



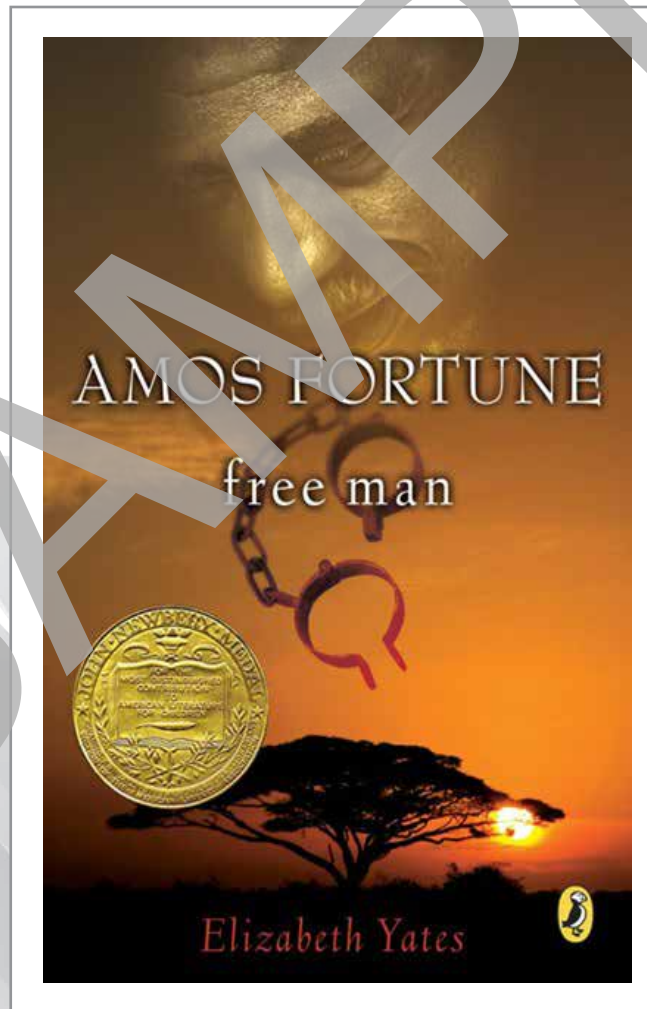
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Amos Fortune, Free Man

Elizabeth Yates



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Amos Fortune, Free Man

Elizabeth Yates

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research, brainstorming, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, compare/contrast, decision making, attributes, multiple perspectives, literary interpretation

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing, foreshadowing, cause/effect, inference, summarizing, inferences

Vocabulary

Pictionary, word maps, prefixes, suffixes, defining, parts of speech

Writing

Personal writing, creative writing, poetry, reports, essays, plays

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, presentations, charades, debate, plays

Literary Elements

Literary analysis, story mapping, plot development, setting, character analysis, similes, metaphors

Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—developing maps, research, charting a course, time lines, cultures, historical references, religion, geography; Science—botany, animals, ecosystems; Math—measurement, money; Language—poetry, outlines, research, Old English vs. modern English; Music—composing lyrics; Art—illustrations, dramatization; Health—diet, nutrition

Summary

At-mun is born the son of a king in Africa in 1710. During a tribal celebration, his people are attacked by slave-traders, his father killed, and At-mun is taken captive. At the age of 15, he is transported to America on a slave ship and sold into slavery. At-mun is given the name Amos Fortune and learns to speak, read, and write through the study of the Bible. Throughout the remainder of his life, Amos uses his religious beliefs as a blueprint for righteous living. He holds his head high through persecution, poverty, and racism, and faces life's challenges with dignity, determination, and persistence. At almost 60 years of age, Amos Fortune buys his own freedom and starts his own tanning business. Through hard work and determination, he is able to purchase the freedom of four other slaves, buy land, build a home, and help others.

About the Author

Elizabeth Yates (1905–2001) grew up in the countryside of New York State. From an early age she wanted to write, and when she was 21 she went to New York City to make her dream a reality. She met and married William McGreal and soon moved to England, where she published her first book, *High Holiday*. She eventually moved back to the United States and continued her writing career, penning more than 40 books during her career. *Amos Fortune, Free Man*, perhaps her best-known book, won the Newbery Medal in 1951.

Background Information

Biblical references throughout the book point back to the major themes: determination, persistence, self-worth, and overcoming adversity. The name Amos means “burden-bearer” in Hebrew.

Genre: biography

Setting: 1700s; Africa, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire

Point of View: third person

Themes: determination, dignity, self-worth, power, adversity

Conflict: person vs. person, person vs. society

Date of first publication: 1950

Characters

Amos Fortune: born a prince of the At-mun-shi tribe in Africa in 1710; taken into captivity at age 15 and sold as a slave in Massachusetts; spends over half of his life as a slave; purchases his freedom and the freedom of several other slaves before he dies

Caleb Copeland: Quaker who purchases Amos when he first arrives in America; teaches Amos the cloth-making trade; Copeland family also teaches Amos reading, writing, and math

Ichabod Richardson: purchases Amos when Caleb Copeland dies; very religious and strict; teaches Amos the tanning trade

Lily: the first slave Amos frees; marries Amos; lives only one year in freedom

Using Predictions

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how a conflict will be resolved, which details will be important to the plot, which details will help fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses as they read the novel.

As students work on their predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give to help us make predictions? Why are some predictions more likely to be accurate than others?

Create a chart for recording predictions. This could either be an individual or class activity. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, students can review and correct their previous predictions about plot and characters as necessary.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own prior knowledge.

Apply any new information (i.e., from class discussion) that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions

Africa 1725 & The Middle Passage, pp. 3–33

At-mun, a 15-year-old African prince, is captured by slave traders. He and his people endure extreme hardships as they are taken on a half-day journey to a river where they are loaded into canoes. Hours later they arrive where the river meets the ocean. After three weeks of living in unsanitary pits with little food or water, they board a sailing ship headed to America. For At-mun, the three-month journey ends in Boston. He is sold at a slave auction and renamed Amos Fortune.

Vocabulary

mystic (3)
obeisance (4)
pagan (5)
seethed (9)
shackles (10)
conical (11)
brandished (20)
shrewd (24)
wharf (28)
truculent (32)

Discussion Questions

1. According to the incantation on page 7 of the novel, what do the At-mun-shi people worship? (*nature*)
2. What does the old woman mean when she taps her head saying, “Not with this will he rule, but so,” laying her hand on her heart? (*She is saying that At-mun has a good, kind heart, and he will rule his people well. p. 8*)
3. At the end of the first chapter, At-mun reminds his sister that she is a princess. Why do you think these are his parting words? (*Answers will vary. p. 12*)
4. What do you think At-mun is feeling as he leaves the familiarity of the jungle and journeys farther from his home than he had ever been before? (*responsibility for protecting and leading his people, anticipation, wonder, curiosity, fear of the unknown, p. 18*)
5. What does the author mean by the following, “To them it was a great bird sent for their deliverance and in his heart each one hailed it” (p. 20)? (*The At-mun-shi have been treated so badly up to this point that they hope to be delivered from their present situation into a better arrangement.*)
6. How were the tribesmen and women like merchandise after three weeks in the pit? (*They are treated as things to sell rather than as people who have emotional and physical needs and deserve respect. pp. 22–23*)
7. What does the author mean when she writes, “But the waves slapping against the ship had more meaning than the words shouted through the hatch” (p. 25)? (*The captives don’t understand what the traders are shouting, but they know they are leaving their families and homeland.*)
8. Why do you think it is so important to At-mun to remember he is a king? (*Answers will vary. He understands his self-worth regardless of the external circumstances. This theme is repeated throughout the book. p. 27*)
9. According to his religious beliefs, is Caleb Copeland justified in purchasing a slave? (*Answers will vary. pp. 32–35*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Writing: There appears to be no written record of the At-mun-shi tribe in Africa except in the book *Amos Fortune, Free Man*. Based on the information provided in the first two chapters of the book, write an essay explaining why you think the tribe cannot be found.
2. Art: Draw a picture of the scene depicted on page 20, including the ship, holding areas, canoes, and captives.