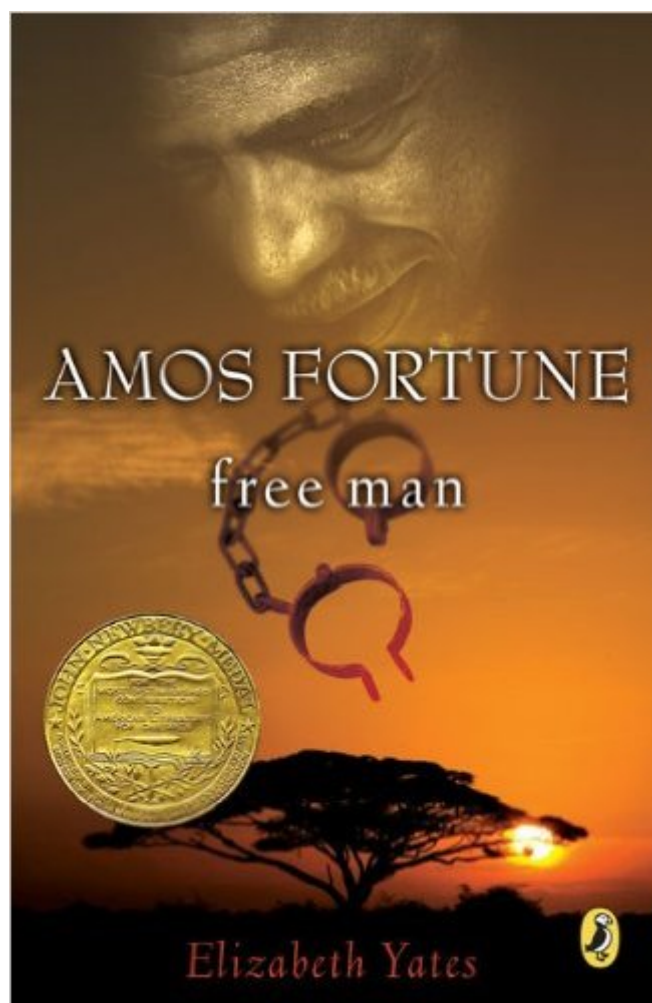


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Amos Fortune, Free Man (Newbery Library, Puffin)



Synopsis

A Newbery Medal Winner When Amos Fortune was only fifteen years old, he was captured by slave traders and brought to Massachusetts, where he was sold at auction. Although his freedom had been taken, Amos never lost his dignity and courage. For 45 years, Amos worked as a slave and dreamed of freedom. And, at age 60, he finally began to see those dreams come true. "The moving story of a life dedicated to the fight for freedom." —Booklist

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1090L (What's this?)

Series: Newbery Library, Puffin

Paperback: 192 pages

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Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.5 x 7.7 inches

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Cultures > Multicultural Stories > African-American

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Amos Fortune, Free Man" succeeds on many levels. It is an accurate piece of historical fiction, dramatizing the events and people that filled the early days of colonial America. It is compassionate in its approach to the irony and hypocrisy of the times. It is a fitting tribute to all slaves who endured unspeakable hardships from slave to free man. The author begins the story with Amos's life, as Prince At-mun, in the wilds of Africa. The subjugation into slavery and the trip along the Middle Passage is told with accuracy and strength. As an African-American, I was moved by the enduring qualities exhibited by this man, his unwavering desire to be free, his longing to help others, and his pride in himself. All the characters in the book are representative of the citizens of the day. The book

is noticeably free of the vilest of the slave owners, but the thought of forced servitude by one man on the other is horrible enough. Descriptive writing of the setting makes the reader feel that he or she is in the hold of the great slave ship, is walking along the busy port cities of New England, and is enjoying the majestic beauty of New Hampshire's mountains. Amos Fortune never really resigns himself to the fact that he is a slave. This constant vigilance for self-rule is the abiding theme throughout. A strong sense of independence is presented in the man's words and deeds. The novel provides the reader with a realistic view of how things really were. By also including the language used in documents of the period, the author contrasts the brevity of modern tongue with the wordiness of colonial times. This enhances the authenticity of the text. The book is a triumph of man over adversity. It is a worthwhile addition to any child's literary background.

This 1951 Newbery winner is a biography, so there is no need to critique the plot or character development. The book reads easily, being the reconstructed life of a proud African youth who was captured at the age of 15 in 1725--reminding us of Haley's Kunta Kinte. Amos never forgot that he was the first son of chief, nor that he must protect and inspire his crippled younger sister (who would assume the role of leader of her village). Indeed, for years he haunted the New England docks seeking her; all his life he exhibited a tenderness and compassion for crippled women and children. Despite the horrors of captivity, the cramped voyage in chains, and being considered the legal property of different masters, Amos never lost his dream of directing his own destiny or his sense of personal dignity. The ten chapters are chronological, thus of varying length, depending on the amount of material during a specific period of his life. The author skillfully recreates Colonial and then American cultures, drawing the reader into the heart and mind of this noble African, who lived to be 80. He truly was fortunate not to have been unloaded and auctioned off in the South, where he would have suffered excruciatingly in the plantation fields. His goal was to live as a free man; then to help other blacks enjoy the same privilege, even if only to die in freedom. He accomplished his private purposes several times, but at great personal cost. Amos set an example of honesty and Christian responsibility, leaving a legacy of peace and a foundation of interracial cooperation. He did what he could to improve the life for all people in his New Hampshire community. Recommended for elementary and middle school students of Black and Colonial history.

Amos Fortune, named At-mun at first, is prince of the At-mun-shi people in Africa. Right before the time of the planting of corn, At-mun and others in his tribe are captured and taken to America as slaves. Amos, now living in Massachusetts, learns to live among white men and eventually gains his

freedom. While in Massachusetts, Amos looks at the port for his little sister, Ath-mun. She was left behind in Africa when Amos was taken, but Amos searched to see if she had been brought to America since then, and maybe would come off of a ship at the port some time. Because of Amos' wanting Ath-mun to be cared for, he dedicated himself to helpless people. He helped many people in his lifetime. Amos' last name, Fortune, was given to him by other slaves who saw how fortunate he was. Both of his masters were good to him. He was taught a good trade as a tanner and became very good at it. He was able to earn freedom for himself and his family. This story is very good, but it isn't as adventurous as I like books to be. I don't think it really hooked me as much as I wish it would have. I think a lot of people will really like this book; it just isn't MY idea of a great book.

I brought this book for my 9 year old who is quite good at reading. I wanted her to learn some history of the slaving times from a different perspective. Amos Fortune is a true story and shows the indomitable Christian spirit of this man, and the people who assist him in his life. I read it before I gave it to my daughter and couldn't put it down. It's a fairly short chapter oriented book, a two hour read for most adults. Contains some hard words and some historical events that may need to be explained (but are not overwhelming or offensive) to younger kids.

I've used Amos Fortune Free Man as a powerful tool in building vocabulary and dictionary usage skills for my fifth graders. It is not an easy read, but does open young eyes to the way of life in colonial America. The book develops the character as they read, and I point that out to my students. Advanced readers told me that they thought it was boring at first but got better as they read. The concept that fiction and historical fiction books often develop in that way came through clearer by having them read the book than by my merely telling them. They learned not to give up on a book after reading just a few pages. I highly recommend it for gifted readers.

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