

Book Questions

What is *The Little Regent* about?

Blurb:

A little girl is tasked with ruling her West African village in this empowering story about breaking from tradition and leading with your heart.

Short Description:

The Little Regent tells the story of a little girl, Abioye who is installed as the regent, which is a temporary ruler, of her village after the death of her father, the king. The chiefs are skeptical of Abioye because of her age, and Abioye herself is initially overwhelmed by the responsibility. But encouraged by her mother and her late father's words, Abioye engages with the citizens of the village and discovers ways that she can make a difference. The village flourishes, and when the time comes to elect a new king, the villagers refuse any of the candidates put forth by the chiefs, insisting that Abioye becomes the first female king of the village.

Longer Description:

After the king of a West African village dies, his eight-year-old daughter Abioye is made the temporary ruler, or regent, until a new king is chosen. The chiefs scoff at this decision—a little girl can't be regent! Even Abioye herself doubts whether she's up to the task. But her late father's words of wisdom comfort and guide her: Those who will rule must first learn to serve.

The next day, amid meetings about taxes and titles, Abioye keeps her eyes and ears open for ways to serve her people. When she hears about their dried-up well, their leaky boats, and their hungry children, she decides to devote herself to helping the villagers instead of attending stuffy meetings with the chiefs. With her ideas and support, the village flourishes. But as the villagers praise her leadership, the chiefs complain that she is abandoning her duties, and announce that it's time for a new king. When the time comes for the villagers to vote for their new ruler, they reject all the other candidates and crown Abioye instead, making her the first female King the village has ever had!

Author Yewande Daniel-Ayoade draws on Yoruba traditions and culture to craft a highly original, uplifting feminist fable. Abioye's journey will inspire readers, regardless of age or gender, to discover their inner strength, wisdom, and capacity to lead.

What is the theme of this story?

The Little Regent explores several themes. The primary theme is servant leadership and what it means to be a good leader. But it also explores gender equity and encourages kids of all genders that they can make a difference.

What was the inspiration for your story?

This story was initially inspired by my children's love for Disney Princesses. I saw how much they loved shows featuring princesses, and I wanted to write them a story about an African princess, as a way to share my culture with them.

This story idea also came to me during election season, so I decided to make the theme of the story about what it means to be a good leader.

And finally, the key line in the book: those who will rule must first learn to serve, was inspired by a Bible verse in Matthew: "whoever would be great among you must be your servant".

What would you like kids to take away from this story?

That kids of all ages and genders can make a difference. And that good leaders don't lord it over others, but demonstrate empathy and a servant heart.

What makes your book unique?

- It offers a kid-friendly exploration of the concept of servant leadership.
- It teaches kids that they can make a difference.
- It encourages discussion about gender equity.
- It is a great way to introduce kids to West African culture.
- Ken Daley's vibrant, colorful illustrations will have kids returning over and over.

Author Questions

At what point did you decide to be an author and what was your path to publication?

I started writing as a child growing up in Nigeria. When I was about eight I wrote a collection of stories that my father got his secretary to type up and he put in a binder for me. This was my first "book". In my early twenties, I wrote a full-length novel. I subbed it for a while, and even though I didn't get representation, I got some encouraging feedback from editors. And then after I had my children and started reading to them, I developed a love for picture books and pivoted to writing for children.

My first four books were self-published and modestly successful, but I never let go of my dream to become a trade-published author, and eventually I was able to sell *The Little Regent* and two more books to Owlkids Books.

Describe your writing process. Do you outline, plot and plan, or is your writing more organic?

I am a little haphazard in my approach to writing. Whenever I get a story idea, I create a file for it that I name 'Scribbles'. I dump all my thoughts in that file without a filter, just whatever comes to mind. And then over a period of months, I refine the idea, create a story plan, and eventually write a first draft. However, I am typically working on multiple stories at a time. At the moment, I have ten works in progress.

What have you found to be most challenging about writing picture books?

I think it's having to convey a complete story idea in a few words. When you write picture books, every word must count. I am an obsessive editor. I will edit a story until my publisher figuratively snatches it out of my hand, and then I'll edit some more. With *The Little Regent*, I was still sending my editor comments after the illustration was done :).

Do you have any odd (writing) habits?

I tend to get completely lost in the story when I write so I struggle to fit writing into daily life. I have done my best writing when I go away to a hotel for a few days, and I typically do this once or twice a year.

Share some advice for aspiring authors. What advice would you give to your younger self?

Be patient. Publishing can be very slow but give it time and don't be discouraged by how long it takes to get a book contract. Also surround yourself with cheerleaders and people that can help you develop in your craft. Never stop learning.

What do you like to do when you're not writing?

I am very much a homebody, so my hobbies revolve around my home. I love to bake and cook, play piano; I enjoy movie nights and board game nights with my family, I read of course, and I love to sing.

Is there anything interesting about you that most people don't know?

I have mirror-touch synesthesia. It's a condition where you can feel other people's pain. It also means I experience a sensation in the same part of my body when somebody else is touched. My nose is particularly sensitive so sometimes my kids will touch their noses in front of me just for fun because I will feel as if my nose is being touched.