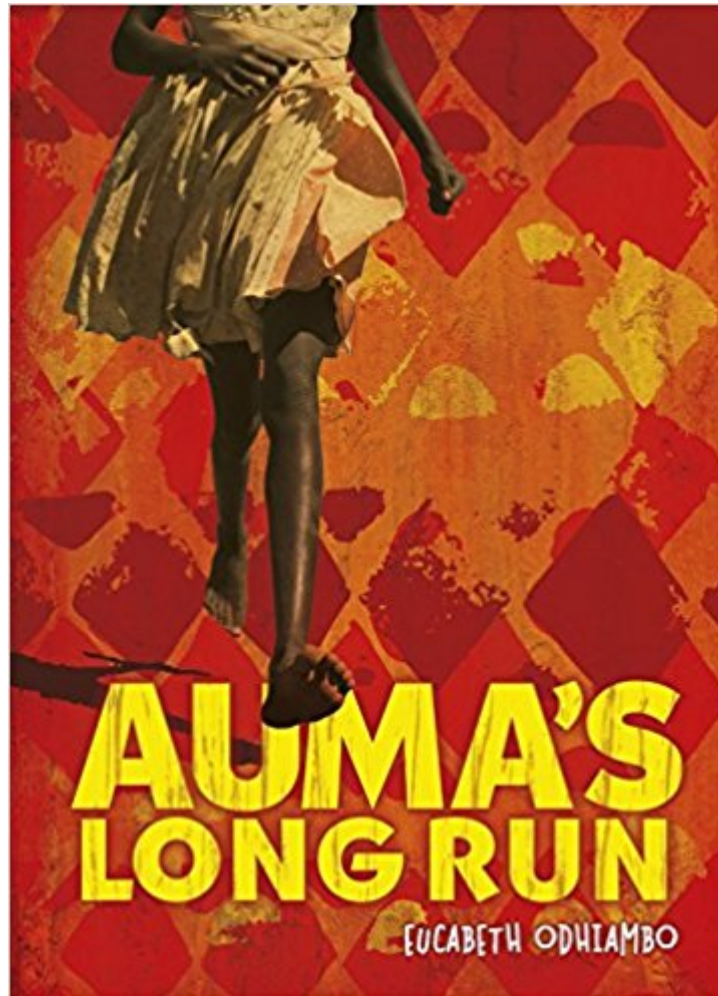




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Auma's Long Run



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Synopsis

Auma loves to run. In her small Kenyan village, she's a track star with big dreams. A track scholarship could allow her to attend high school and maybe even become a doctor. But a strange new sickness called AIDS is ravaging the village, and when her father becomes ill, Auma's family needs her help at home. Soon more people are getting sick even dying and no one knows why. Now Auma faces a difficult choice. Should she stay to support her struggling family or leave to pursue her own future? Auma knows her family is depending on her, but leaving might be the only way to find the answers to questions about this new disease.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

"Auma treats readers to beautiful descriptions of the world around her but also gives them a candid look at the fear and superstition surrounding AIDs in its early days in Kenya as well as the grief of loss. . . . Honestly told, Auma's tale humanizes and contextualizes the AIDs experience in Kenya without sensationalizing it." (Starred Review) --Kirkus Reviews "A hard-hitting story of a resilient and intelligent girl who bravely confronts a devastating health crisis." (Starred Review) --Publishers Weekly "[A] moving testament to the power of determination to overcome overwhelming odds is a recommended purchase for all libraries." (Starred Review) --School Library Journal

Auma has been running all her life. In her small Kenyan village, she's a track star with big dreams. A track scholarship could allow her to attend high school and maybe even become a doctor someday. But a strange new sickness called AIDS is ravaging the village, and when her father becomes ill, Auma's family needs her help at home. Soon more people are getting sick even dying and no one seems to know why. Now Auma faces a choice. She can either quit school and go to work to support her struggling family or leave her loved ones behind to pursue her own future. Auma knows her family is depending on her. But leaving might be the only way to find the answers to her questions about this new disease. [Back of Jacket]: One afternoon, as I looked at Baba, a silent fear gripped my heart. He spent every day in bed, he barely ate, and his cough was worse. Everyone had completely stopped talking about his illness. I wanted to talk. Even if no one had the answers, I wanted to ask a million questions. And I wanted to ask them out loud. Why couldn't we talk about it? [Back Flap]: Eucabeth Odhiambo is a professor of Teacher Education at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania. As a classroom teacher she has taught all grades between kindergarten and middle school. This is her first novel.

Eucabeth Odhiambo grew up in Kenya. While she now lives in Pennsylvania, where she teaches in the teacher education department of Shippensburg University, she returns to her home country in her debut novel, *Auma's Long Run*. Auma is a teenager in rural Kenya whose village is being ravaged by AIDS. She is torn between her responsibility to her family and her desire to become a doctor. In many ways, Auma is just like girls anywhere in the world. But her lifestyle is foreign to most Western readers. She has to walk to the stream to fetch water, she lives in a mud house with no electricity or indoor plumbing, and has cows in the yard. Her father works in Nairobi and sends money home to the family. Everything changes when he arrives home earlier than expected. Soon both he and Auma's mother have died of AIDS. Auma loves to run and has become a local star, winning most of her races. She wants to earn a scholarship for her running so she can study to become a doctor. With her parents' sickness, her mother's efforts to marry her off, and her responsibilities caring for her younger siblings, it starts looking like she won't get to follow her dreams. *Auma's Long Run* is a touching story that brings the realities of poverty and sickness in rural Kenya into focus, personalizing village life in a way that statistics and news items can't. The target audience may be young girls, but boys and adults will be enriched and will enjoy this story of Auma's coming of age in Africa. Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for the complimentary electronic review copy!

When we think of AIDS in Africa, the word "hope" is not one that often comes to mind. It's more like "absolute desolation." And I think the media portrayal of "the third world" has taken so much humanity out of how we look at it. I went into Auma's Long Run looking for more, but not knowing what I'd get out of it. This book is full of death, especially for MG fiction. Odhaimbo doesn't gloss over what is happening—the lesions, the weakness, the bodily functions. As an educator, her goal is to educate, and so that is what she does. She grew up in Kenya in the 80s, like Auma, when "Slim" was still so unknown, where children learned in school about the disease and then had to try and talk to their parents about it. Could you even imagine? We have a hard enough time trying to explain how the new iPhone works to them! But there IS hope in Auma. So much hope. That's what makes this story so compelling, and why I finished it so quickly. Even as so many people in her Kenyan village were dying, that only drove her forward to find out what was causing it. At 15 she has to balance so much—school, work, family—starvation. That's so much for a teenager to have on her plate! Her focus just impresses me so much. We learn about HIV/AIDS in school now, but there's still so much stigma around it, especially when it comes to how we view the epidemic in African countries. Maybe Auma's story can help reduce that stigma, and show us the human side.

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