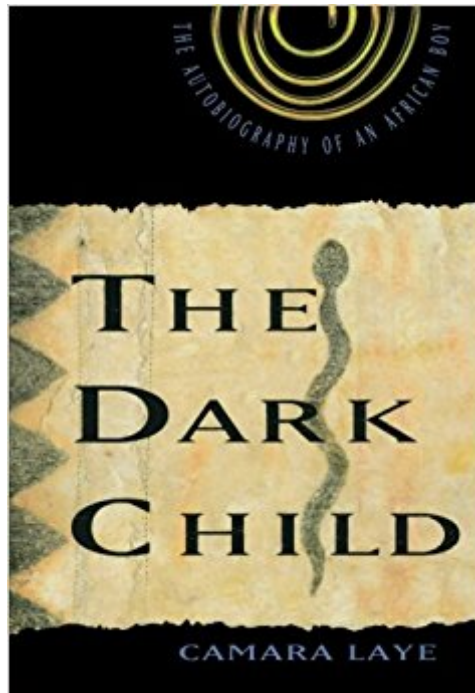




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The Dark Child: The Autobiography Of An African Boy



Synopsis

The Dark Child is a distinct and graceful memoir of Camara Laye's youth in the village of Koroussa, French Guinea. Long regarded Africa's preeminent Francophone novelist, Laye (1928-80) herein marvels over his mother's supernatural powers, his father's distinction as the village goldsmith, and his own passage into manhood, which is marked by animistic beliefs and bloody rituals of primeval origin. Eventually, he must choose between this unique place and the academic success that lures him to distant cities. More than autobiography of one boy, this is the universal story of sacred traditions struggling against the encroachment of a modern world. A passionate and deeply affecting record, The Dark Child is a classic of African literature.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“The Dark Child has the force of nostalgia, which spurred Laye to write it to relieve his exile at a time when he was far from his people.”
—From the Introduction by Philippe Thoby-Marcellin

This book is a distinct and graceful memoir of Camara Laye's youth in the village of Koroussa, French Guinea, a place steeped in mystery. Laye marvels over this mother's supernatural powers, his father's distinction as the village goldsmith, and his own passage into manhood, which is marked by animistic beliefs and bloody rituals of primeval origin.

I just love this book! I read it in High School as a Literature test book. I decided to take my time and

go through the book now as an adult. It came on time also,

Fabulous read...one of my top five of all time...great for all mother's of sons to read...and everybody else, too.

Very nice book and easy to read.

Great read.

I just love this book! I read it in High School as a Literature test book. I decided to take my time and go through the book now as an adult. It came on time also,

Great book must read.

From what I remember I liked this book. There was not much action in the book but I still liked it.

Not much happens in this gentle, sentimental little book, but it's a pleasant read all the same. There seems to be some disagreement about whether *The Dark Child* is a memoir or an autobiographical novel; my library shelves it as nonfiction, though given the abundant dialogue, the author clearly took some creative license. Either way, it's a nicely-written coming-of-age story of a boy from in a traditional village in Guinea in the 1930s and 40s. There are no atrocities, no violence (except from bullies at school), no political themes: you would not know from Laye's writing that Guinea was under French rule at the time, gaining its independence only after this book's publication in the 1950s. Other characters drift in and out of the story, but more than anything it's the story of the author's relationship with his own culture. In the first chapter, his mother introduces him to a snake that visits his father in his workshop - "the guiding spirit of our race," the parents explain. No one sees any conflict between their superstitions, and his mother's mysterious powers, and their Muslim beliefs. Later chapters are spent on harvest and coming-of-age rituals. Only toward the end does Laye leave the village to study. It's a nostalgic story, developing at a graceful, measured pace, with perhaps a bit of stereotyping for the benefit of foreign readers, though at the time apparently any portrayal of life in Africa as calm and cheerful was groundbreaking. For that matter, it's hardly common now. At any rate, I'm not falling over myself to recommend this, but I enjoyed it and consider it worth reading. A solid 3.5 stars.

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