

Africa is My Home: A Child of the Amistad

AUTHOR: Monica Edinger
PUBLISHER: Candlewick Press
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GENRE: Historical Fiction
LEXILE: 890L **AR:** 5.3

SUMMARY:

This book is a fictional account of Sarah Margru Kinson, African child aboard the *Amistad*. The story covers her being taken from her home in Africa, her sale into slavery, and the trial that ensues after the ship she was on, the *Amistad*, was overtaken by the captive Africans. The book then describes her life after that famous trial.

BOOKTALK:

What do you know about slavery? You have probably learned how in the 1700s and 1800s Africans were taken from their homes in Africa, how they were chained and crammed into the cargo holds of ships and spent weeks in dark, filthy, and depressing conditions crossing the Atlantic Ocean. You may have even learned about the term “Triangular Trade” and how that system perpetuated the slave trade.

Thinking of all that you know about slavery, did you also realize that *children* were brought to the Caribbean and American colonies to be sold into slavery? Children *your age* were taken from their families and homes, taken from everything they were familiar with, crammed onto slave ships and sold to the highest bidder! Can you imagine that?

Africa is My Home is the fictional story of one of those children - Sarah Margru Kinson, 9-years old. She has many adventures throughout her life that are discussed in this book, beginning with her first trip across the Atlantic - from Africa to the Americas.

AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:

Author’s Name: Monica Edinger

Author’s Website:

Educating Alice
<http://medinger.wordpress.com/>
Monica Edinger’s official blog.

Monica Edinger
<http://www.teenreads.com/authors/monica-edinger>
Short biography from TeenReads.com.

Other books written by the author:

Africa is My Home : A Child of the Amistad is Edinger's first book for children. Her books for educators include:

- *Using Beloved Classics to Deepen Reading Comprehension*
- *Seeking History: Teaching with Primary Sources in Grades 4-6*
- *Far Away and Long Ago: Young Historians in the Classroom*

CHALLENGING WORDS

listless (p. 2): *adjective* lacking energy or spirit.

pawn (p. 4): *noun* one that can be used to further the purposes of another.

captives (p. 4): *noun* one that is captured and kept in a cage, prison, etc.

calabashes (p. 5): *noun* a utensil (as a bottle or dipper) made from the shell of a calabash.

wharf (p. 12): *noun* a flat structure that is built along the shore of a river, ocean, etc., so that ships can load and unload cargo or passengers.

encumbered (p. 12): *verb* to impede or hamper the function or activity of

vexed (p. 13): *adjective* annoyed or worried.

deceived (p. 17): *verb* to make someone believe something that is not true.

mutiny (p. 18): *noun* a situation in which a group of people (such as sailors or soldiers) refuse to obey orders and try to take control away from the person who commands them.

wary (p. 26): *adjective* not having or showing complete trust in someone or something that could be dangerous or cause trouble.

novelty (p. 30): *noun* the quality or state of being new, different, and interesting.

prosecuted (32): *verb* to hold a trial against a person who is accused of a crime to see if that person is guilty.

endeavor (p. 35): *verb* to seriously or continually try to do something.

content (p. 39): *adjective* pleased and satisfied : not needing more.

vehemently (p. 43): *adjective* showing strong and often angry feelings : very emotional.

auspicious (p. 44): *adjective* showing or suggesting that future success is likely.

(*Definitions from [http://www.merriam-webster.com/.](http://www.merriam-webster.com/))

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What events lead to Margru being taken by the slave traders?
2. Magulu, Margru, and Sarah Kinson are all names for our main character. How did she come to have each name?
3. Describe what happened to the *Amistad* after the African captives took control.
4. On the ship, what was the magical object that was like water and the “sheets of paper all stuck together, with marks on them”?
5. How did Margru feel about attending Oberlin College? Why did she feel that way?
6. What did Margru become when she got older?

ACTIVITIES with COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Language Arts:

- Using several sources, read more about Sarah Margru Kinson and write a report about some aspect of her life.

5.RN.4.2 Combine information from several texts or digital sources on the same topic in order to demonstrate knowledge about the subject.

5.W.5 Conduct short research assignments and tasks on a topic.

- Look at the 10 instructions for Reading on page 35. Translate each instruction into today’s way of speaking.

5.RV.2.1 Select and apply context clues (e.g., word, phrase, sentence, and paragraph clues) and text features to determine the meanings of unknown words.

LIFE SKILLS:

Courage
Perseverance
Kindness
Forgiveness

RELATED INTERNET SITES:

Teaching With Documents: The *Amistad* Case

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/amistad/>

A host of primary sources from the National Archives.

Education World: The *Amistad* Comes to Life

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson043.shtml

Cross-curriculum activities that “bring the *Amistad* story to life.”

ACTIVITY SHEET CREATED BY:

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