

Additional Study Guide for COPPER SUN

BOOK: *Copper Sun*

AUTHOR: Sharon M. Draper

FOCUS: Celebration to devastation

OBJECTIVES: Students should be able to:

- participate in a meaningful book discussion:
 - predicting
 - listening
 - discussing
 - interpreting
 - challenging
- compare and contrast
- sequence events

MATERIALS: writing and drawing paper/construction paper/butcher paper/colored pencils/ pens/markers/scissors/glue/items for decorating journals/paint and paintbrushes/items for making drums/items for making a model of a village

OPENING ACTIVITY: Read the author's note. Then have students tell what their greatest treasure is and why.

Read the excerpt from the poem "Heritage" by Countee Cullen. Then have each student write a poem entitled "Heritage" that represents the students' own heritage.

Note: Have the book *The Middle Passage* by Tom Feelings available for students to use as a resource.

MAIN ACTIVITY: Book discussion, *Copper Sun*, chapters 1-11, pages 1-63

Group students in pairs and have each pair of students read the page just before part one and chapters 1-3, pages 1-20.

Recommendations for discussion:

- On the page just before part one, the author tells about a slave sale and how it must feel to be fifteen years old and standing on the auction block. Describe the feelings and fears of Amari. Make predictions about Amari and what will happen in the rest of the story.
- What does the term betrothed mean? Express your views about two people being betrothed to each other.
- How does the culture in the village of Ziavi differ from the culture in your community regarding marriage?
- Why do you think girls were forbidden to weave fabrics on the loom? What chores do you know of today, if any, that girls are forbidden to do? How do you feel about this?
- What does your family do to welcome guests to your home?
- Compare and contrast your community to the village of Ziavi.
- Recall the way Besa greeted Amari. How do young men greet young ladies in your community?
- How do residents in your community warn one another about strangers in the community?
- Besa is very skilled in drum playing. What do you think Besa meant when he said that drums are not just noise—they are a language?
- How do you think they determined which names represented their tribes?
- Describe the social, family, and cultural structures of the village of Ziavi. How did the custom of graciousness to guests become a death sentence for the village of Ziavi?
- Explain why the Ashanti helped the European killers.
- How do you think Amari feels to have seen all her family die?
- How did Amari appear to have given up hope when she was captured?
- Comment on what the strangers did to the people in Amari's village.
- What are the fire sticks that Amari referred to?
- How do you think the young men in the village feel, now that they are in a helpless situation?
- Amari said that Besa's face had become a mask. What did she mean and what was he hiding?

- How do the rhythms of the drum introduced in chapter one differ from the walking rhythms of the captives?
- Do you agree with Amari's statement that as long as we have life, we have hope? Why? If you were in this situation what would you hope for?
- What does the statement, you are as strong as your weakest link, mean? How was Tirza the group's weakest link? How did her absence strengthen the group?

Divide students into three groups. Have each group read and summarize the chapters as outlined below. Encourage groups to be creative with their summary presentations using skits, illustrations, commercials, reports, raps, etc.

Group one – chapters 4 and 5, pages 21-35

Group two – chapters 6-8, pages 36-49

Group three – chapters 9-11, pages 50-63

Recommendations for discussion:

- Express what Amari might have been thinking as she and the others were forced to walk across the countryside.
- How was the city that the captives arrived at different from Amari's village? Why do you think the Black people in the city were not captured?
- Discuss how tribes spoke in different dialects. Identify some of the groups and dialects throughout the world today.
- Why is it said that music is the universal language? What kind of music is the woman telling Amari to make one day? (page 25)
- In a world of differences, how does it feel to find someone who is like you, just as Amari found the lady who spoke her language?
- Express your views about a price being placed on human life.
- Give reactions to the woman's statement that her spirit was too strong to die in a place like Cape Coast Castle.
- What is the symbolism of the Door of No Return?
- How are the captives mentally trapped in a place of hopelessness, between the misery of the present and the memories of the past?
- Express your views regarding branding humans. Compare and contrast branding done by fraternity and sorority members today

and the branding of the captives in this book. Now that you know about branding of slaves, would you want to be branded? Why?

- Recall the horrors of Cape Coast Castle, the Door to No Return, and the branding on the beach. What necessary survival techniques would you have to develop in order to survive those experiences?
- What were the slave traders paying the captors with? How are these items different from the currency we use in this country? In what cultures today do people engage in trading items versus purchasing with currency?
- Comment on Afi's comparison of the large ship to a death house.
- Do you think the Ashanti warriors deserved to be betrayed by the white captors because of their role in capturing the other African tribes?
- Though Amari said that Besa was thin and filthy, she thought he looked beautiful. Share experiences when someone did not appear to be beautiful on the outside, but you were able to see beauty otherwise.
- How did the spirit of the sun bleed for the captives? Why was it saying farewell?
- Why do you think the elders in the village owned slaves? Does the fact that they were treated like members of the family justify them being enslaved?
- Tell about someone who you think was chosen to survive and must remember the past and tell those yet unborn.
- How has being enslaved erased the true identity of the captives?
- What was the significance of the women grabbing handfuls of sand while being forced out of the holding pens? If you were leaving a familiar place and not expected to return, what would you take as a memory token and why?
- When Afi and the other women sang the old Ewe song, it was the saddest sound Amari had ever heard. Why do you think Afi hummed the death song? Why do you think the others joined in? What is the saddest sound you have ever heard? How did you respond to that sound?
- Amari thought that the foreign drum had none of the life and voice their drummers were able to coax from a drum. Why do you think foreign drums did not carry a message like the drums from Amari's village?

- Have you experienced a time when you used your inner strength as a shield? Share the experience, if you feel comfortable doing so.
- Why do you think Bill chose to teach Amari English? Why did he select Amari and not someone else? Do you think people can really see something special in others?
- What do you think the author meant when she stated that knowledge of the white men was a powerful weapon that Amari could possibly use one day to her advantage? How might this work to Amari's advantage?
- Amari gathered words as weapons to be used later. How, if ever, have you used language as a powerful tool?
- How does one die inside as they continue to live? How was death an easy way out of a bad situation?
- What enables Afi to show Amari love in this place filled with hatred?
- Even though Amari lived in Africa two hundred years ago, in what ways is she like many 15-year-old girls today? How is she different? What strengths do you identify from her family and home life? What negatives do you identify?
- How is the relationship between Besa and Amari similar to teen relationships today? How is their relationship different? Make predictions about their future together.

COOPERATIVE GROUP ACTIVITIES: Have each student make a journal that reflects their heritage. Each day throughout this week, students should record journal entries from Amari's viewpoint. The entries should express Amari's thoughts and feelings throughout her journey.

Have students begin work on a class dictionary of new words they identify during their reading. They should take notes of unfamiliar terms to add to the dictionary each day as they read. Encourage students to use context clues and try to determine the meaning of each word before using the dictionary.

Have students recall the descriptions of the village of Ziavi. Then they should begin work on a model of the village based on the descriptions and their imaginations. Students should incorporate as many items from nature as possible in the model. Each group could be responsible for certain parts

of the village. Allow students time each day this week to work on the village.

Each tribe had Kente cloth with a design that represented their village. The design for Amari's tribe included animal figures and bold shapes. Have each group of students create a design to represent their group. Then groups should draw and color, or paint the design in a pattern on butcher paper to make Kente cloth. Have students explain why they selected the design they did and how it represents their group.

Divide students into two groups. Have each group plan a welcoming ceremony for visitors to this country. Groups should present their plans to the class.

Have each student use a variety of materials to create a drum. Then groups should compose rhythms that they think tell a story. Each group should perform the rhythms while telling their story.

Have each group re-create the Cape Coast Castle experience in any form of art, such as visual art, drama, poetry, music, etc.

Have groups create an image of the copper sun in Africa saying farewell to the captives. Then have each group write a poem entitled "Copper Sun."

Discuss with students the genre of folktales. Refer to folktales in other available books. Then have each group write their own folktale entitled "Why the Sea Is Salty Like Tears." Compile these folktales to make a class book. Also, have students design the book cover. Have this book available for students to read during D.E.A.R. Time.

Have each group create a shoebox filmstrip that shows events that occur in this story. To make the filmstrip, paint the outside of the shoebox then cut a window in the bottom of it and slits in the sides. Cut butcher paper so it can be pulled through the slits. On the paper, students should draw or paint pictures that will fill the screen. Groups should add to their filmstrip each day. After threading the filmstrip through the slits, secure each end to an empty cardboard tube. Then each group should present their filmstrip to the class on day five.

Afi and the other Ewe women sang an Old Ewe death song. Have groups

write a song that they might have sung. Students should select a familiar tune and re-write the lyrics to compose a song Afi and the others might have sung. Each group should perform their song.

During the Middle Passage, Amari was too numb to remember the words of a prayer. Group students in pairs. Have each pair of students write a prayer for those who died and were thrown overboard.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION ACTIVITY: The people of the Ziavi village enjoyed music, singing, dancing, and self-expression. Explore the importance of artistic influences on individuals as well as groups of people. Discuss how self-expression can be used as a tool for helping and healing.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Have students imagine entering the hold of the slave ship and refer to the book *The Middle Passage*. Then in their journals have them reflect on the horrors that occurred during the Middle Passage.

Note: In the village of Ziavi, there were various types of fruit available. During the afternoon activities time block, have available mangoes, pineapples, coconuts, papayas, and other fruits along with various fruit recipes. Have students create treats using the fruits and recipes. Then enjoy!

BOOK: *Copper Sun*

AUTHOR: Sharon Draper

FOCUS: A different world

OBJECTIVES: Students should be able to:

- participate in a meaningful book discussion:
 - predicting
 - listening
 - discussing
 - interpreting
 - challenging

- compare and contrast
- sequence events

MATERIALS: writing and drawing paper/chart paper/pencils/pens/markers

OPENING ACTIVITY: Read-Aloud: *Ebony Sea*

Have students give reactions to the Ebo people's resistance to slavery.

MAIN ACTIVITY: Book discussion, *Copper Sun*, chapters 12-19, pages 64-119

Divide students into two groups. Then have each group read and summarize four chapters from chapters 12-19. Encourage groups to be creative with their summary presentations.

Recommendations for discussion:

- How is the world connected by the sun, moon, stars, and the ocean?
- Afi told Amari to find beauty wherever she could. Is this a practice that you try and live by? Discuss.
- Have you ever experienced a situation when you felt the need to use someone else's strength as an example? Share your experiences.
- Respond to the tall black man warning the slaves in the Ashanti language. Why do you think he told the slaves not to forget their own language?
- The slave auctioneer asked Mr. Derby after he purchased Amari if he wanted her mother too. Mr. Derby responded that family ties only confuse the poor creatures. Discuss the destruction of slave families as people were brought and sold with no regard to their family structure. When slavery ended, what was the long-range result of this family destruction? What evidence do we see today that promotes family destruction?
- Comment on Polly having to sign up for an indenture to pay off her parents' debt.
- Respond to the slaves being sold like merchandise.
- Why do you think people create stereotypes about people who

are different from them?

- Discuss Polly's character and how she comes across when she is first introduced in the book. What kind of life has she had? Do you think her past justifies her attitude? What advantages does Polly have in the society and in the story?
- Discuss the first meeting between Polly and Amari. Why do you think this part of the story is told from Polly's point of view?
- Comment on sixteen-year-old Clay whipping Noah, an elder.
- Why do you think reading was considered a dangerous act for women and slaves?
- How is Amari accepting Myna as her new name a step toward losing her identity?
- Amari tried to assimilate into the culture of plantation life. How do you go about adjusting to a new culture?
- Discuss the importance of teaching and passing on history and traditions.
- Amari forced her mind to think of pleasant things when she was with Clay. When bad things happen to you, what helps you to endure?
- Why do you think Clay wants Amari to like him?
- How are Teenie, Tidbit, Amari, and Polly like a family?
- Tell about herbal remedies you know of.
- Do you agree with Teenie's statement that as long as you remember, nothing is really gone? Why?
- Research advertisements for the sale of slaves during the internal slave trade. Analyze the impact of the advertisements on slaves.
- Find references to "copper sun" within the story.

COOPERATIVE GROUP ACTIVITIES: Have each group categorize the groups of people from the book in levels of hierarchy (the house slaves, the field slaves, indentured servants, slave owners, white men, white women, etc.) Then have groups categorize levels of hierarchy in our society today. Groups should discuss the similarities and differences between the past and present levels of hierarchy.

The Derby family traveled in a horse drawn wagon from town to Derbyshire Farms. Have groups design a modern-day wagon that reflects the resources and technology that are available today.

Have students create a nametag for themselves, on index cards, using alliteration (the occurrence in a phrase or line of speech or writing of two or more words having the same initial sound, for example, Polly Peach Pie). Then have students create an illustration for their nametags.

Have available for students *The Middle Passage* by Tom Feelings. “Read” the pictures. Make connections between the story and the pictures. Compare/contrast the depiction through pictures versus words. Then have groups create a tribute in memory of the people who lost their lives during the Middle Passage experience, and for survivors.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION ACTIVITY:

Conflict: Discuss the effects of the language barrier in this story. Then discuss how slave owners used language as a form of oppression and a way to dominate. Identify examples of present day language barriers.

Resolutions: How do you think different tribes communicated since they spoke different languages? How did slaves communicate with one another even though slave owners did not want them to? Reflect on personal experiences related to interaction with members of different peer groups or cliques. Is communication an issue? What characteristics distinguish your clique from another? How might preserving the identity of your clique benefit/limit your group?

Debrief: Students will gain some insight into the importance of acknowledging social differences, particularly when those differences are rooted in cultural tradition and not just circumstances of different peer groups. At the same time, they should recognize that those differences that distinguish our separate identities can become barriers to interaction with others, and even obstacles to self-growth.

SOCIAL ACTION ACTIVITY: Polly believed that Negroes made it difficult for regular folks like herself to get work, and that no one could compete with somebody who worked for free. Have students research articles about the current immigration issues in this country that suggest that immigrants are employed in jobs that American citizens could have because they are willing to work for lower wages. Discuss the parallel debate about the slaves and the Mexican immigrants.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Have students write a journal account expressing how Amari might be feeling at this point in her life.

BOOK: *Copper Sun*

AUTHOR: Sharon Draper

FOCUS: Broken spirits

OBJECTIVES: Students should be able to:

- participate in a meaningful book discussion:
 - predicting
 - listening
 - discussing
 - interpreting
 - challenging
- compare and contrast
- make predictions
- sequence events

MATERIALS: writing and drawing paper/construction paper/pencils/pens/markers/scissors/ glue/egg cartons/dried beans

OPENING ACTIVITY: Divide students into four groups. Then assign each group two chapters from chapters 20-27 to make predictions about what will happen next based on the chapter titles. Students should write a paragraph summarizing their predictions for each chapter. Have each group read their paragraphs to the class.

MAIN ACTIVITY: Book discussion, *Copper Sun*, chapters 20-27, pages 120-183

Divide students into three groups. Have each group read and summarize the chapters as outlined below. Encourage groups to be creative with their summary presentations.

Group one – chapters 20 and 21, pages 120-135

Group two – chapters 22-24, pages 136-162

Group three – chapters 25-27, pages 165-183

Recommendations for discussion:

- Why do you think the slaves were not allowed to look directly into the master's eyes?
- Discuss the significance of the slaves singing, and the significance of singing for us today. Do you think we share some of the same reasons?
- How do Teenie, Tidbit, and Hushpuppy bring life to the plantation? Give specific examples.
- Discuss the gradual developing of the relationship between Polly and Amari. How is each girl unique? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? What does each girl offer that the other needs?
- Slavery was a period of extreme degradation of one group of people by another. What do you think were the short-term and long-term effects of slavery on both groups?
- How are the slaves that work in the plantation treated differently from the house slaves?
- Comment on Clay and Mr. Derby's conversation justifying slavery.
- What was the overall effect of the gator bait scene? What is it about human beings that makes one person mistreat another? What is it that makes us survive in spite of it?
- How is Mrs. Derby almost like a slave herself? What predictions did you make about Mrs. Derby and Noah? What foreshadowing is given to prepare the reader for what happens?
- Why would what Mr. Derby did to Noah and the baby be socially and legally justifiable in their days? Why do you think Dr. Hoskins did not speak up? Why is tragedy more memorable and powerful in a novel?

COOPERATIVE GROUP ACTIVITIES: Teenie seemed to know lots of things she could make from corn. Have each group identify dishes they can make using corn. Then have groups write recipes that include corn as an ingredient. Compile into a cookbook.

Group students in pairs. Have each pair construct a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Amari, Polly, and a fifteen-year-old girl today. (See appendix for Venn diagram instructions.)

Have students pretend that they are news reporters on the scene, in the chapter “Death in the Dust.” Have each group write a catchy headline that can capture the news story of Noah and the baby’s death. Write a detailed account of what happened for a newspaper headline story.

Have each pair of students make a Mankala game as it is called in East Africa. In South Africa, it is called Ohora. In West Africa, it is called Owara. To build the game boards, separate the top and bottom of an egg carton for each board. Cut the top section in half and attach each to a side of the bottom section. Each player’s Mankala is on his/her right. Allow students to play this game during the afternoon activities time block.

Directions for playing:

1. Two players per game board should put three dried beans into each of the egg carton cups on their own sides.
2. The first player begins by taking all of the beans out of one of his/her cups, moving to the right, dropping one bean into each of the next three cups. The Mankala counts as a cup after you begin playing.
3. If the first player is able to drop the third bean into his/her own Mankala, he/she gets another turn. If the third bean does not end up in his/her own Mankala, it becomes the other player’s turn.
4. Continue playing taking turns with each player trying to get as many beans as possible into his/her Mankala, until all cups on a player’s side are empty.
5. The winner is the player with the most beans in his/her Mankala.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Have students write a journal entry expressing how Amari might be feeling at the end of chapter 27, “Death in the Dust.”

BOOK: *Copper Sun*

AUTHOR: Sharon Draper

FOCUS: Farewell

OBJECTIVES: Students should be able to:

- participate in a meaningful book discussion:
predicting
listening
discussing
interpreting
challenging
- express thoughts and feelings through poetry

MATERIALS: writing and drawing paper/chart paper or poster board/pens/pencils/markers/ scissors

OPENING ACTIVITY: Read-Aloud: Read the poem “The Conductor Was a Woman,” from the book *Remember the Bridge*.

MAIN ACTIVITY: Book discussion, *Copper Sun*, chapters 28-35, pages 184-232

Divide students into two groups. Have each group read and summarize four chapters each from chapters 28-35. Encourage groups to be creative with summary presentations.

Recommendations for discussion:

- Discuss the pros and cons of Amari, Polly, and Tidbit being taken away to be sold.
- Discuss the relationships among the slaves on the plantation versus people’s relationships in communities today.
- Discuss the argument between Amari and Polly over whether to go north or south. Why was it extremely unusual to choose a southern route? What does this show about Amari’s personality?
- Would you choose the route recommended by Dr. Hoskins or by Cato? Why?
- How does the strength of Amari’s family make a difference in her life?
- On the journey we find more about Polly’s parents and her background. How did Polly’s parents and her relationship with

them shape the person that Polly became?

- Discuss Clay's character and his complicated feelings for Amari. Does he have any redeeming qualities?
- Amari explained that you dig one plant, leave two plants and ask the plants permission. What ways do we work in harmony with nature? In what ways do we not?
- Comment on the number of days Amari, Polly, and Tidbit have been walking. Estimate how many miles they have traveled. What are some ways people can determine time and place when they are out in the woods like Amari, Tidbit, and Polly were?
- What would you have done to Clay if you were Amari, Polly, and Tidbit?

COOPERATIVE GROUP ACTIVITIES: What if Amari and Harriett Tubman met? What would they say to each other? Have each group develop a dialogue between Harriett Tubman and Amari. What advice would they give to each other? Then have pairs of students role-play the dialogue.

Have each group make a list of the resources that were available in the forest. Then have each group plan meals for a day for Amari, Polly, and Tidbit using these resources.

Have students write a poem about fear. (See appendix for poetry-writing forms and examples.)

Have students create a "Wanted" poster for the capture of Amari, Polly, and Tidbit. Include descriptions, reward and return information, etc.

Have each group write a character sketch of Tidbit. What made him unique—his personality, his charm, his love of life? Include specifics from the book to illustrate your points.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Have students write a journal entry expressing Amari's thoughts and feelings at this point.

BOOK: *Copper Sun*

AUTHOR: Sharon Draper

FOCUS:

OBJECTIVES: Students should be able to:

- participate in a meaningful book discussion:
 - predicting
 - listening
 - discussing
 - interpreting
 - challenging
- use map skills
- express ideas through art and writing
- make predictions
- role-play scenes

MATERIALS: writing and drawing paper/butcher paper/United States map/paint and paintbrushes/pens/colored pencils/markers

OPENING ACTIVITY: Read-Aloud: Read the poem “Remember the Bridge,” from the book *Remember the Bridge*.

MAIN ACTIVITY: Book discussion, *Copper Sun*, chapters 36-42, and the Afterword, pages 235-304.

Divide students into three groups. Then have each group read and summarize the chapters as outlined below. Encourage groups to be creative with their summary presentations.

Group one – chapters 36 and 37, pages 235-262

Group two – chapters 38-40, pages 265-284

Group three – chapters 41 and 42, pages 285-302

The intern should read the Afterword, pages 302-304 aloud to the students.

Recommendations for discussion:

- Amari meets people throughout this novel who give her strength that helps her survive. Describe her relationship with these people and explain the long and short-range influence of them on Amari's life.
- What social and cultural pieces were in place to prevent slaves from protesting or fighting back?
- Describe the difficulties of the three young people traveling by night, all alone, no food, and no proof that the place they were traveling to existed. Do you think you would have survived the journey? How? What do you think was the most difficult part of the journey for the travelers?
- What does Amari learn about herself, her past, and her future through her reunion with Besa?
- How do you think Amari, Polly, and Tidbit felt when they finally reached Fort Mose?
- Discuss the symbolism of the river that Amari, Polly, and Tidbit had to cross?
- Identify ways that Amari could inform Teenie of their safe arrival at Fort Mose.
- How does freedom look, smell, sound, taste, and feel?
- Do you think the slaves that run away ever obtain true freedom?
- Express your views about the statement: Freedom means very little if there is no knowledge to go with it.
- Do you agree with Amari's statement that it is better to die for freedom than live as a slave?
- What does Amari's new baby represent?
- Explain the title of the novel. What are the possible interpretations of the title?
- How has what you learned about Africa, the Middle Passage, slavery, and African-American history changed your way of thinking?
- Discuss the importance of knowing your personal history. Why is it important to study historical information of a country or a people?
- What would you tell a student who feels it is not important to learn about slavery?
- Explain how slavery was an integral force in the shaping of American History.

COOPERATIVE GROUP ACTIVITIES: Based on the descriptions in the book and students imaginations have them paint a mural of Fort Mose.

Have each group locate South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida on a United States map, and trace the route Amari, Polly, and Tidbit might have taken. Using the map scale, have students determine the number of miles they traveled, how long the trip would have taken by boat, then by car.

Have students identify two individuals whom they regard as heroes, male and/or female. What common characteristics do the individuals have? What makes these heroes meaningful today? What do we need from heroes? With group members, discuss heroism from the hero's point of view. Each person should organize his/her responses to write a speech about heroes. Have students present their speeches to the class.

Have students imagine how this story might have been represented in the history of the Ewe people. Have groups write a scene for Amari's return to her village. What would Amari have said about her experience during the Middle Passage and in the United States? Do you think Amari would be recognized as a hero in the history of her people?

Have students role-play the scenes written about Amari's return to her village.

Have each group write an additional chapter for this novel. Groups should think about the following questions: What will happen with Amari and her baby? Will Tidbit reunite with Teenie? Will Amari reunite with Besa? Will Amari, Polly, and Tidbit continue to stay together? What happened to Mrs. Derby? What happened to Clay? Was Dr. Hoskins punished? Did Afi make it to Fort Mose?

Have each group write a brief summary and a review that could appear on the back cover of *Copper Sun*.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Reread the poem "Remember the Bridge." Then reflect on Amari's experiences and this poem. Have students write a journal entry that express thoughts and feelings from Amari's viewpoint.

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