

Title: *The Door of No Return*

Authors: Kwame Alexander

Genre: Historical Fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Caroline Q., 9th Grade

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Young Kofi lives a rich, colorful life in his hometown of Upper Kwanta. This young, energetic, and at times wise-past-his-years boy always has several things on his mind. His village's ritual that serves as an initiation of manhood, one which he may be subjected to soon. The odd schoolmaster Mr. Goodluck Phillip, who sternly admonishes Kofi for speaking his native Twi instead of the Queen's English. The lovely girl Ama, who gives him herbs for his cuts and laughs at his jokes and just might like him back. The river near his village, where he devises new strategies to beat a rival in a race with his best friend Ebo and has to be dragged out of at night for dinner -and safety- by his big brother Kwasi.

Kwasi is a great big brother; and fighter. When Kwasi accidentally kills a man from Lower Kwanta in a wrestling match, everything changes. Lower Kwanta's need for revenge against Kwasi; and appetite for European riches, sets off a horrific sequence of events, beginning with the kidnapping of Kwasi and Kofi, and ending with Kofi being sold into the slave trade. Without Kwasi.

Alone and terrified, Kofi perseveres through the most brutal circumstances that the slave trade puts him through, ending up on a slave ship to a European country. However, his kind and generous spirit, along with resilience and stories of happier times, make him many friends along the way, though none of them stay with him for long.

Aboard the slave ship, the minutes drag by and the days slip away, along with Kofi's hope for the future. One day, a storm gathers in the sky. In what some would consider a tragic ending; and others a miraculous one, Kofi's bravery leads him and a newfound friend through the door of no return.

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested?

Yes, the plot of the book *The Door of No Return* kept me interested. It moved along at the perfect speed, creating various feelings of nostalgia, fear, or anxiety for the reader.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of this book was just right for me. I found that the way each event was described and lingered on enhanced the story. One example of this is Kwame Alexander spending a long time talking about Kofi's initial imprisonment, showing Kofi's apprehension and uncertainty about the situation.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

I think this book is appropriate for grade levels seven and above. There are themes in the book that require maturity to read about and understand, such as slavery, death, and assault.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book, naturally, to any fan of historical fiction. *The Door of No Return* is a shining example of historical fiction, educating you about the time period and events that took place through the fascinating story of one person. I would also recommend this book to anyone who likes or wants to get into poetry. This book is written with poetic prose. It's easy to understand and read, but also impactful in a way

that's hard to achieve with the standard sentence structure, like the one used in this review. The poetry told the story beautifully and flowed.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

Kwame Alexander does use some words from the language of Kofi's home in his writing. For me, this does nothing but enhance the story, making it feel richer. Based on the circumstances in which the words in the foreign language are used, you can infer the meaning of most phrases without a problem. However, there is also a glossary at the end of the book.

5 stars: I'm really glad I read this book; it was awesome!

The story alone of *The Door of No Return* captivated me, but the way Kwame Alexander uses poetic prose and masterful plot devices really made this book a home run. I felt whatever Kofi was feeling. The ending especially stuck with and moved me.