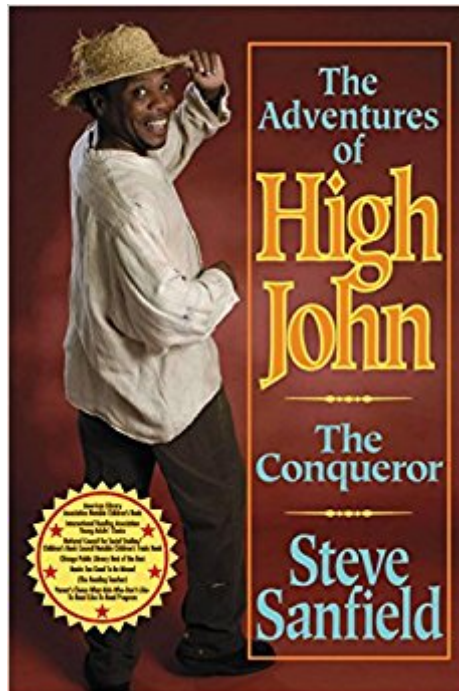


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Adventures Of High John The Conqueror (American Storytelling)



Synopsis

High John the Conqueror sometimes called simply High John or John was a slave trickster who always outwits Old Master. Much like Greek slave Aesop's animal characters, High John was the subject of a series of subversive narratives, whose mission was to outsmart his oppressors. Tall tales of High John's exploits flourished during slavery, but after emancipation they fell out of circulation and his antics were all but forgotten. Sanfield weaves in historical context with this folktale about resourcefulness and courage.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The 16 segments of this collection are filled with the laudable escapades of High John the Conqueror, a fellow about whom slaves told trickster stories (that somehow never reached the ears of white owners). In one tale, which vividly illustrates the truism "knowledge means power," John (who is determined to be the smartest slave on the plantation) sits under the kitchen window nightly, listening to Master and Missy's conversations. Each night Master outlines a different task John will be assigned the following day. When Master goes to inform John of the task, John either has the job underway or completed. Master, believing John to be omniscient, bets the plantation on the slave's ability. What follows that bet (and courses through all these stories) is a combination of remarkable folk-telling with the ironic circumstances wrought by human beings making slaves of other human beings. A superior companion to *Afro-American Folktales* edited by Roger D. Abrahams. A Richard

Jackson Book. Ages 8-up. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

High John the conqueror was a figure in trickster stories told by African-American slaves; the sixteen stories in this collection illustrate moments in the life of this folk character. Among the stories included here are tales of High Joh the conqueror as a free man after Emancipation, when Old Master vanished, only to be replaced by Old Boss. (The Multicultural Review) The 16 segments of this collection are filled with the laudable escapades of High John the Conqueror, a fellow about whom slaves told trickster stories (that somehow never reached the ears of white owners). In one tale, which vividly illustrates the truism "knowledge means power," John (who is determined to be the smartest slave on the plantation) sits under the kitchen window nightly, listening to Master and Missy's conversations. Each night Master outlines a different task John will be assigned the following day. When Master goes to inform John of the task, John either has the job underway or completed. Master, believing John to be omniscient, bets the plantation on the slave's ability. What follows that bet (and courses through all these stories) is a combination of remarkable folktelling with the ironic circumstances wrought by human beings making slaves of other human beings. A superior companion to Afro-American Folktales edited by Roger D. Abrahams. (Publishers Weekly)

This is a must have for anyone studying African American Folklore and Hoodoo culture.

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