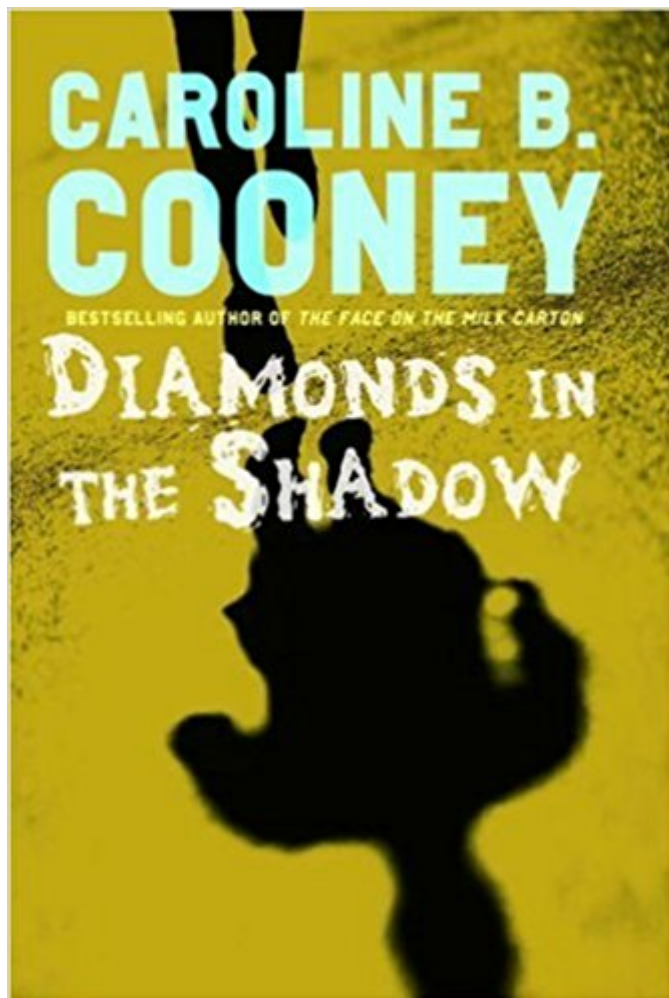




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Diamonds In The Shadow



Synopsis

A powerful novel about the difficulty of doing what is right. Through their love for people, yet ignorance of the unknown, the Finch Family has joined alongside their church and opened their home to an African refugee family who are moving to Connecticut. The Amabo family of four—Andre, Celestine, Mattu, and Alake: father, mother, and teenage son and daughter—arrive in great hope as they have escaped the tyranny of Africa. What the Finch Family doesn't know is that there are not just four refugees in this Amabo family, but five. As the Amabo family, who have suffered unimaginable horrors, begin to adjust to a life of plenty in the Finches' suburban Connecticut home, and the Finches are learning new lessons of "The Golden Rule." The life adjustment for all seems flawless. But the fifth refugee does not believe in good will. This lawless rebel has managed to enter America undetected. And the Amabo family has something of his--something that they agreed to carry into the country for him. When Jared, the oldest Finch son, realizes that the good guys are not always innocent, he must make a decision that could change the fates of both the Finches and the Amabos. In this uncommonly penetrating story, Caroline B. Cooney presents a fresh perspective on how doing what is right can be most difficult.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 6 Up

When the Finches take in a church-sponsored refugee family from war-torn Sierra Leone, teenage Jared is annoyed that he has to share his room with Mattu, who is his age. Sixth-grader Mopsy, however, is thrilled to embrace Alake and wants to turn her into a "best" friend. Alake doesn't talk, barely eats, and is plagued by nightmares. Meanwhile, Kara Finch takes the Amabo parents under her wing, teaching them about conveniences such as microwaves. The family brings no luggage except for two boxes of cremated remains. Through snooping, Jared and Mopsy find uncut diamonds in the ashes. Unlike their parents, they realize that something is amiss in this family. The Amabos do not talk, or touch, or seem to care about each other. Cooney brilliantly contrasts the horror of Africa's civil wars with the overwhelming abundance and naivety of American suburban life. Jared's narcissism, selfishness, and racism disintegrate when he confronts true evil. How families mysteriously bond and care for one another is examined under the dramatic circumstances of two disparate groups trying to make things work. When Jared learns that Mattu never heard of the Holocaust, he is astonished. But, Mattu tells him, "We have those in Africa. I have been in one." Indeed, more than 60 years later, we are learning about ever-new Holocausts.

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Cooney's Connecticut church has sponsored war refugee families, and her stirring teen novel neither sensationalizes nor minimizes the brutality of their experiences. Her story unfolds through the alternating narratives of the American teens in a host family and African refugee teens, who can't forget what happened even as they adjust to their new surroundings and try to convince themselves they will eventually find a safe home. While Jared is angry that he has to share his room with Mattu and introduce the refugee at school, his younger sister tries to help Alake, who is mute and still. What horrors did Alake witness? Even in America, there's fear to be dealt with: a killer wants the uncut diamonds he forced Mattu and Alake to smuggle out for him. The climax is too neat, but tension mounts in a novel that combines thrilling suspense and a story about innocence lost.

Rochman, Hazel --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

I read this book with my middle school students and the LOVE it! Caroline Cooney got it right again. She is so good at writing stories that are true to life and could be true but are still intriguing. This one has you on the edge of your seat till the very end. I always have students read about Blood Diamonds prior to reading the story to help the understand the characters behavior better. It opens

their eyes a bit to what good lives they actually have and to become more aware of situations in other countries. I doubt that my students will ever downplay the slaughter and call them Conflict Diamonds after reading this.

I had figured out what was happening well before it happened and it frustrated me because of the choices that the characters were making.

My 13 year old son enjoyed this book.

Could have been a good book, but I was not a fan of the author and the way she wrote it.

"Great book!" My 11 yr old said

Its one of those books you cannot put down. You have to keep reading it to find out what is going to happen. I actually brought it for my nephew's reading assignment but read it myself.

Product as described and delivered in a timely fashion at a great price

It started slow but picked up quickly. Great ending. Good for anyone who wants to educate their child on worldly issues that affect the US.

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