyemi began to write. Her original goal was to publish a YA novel that would be made into a movie. Over time, her goal gained a purpose greater than fame or fortune, she wanted to write a YA novel that would make a difference in a young person's life. She hoped to write a book that would make readers fall in love with the story of someone who was different from them. Adeyemi graduated from Harvard University with an honors degree in English literature and went on to receive a fellowship to study West African, mythology, culture, and religion in Salvador, Brazil. Her studies in Brazil inspired her to begin writing *Children of Blood and Bone*.

Summary of *Children of Blood and Bone*



Children of Blood and Bone is set in the world of Orïsha, a land where magic once thrived and the maji who wielded it were the chosen of the gods. All that changed 11 years ago, when magic disappeared and the adult maji were hunted and killed in one brutal night called the Raid. Zélie Adebola is a òfin. With their white hair and dark skin, the òfins are the targets of hatred and prejudice throughout the land. Since the loss of magic, òfins can never ascend to become maji and instead are forced to pay for their freedom or become slaves. When magical artifacts start reappearing across Orïsha, Zélie teams up with a rebel princess and is thrust into the role of reluctant savior in a race to reignite magic before it disappears from the world forever.

Quotes

“Those in power began to abuse their magic, and as punishment, the gods stripped them of their gifts. When the magic leached from their blood, their white hair disappeared as a sign of their sin. Over generations, love of the maji turned into fear. Fear turned into hate. Hate transformed into violence, a desire to wipe the maji away.” (pg. 15)

This quote from Mama Agba sets up the power structure of the world of Orisha. The ruling class, having lost their own divine powers, fears the power the maji wield. Their fear leads to the destruction of magic and the massacre of the maji. The remaining children of the maji, the *dîviners* struggle to survive in a world that hates them. Aside from being a key plot point, this quote also connects to real world prejudice and hatred of that which is different. The *dîviners* are abused and killed by the authorities of Orisha with impunity. This can be seen in contemporary times in the mistreatment and police killings of Black Americans. An important aspect of Zélie's character is her rage at the injustice done to her people. Her desires to save her people echo the aims of the current Black Lives Matter movement to end police brutality.

“Duty before self. No matter the cost or collateral. Even if it’s a betrayal of everything I know, my duty to protect Orisha comes first.” (pg. 186)

This quote from Inan, the Crown Prince and Captain of the Guard, is repeated by him often throughout the novel. It is a phrase that has been metaphorically branded into him by his ruthless father, King Saran. Though Inan doesn't want to be a part of the endless bloodshed that his father demands, he feels that above all else his duty is to his people and securing the lasting peace and safety of Orisha. His father has brainwashed him into believing that the only way to protect the world is to destroy all magic and its practitioners. Adeyemi uses Inan's repeated creed to show how blind obedience can lead to the perpetuation of violence. Inan goes against his own morals to try to please his father and achieve the purpose he has been taught is good and just. He sets aside his own thoughts and feelings, never daring to think critically beyond what his father has ingrained in him. Adeyemi's characterization of Inan shines a spotlight on the kind of tragedy and violence that can be the result of achieving a goal through any means necessary.

“Though no food fills my stomach, it churns with the truth. All those years sitting silent at the table. Sipping tea while people died.” (pg. 198)

This quote from Amari, the Princess, shows the development of her character as she learns about the cruelty of the world and the mistreatment of the *dîviners*. Amari always knew that King Saran was brutal and merciless, but she has no idea of the full range and scope of his evil. Though she herself has suffered at the hands of King Saran, Amari never imagined the violence taking place outside her sheltered palace upbringing. As she travels throughout Orisha, Amari begins to see the world as it really is. She sees the way her father has shaped society into an unjust horror and she feels incredible guilt at never having done anything to try to stop it. When she witnesses the many abuses perpetrated against the *dîviners*, she realizes that she can no longer stand by and do nothing. Adeyemi uses Amari's growth to illustrate how even so-called ordinary people need to step up and be a part of the solution. Amari knows better now, so she must strive to do better.

Resources

Children of Blood and Bone fits into the *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story* chapters six, seven, and eight. It resonates most with Chapter Eight: Books on Allegory, Fantasy, Myth, and Parable because it is a fantasy novel with the strong possibility of reading for allegorical interpretation. The fantasy elements of the different classes in Orisha tie in very powerfully with real world struggles of class and race. *Children of Blood and Bone* also deals a lot with the topics of Chapter Six: Books about Identity, Discrimination, and Struggles with Decisions and Chapter Seven: Books about Courage and Survival, both of which are encompassed by the fantasy setting. Zélie and Amari both struggle with their place in the Orishan society despite being on opposite sides of the spectrum with Amari being Princess of the realm and Zélie being a member of the lower almost untouchable class of *dîviners*. Zélie faces terrible discrimination as a visible member of the magical lower class and Amari learns about her family's place in perpetuating the discrimination against the *dîviners*. They both must make brave choices while fighting to survive in their fight to return magic and justice to their world.

Text Complexity

Qualitative:

Lexile Range: HL670L (Age Range:14-17)

ATOS Level: 4.8 (Interest Level:Upper Grades 9-12)

Quantitative:

Children of Blood and Bone uses rich language and concepts inspired by West African mythology to tell a story that is exciting and mysterious. The plot includes flashbacks and shifts between the perspectives of the three main characters, Zélie, Amari, and Inan. Adeyemi trusts her readers to be able to follow along and dives right into the action. She doesn't spend a great deal of time on exposition in the beginning, instead allowing readers to absorb the new words and concepts she introduces through their own inference. Adeyemi adds explanation throughout the story when it comes up naturally in the narrative, granting readers the time and pacing to fully develop their understanding of the world of Orisha.

Exeter Quality 1: *Children of Blood and Bone* uses "[i]maginative and well-structured plots going beyond simple chronologies to include time shifts in differing perspectives."

Exeter Quality 2: *Children of Blood and Bone* is written with “[e]xciting plots that include secrecy, surprise, intention brought about through narrative hooks and a fast pace.”

Exeter Quality 5: *Children of Blood and Bone* employs “[l]ively, varied, and imaginative language that is grammatically correct while being neither patronizing and simplistic nor unnecessarily confusing through lexical density or complexity.”

Exeter Quality 8: *Children of Blood and Bone* applies [v]aried levels of sophistication that will lead to the continual development of reading skills.

Archetypes:

Seeker: Zélie and Amari are both archetypal Seekers, they both leave the comfort and safety of their homes to make their hero’s journey to restore magic and justice to Orisha.

Warrior/ Hero: Zélie is the archetypal warrior hero. She must gather all her courage and strength to stand up and fight the injustice in her world. She has the capacity for rage and must make the right choices to continue on the path of good to overcome the villains in the novel.

Magician: Zélie and all the other diviners and maji are archetypal Magicians. They work magic without Adeyemi ever explaining exactly how it works. The internal consistency of the novel carries the concept of magic adeptly.