



Ajeemah and His Son by James Berry

Subjects: Slavery—Jamaica— Juvenile Fiction; Fathers and sons— Juvenile Fiction

Awards: Best Books for Young Adults, Boston Globe–Horn Book Award, Horn Book Fanfare

Book Lists: Latin America

Props: Gold coin in shoe

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In 1662, England captured the Caribbean island called Jamaica. For the next 150 years, Jamaica flourished as an agricultural British colony. And by cultivating the sugar cane and coffee bean, plantation owners became very wealthy. But many workers were needed to run a plantation. So during those 150 years, one million human beings (men, women and children) were ripped from their homes in Africa, forcefully brought to Jamaica, and sold into slavery. Ajeemah and his eighteen-year-old son, Atu, were two of those human beings who were captured and sold into slavery in Jamaica. This is how it began.

The day had begun wonderfully. Atu was to be married soon and he and his father, Ajeemah, were walking together down the village road. They were in a happy mood as they were going to deliver a gift of gold (*Show coin*) cleverly concealed in the heels of Ajeemah's sandals to the parents of Atu's soon to be wife. Atu thought of his wife to be, smooth-skinned, bright-eyed Sisi. She was a good singer and dancer. Atu spoke to his father of his nervousness and excitement regarding the upcoming marriage. But then as they came around the corner of the footpath, between high bushy banks

on each side of the track, they were ambushed. In total surprise, Ajeemah and Atu were knocked to the ground, overpowered by a gang of six Africans with two guns, two dogs, and knives and sticks. Their hands, feet and mouths were tightly bound. Then a bag—a dirty, sickly stinking hood—was crammed over their heads and faces.

The kidnapers commanded, "Get moving!" But eaten up with rage, Ajeemah and Atu stood their ground. Blows from a stick rained down on their backs with cutting pain. But they would not move. Then one kidnapper signaled for the dogs. Growling with menace the dogs leapt up and gripped the captives as if ready to butcher them, Ajeemah and Atu gave in. They obeyed and found themselves walking.

But to where? For how long? Follow Ajeemah and Atu as they are shipped far from their home and sold into slavery in Jamaica. Can they survive the humiliation, degradation and inhumanity of their new lives? Will they ever return to Africa, to their families, to Atu's bride-to-be? (*Hold up book*) *Ajeemah and His Son* by James Berry.