

Chapter 1 : "The Dark Child" by Camara Laye | Essay Example

*The Dark Child is a distinct and graceful memoir of Camara Laye's youth in the village of Koroussa, French Guinea. Long regarded Africa's preeminent Francophone novelist, Laye () herein marvels over his mother's supernatural powers, his father's distinction as the village goldsmith, and his own passage into manhood, which is marked by.*

Laye was born January 1, , in Kourassa, French Guinea, and became the eldest son of 12 children fathered by Camara Komady, a leading blacksmith in the region. At 15, Laye traveled to the colonial capital, Conakry, to study at a technical college, and four years later left his homeland on a scholarship to study in France. When his scholarship was not renewed, he found work in France. He took a job at the Simca auto factory and with the French railroad, pursuing his studies in night classes. It was during this period that Laye wrote *The Dark Child*: The resulting memoir recounts his youth from the early s to the late s. A seminal work in African literature, *The Dark Child* was the first to convey in French to European readers the experience of growing up in Malinke society in colonial Guinea. The area featured in the memoir, known as Upper Guinea, lies in the Mande heartland. The Mande count among their ancestors the legendary Sunjata Keita see *Epic of Son-Jara* , also covered in *African Literature and Its Times* , who early in the thirteenth century established the Mali empire through a series of conquests. In religion, the Mande practiced a mix of Islam and their own indigenous faith. Society allowed men to marry more than one wife. There was a separate, circular thatched structure for each adult circumcised male and for each married woman; all others shared the house of their mother or closest relative. The size of a town varied from perhaps 20 concessions in a small community to or more. Aside from the capital of Conakry, however, the large town was more a cluster of villages around an administrative and commercial core than it was a modernized urban area. Within the compound, or concession, women tended children, prepared food, drew water, raised crops, washed, and gathered firewood. Meanwhile, men raised cattle and sheep, farmed, or pursued a craft. Mande society in general long consisted of three groupsâ€”nobles, specialized professionals, and the defunct subdivision of slaves. The nobles consisted of farmers, who grew rice, millet, and garden vegetables for subsistence; from their clans came the political leaders. Their lives were intertwined with those of the specialized professionals, known as nyamakala. The nyamakala inherited the spiritual means to perform and be protected from the consequences of their trades, which were thought to unleash nyama, energizing force. The blacksmiths fashioned hoes, saddles, wooden plates, statues, rifles, and amulets; their trade was fraught with potential danger. Some were healers too. Among the most hazardous acts a blacksmith performed was circumcision, a rite Laye undergoes in the memoir. A blacksmith is born into a caste which enables him to smelt iron ore, to transform the iron, earth, and wood, and to survive the forces unleashed by his transformationâ€¦. The means or powers required to perform an act are referred to as dalilu. All acts and their associate instruments have nyama [energizing force]â€¦. The inherent dalilu of the nyama-kala [nyama caste] affords protection against the nyama they release. Bird and Kendall in Charry, p. The jeli, a hired voice, appeals to the pride of the blacksmith, recalling the lofty deeds of his ancestors in couplets, while plucking the kora, a stringed harp unique to the Mande. The explanation touches on a negative image under which the jeli labored: In fact, a debate rages today about the status of the nyamakala in general. While nyamakala could not own land or hold public office in Mande society, political leaders would not make a decision without first consulting a senior blacksmith. Clearly there were many facets to the status of nyamakala. Born into a blacksmith family themselves, these apprentices were believed to possess the heretofore untapped power as their birthright, and older blacksmiths kept it intact by marrying among themselves. However, only children born into such a family could pursue the craft. It should be noted that there were farmers and tradespeople who also engaged in sideline businesses. A farmer, for example, might sell surplus produce while not preoccupied with planting or harvesting, while a blacksmith might raise crops in his spare time. Education For most Malinke, education was dispensed by parents, especially the mother, who imparted traditional knowledge in the form of songs, tales, and proverbs. On-the-job training came from other family members too, who had children help at herding cattle, chasing birds from crops, and harvesting rice, the way Laye does in the memoir. Vocational education, as suggested by

the discussion of apprentices above, was a matter of learning by experience. As late as only about 6 percent of the school-age population in French West Africa attended European-style centers of learning. Village schools were sparse, and secondary education was limited. Between and the French Federal School System founded a number of elementary and preparatory schools, which emphasized basic instruction, assuming that most students would not go on to secondary schools. For the most part, higher education focused on vocational training—Laye attends a technical school in the capital—and was reserved for the especially gifted or well disciplined. The French aimed to create an indigenous elite, a small class that could govern the colony effectively. The cream of the elite—those who excelled in the French schools of West Africa—might be rewarded with a scholarship to a school in France. In France, Guinean students found their African degrees to be all but meaningless: On top of these disadvantages, they coped with new experiences of racism in a predominantly white society and with inner pangs of homesickness. By some West African students held such scholarships, and perhaps as many financed their own way to France Hargreaves, p. It is into this tiny fraction that Camara Laye falls. The discrepancy arises from the fact that, during his schooling, French teachers required students to put their family name first, followed by the given name, which prompted the switch from Laye Camara to Camara Laye. Colonial society In Conakry, Laye lives with Uncle Mamadou, whose family occupies one house, not separate dwellings as in Kourassa, although each wife and circumcised male inhabits separate quarters, observing the law if not the letter of custom. Not in the memoir, but important for understanding its backdrop, is the fact that the post- World War II years, when Laye attends technical school in Conakry, saw the rise of vigorous nationalism in French West Africa. World War II inspired movements for social and political reform that would lead to independence. In at the Brazzaville Conference France reaffirmed its commitment to empire, not the independence of its colonies, but its leaders also promised reforms in the colonies, which were ultimately enacted. Nevertheless, it freed Africans from the most oppressive features of colonial rule—forced labor and discriminatory law. Africans themselves had a hand in bringing about these reforms. In they banded together to form a movement the Rassemblement Democratique Africain that agitated for constitutional guarantees of their rights, and in an arm of this movement the Parti Democratique de Guinee was established in Guinea. All these reforms suggested that perhaps France would finally implement a policy that so far it had invoked only as THE RAILROAD Built between and , the railroad in French Guinea connected the interior and the products found or grown there to coastal Conakry and, through that port, to European manufacturers and consumers. The rail lines made concrete the essential fact of colonialism: In the colony, all advancement is found in Conakry; and the only way to get to Conakry is by rail. Every day of his life, the sight of the railway provided Camara with a visual reminder of the colonial power that would shape his life. When he is ready to go to school in the capital, it is a train that carries him away. In short, the railroad encapsulates the changing world of the Malinke; in moving from Kourassa to Conakry, Camara moves from a cozy life bound by tradition and enchantments to a colder and harder society governed by the kind of technology that the train represents. At the same time, many called for a peaceful end to the colonial system throughout Africa. Laborers in Guinea started to marshal support from the population at large—youths as well as women and farmers. The majority of Africans continued to live in villages and to practice subsistence agriculture in the s. Given that the movement, initiated by workers, was still in its infancy at the close of his memoir, it may have not yet reached students like Laye or his uncle, an executive in a French firm in Conakry. Conakry When the French formed the colony of French Guinea in , they chose for their capital the small fishing village of Conakry. Conakry sat on an island called Tombo, from which the French built a thousand-foot causeway to the mainland. By the population of Conakry had swelled to 26., and the city was by far the most important place in the colony. Laye is overwhelmed by his initial experience of the city. His own village had a population of just over 6., so the sheer number of people shocks him. On top of that, the majority speak a language Susa he does not understand, and the climate is oppressively humid compared to that of his inland home. Finally, Conakry is planned like a modern city, with straight, tree-lined streets, and, as mentioned, single homes instead of concessions. But perhaps most amazing to the youth from the interior is a novelty that has nothing to do with school, city, or colony at all: It is this type of emotional reaction that makes The Dark Child such a unique mix of particular Malinke and universal human experience.

The narrator expresses his longing for his lost natal community by remembering the joy and wonder experienced by his younger self. In these chapters, Laye appears to be just another boy in a loving family—a happy Malinke youth, living in the manner of his forefathers. Only in the last four chapters, in which he recalls his experiences in Conakry, does he take on a more distinct identity. His life there cannot follow a customary model; when he returns to Kourassa on holidays, he realizes that he is slowly changing, and his mother recognizes it too, adding European touches to his dwelling. In this way the boy learns about the dangers of snakes. He prepares to kill it, but fortunately does not: This spiritual dimension is contrasted to the less quantifiable, but no less powerful, magic of his mother, whose totem is a crocodile. Not only is she safe near crocodiles, but she appears to have power over animals. He describes his days at Tindican as ones in which he is pampered, examined, made much of; his grandmother plies him with dish after dish, convinced that he does not eat enough in Kourassa. However, his time at Tindican is not idle; besides helping the whole village during the December rice harvest, he aids other children of the village in whatever tasks their parents have set them to achieve. In these chores, he is hampered by the school clothes he wears. His less civilized playmates are fascinated by, if not envious of, these fine, strange clothes, but he is less enchanted: School life presents the boy with a different set of problems. Laye devotes a chapter to describing the bullying the young children receive at the hands of the older children in the schoolyard. The youngsters are teased and forced to do manual labor that the teachers dole out to the older children as punishment for misbehavior. The situation nearly comes to a breaking point, until the headmaster is fired, and security at the school grows tighter. Following this episode, Laye describes, in vivid and emotional detail, his participation in the rite of Konden Diara and in circumcision. He describes the stages involved in this rite, as he does later for circumcision. In these two events, Laye comes as close as he ever will to being a full participant in the customary life of his people. However, these same qualities are tragic, in that they remove Laye from his native environment, and eventually into the cold northern foreignness of France. When he has completed elementary schooling in Kourassa, Camara wins acceptance to a technical school in the capital. Of all his classmates, he is the only one so honored.

**Chapter 2 : Implicit Negritude in "The Dark Child" - Inquiries Journal**

*The Dark Child Camara Laye This is the autobiographical account of the authors experience growing up in a village in French Guinea. Laye shares his childhood with the reader in an open and frank way, he lets us into his family, into his village and into his way of life.*

Born in in Koroussa, Upper Guinea, Camara Laye was the first francophone West African writer to have caught the eye of the international literary scene and thus got translated into English amongst many other international languages. Its lyricism is enriched by its double perspective. According to Adele King in *The Writings of Camara Laye* [], he was, "passionately concerned with preserving a record of traditional homeland. The book wins its audience through its tender but unsentimental treatment of the older African life and the dignity and beauty of that nostalgically lamented past. Laye expresses his deep anxiety at leaving his homeland, writing, "It was a terrible parting! I do not like to think of it. I can still hear my mother wailing. It was as if I was being torn apart. He even brought Marie Lorifo, whom he had known from Conakry, to Paris and married her. In , he published it. An autobiographical story, it narrates in the first person a journey from childhood in Kouroussa, through challenges in Conakry, to France. The book won the Prix Charles Veillon in Flushed with self-importance, he demands to see the king. He was convinced of being engaged as his worldly adviser if he should see him. But unfortunately the king had just left for the south of his realm. So Clarence is left waiting in vain. To save his time from being further wasted he is then led south by an old beggar and two young but roguish boys. He is sold to the royal harem as a slave and ends up giving up his white identity. He was born Malinke, a group that traditionally supplied the blacksmiths and goldsmiths of Guinea. He attended both the Koranic and French elementary schools in Kouroussa. At age fourteen he went to Conakry, capital of Guinea, to continue his education. He did vocational studies in motor mechanics. In , he travelled to Paris to continue studies in mechanics. In , Laye returned to Africa, first to Dahomey now Benin , then Gold Coast now Ghana and then to newly independent Guinea, where he held government posts. In , he left Guinea for Dakar, Senegal because of political reasons, never to return, presumably on exile because of his political views expressed in his third book. He would later become a writer of many essays. The arrest of his wife on her return to Guinea to visit her ailing mother led him to stop his political writings. Camara Laye died in Dakar, Senegal of a kidney infection. *The Radiance of the King* , though exploring the quest and exploits of Clarence, gives much attention to the dancer-girl, Akissi, the Fish Women and Dioki. From that point she is presented as being thrust in a struggle for maintaining her control over the fate of the young Laye. Her powers are mostly magical. She had inherited other powers, we are also told. These include the ability to draw water from the Niger with impunity. I would watch her draw water from the part where there were crocodiles. Evidence of her authoritativeness is in the scrupulous details with which she ensures that things are done. Laye was also forbidden to talk, for his attention must always be fixed on the food in front of him. Her incessant and largely uncontrollable love for her son often borders on jealousy. Even after his formal induction into manhood on his initiation she still continues to exert great influence over him. She thus used to enter his hut without any warning to check his female friends, swiftly showing the door to any she disliked. She was said to be shouting harder than anyone else. This indicates her effort to assert herself above everyone else, even her husband. She controlled their conduct and etiquette throughout the process. At the end of the novel the father has been reduced to virtual impotence. Then my thoughts returned suddenly to my mother. He hardly knew where to begin. She is the one who struggles to shield him from being engulfed and devoured by westernization. Throughout the novel it is seen that Laye shows great affection for his mother. In spite of this the reader is still given a vivid picture of what they look like. She is usually amongst the many girls who accompany him and his sister to school. It is during such situations that they developed affection for each other. This gradually grows into love. She brought him some wheat cake and later she could no longer control herself as she burst into crying in empathy with him. The next time she cried was when he was leaving for Conakry. These instances of crying indicate her great concern for him. However, very little description, less so physical description, is given of her. And all we get of her relationship to the hero is not explicitly stated nor adequately

demonstrated, but only implied. In spite of all this we get the feel of an adolescent love affair "in the games they play on their way to school, the resulting shyness and then the sheer emotion displayed especially when he is departing for Conakry. Marie on the other hand is more explicitly portrayed. She is said to be a half-caste with a very light skin almost bordering on being white. She is "very beautiful, surely the most beautiful girl of all. To the young Laye her beauty is like that of a fairy. She would later help her with her housework. With time she becomes accepted as a part of the family. At the same time her love for Laye was strengthening. It grew to becoming so strong that she ignored all the other boys who were in love with her. So when Laye sat to his proficiency certificate she was even more anxious about his fate than his aunts, as we are told: She did not attach much importance to her own studies, but I really do not know to what extremities she might have been driven if she had not seen my name among the list of successful candidates in the official newspaper of French Guinea. Such selfless love and the further revelation that she herself had been to see the marabout transforms her to a mother-figure. The mother stands out as a forceful and loving woman. Marie is a kindly and motherly girl whose whole soul is devoted to the boy she loves, and Fanta is the young immature girl who falls in love with an equally immature boy. In *The Radiance of the King*, the female characters, if they could be so called, show little of such warmth and conviction. They fail to come off as real people. Because of this they could not have been drawn at such depth as in *The African Child*. The first female characters to be encountered is the dancing girl from whom Clarence asked direction to the city gates. The first and only glimpse we have of her physical appearance is through a rather seductive description: But what is more important is the ease and vitality with which she helps Clarence to continue his journey, "speeding away with him through the narrow streets" crossing a number of streets and negotiating numerous crossroads and plunging determinedly ahead after breaking free of the grip of the leader of the gang. From the house he is ushered into the fields leading into the forest. One cannot get a definite picture of Akissi as she is not a definable person. She is more of a concept. But their role is also spiritual. Through his involvement in sensuousness and his uninhibited sexual orgies, sleeping with the whole harem, he loses his original pride and feels disgusted with himself: He knew quite well that he had become a different man since he had come to live in Aziana. But he detested the new man, he refused to countenance this new man who at night so utterly abandoned himself because of the odour of a bunch of flowers p ROTK. Though she is reputed to be a "frightening creature surrounded by snakes. In the end he is rendered spiritually ready for the coming of the king and is therefore qualified to be accepted by him. Laye also succeeds in giving us visual pictures of these last three female figures. Even Akissi who is never the same is given physical attributes which could be taken as holding good for all the girls who slept with Clarence. In effect she becomes little more than a sex symbol. Almost all his thoughts of her are as sensual as this: The other two female figures, the fish-women and Dioki are also seen in sexual terms. And indeed they determine their course. One could then conclude that Laye uses women as important vehicles of spiritual rebirth. Her exposure and threat to the male witchdoctor is also a significant symbol of her power and fearlessness. In brief, Laye, unlike other West African novelists like Achebe invests his female characters with leading and challenging roles in his novels. He thus seems to be holding up womanhood as the most dependable custodians of the traditional culture.

**Chapter 3 : The Dark Child - Laye Camara - Google Books**

*Camara Laye (January 1, - February 4, ) was an African writer from racedaydvl.com was the author of The African Child (L'Enfant noir), a novel based loosely on his own childhood, and The Radiance of the King (Le Regard du roi).*

Laye wrote the memoir in French, and the final sentence reads as such in the original version: Indeed, the map of the subway is particularly important at this moment in the book. This moment is one of many instances in which Laye implicitly suggests a rejection of colonial French education and society, and an embracement of traditional African values. Yet it is this very idealism that emphasizes his rejection of French colonialism. An early symbol of the idealized African identity is the little black snake. Unlike other snakes, which the men and woman of the community kill at first sight, the little black snake that visits his father is different. Throughout the autobiography, Laye portrays his father in an ideal, almost mystical light. A recurring theme of the novel, and indeed an entire chapter, is devoted to the attainment of manhood and masculinity. The snake itself is difficult to interpret without being presumptuous. And its significance can perhaps be attributed less to the animal itself, and more to the figure it reveals itself to his father. When a young Laye goes with his Uncle to participate in the rice harvest, the existence of a communal labor force within his idealistic perception of Africa society indicates an endorsement of socialist values. The context of the situation is integral. Laye is spending a few days in Tindican, a tiny and seemingly less developed village than his hometown. He has arrived to the delight of his extended family, which marvel at his modern clothes Laye Laye then goes on to note: I do not know how the idea of something rustic became associated with country people. Civil formalities are more respected on the farm than in the city. Farm ceremony and manners are not understood by the city, which has no time for these things. To be sure, farm life is simpler than city life. But dealings between one man and another are more strictly regulated. I used to notice a dignity everywhere which I have rarely found in the cities. The right of others were highly respected. And if intelligence seemed slower it was because reflection preceded speech and because speech itself was a most serious matter. Laye Laye wrote *The Dark Child* while in Paris, and the influence of Marxism in response to the modernity of European urbanism is evident. Surely, the poorer villages of French colonial Guinea were not this idealistic. But Laye is writing in longing for a traditional childhood environment he then perceived as superior. Alienation in the French Educational System It is no coincidence that once Laye enrolls in a French primary school instead of a Koran one his educational experience deteriorates. In chapter six he describes his school punishments as severe, and the lessons as quite difficult. Thus Laye hints that despite the apparent superiority of the French educational system, he learned in spite of its many challenges. It also is important to note that his idealistic perception of masculinity, his father, saves him from this ordeal. It is not a complete story of his life; it is, in fact, only a tiny snippet. Instead, he gives us a strategically planned perception of his early life in order to advance certain messages and beliefs. The events should not be discounted as fiction, but rather fictionalized accounts of real events in order to prove a point. In addition, the conditions of French colonial Guinea, especially the tiny village of Tindican, could not have been as ideal as Laye describes. How much of this attitude is simply revealed in his writing, and how much was purposely employed, is hard to determine. Thus *The Dark Child* is not merely a memoir. Stanford University, 24 May Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Myrna Bell Rochester and Natalie Schorr. Cite References Print Diagne, Souleymane. *Implicit Negritude in The Dark Child*. More By This Author:

Chapter 4 : The Dark Child | [racedaydvl.com](http://racedaydvl.com)

*The Dark Child is Camara Laye's autobiography, tracing the development of his cultural and personal values as a young man coming of age within the Malinke tribe of Upper Guinea during the '50s.*

Get Full Essay Get access to this section to get all help you need with your essay and educational issues. Whether you are a fan of autobiographies or not, The Dark Child is without a doubt worth your time. This is something that I thought he did wonderfully; as the book continues and he grows older, his perception and understanding of the world change along with his writing. So while he is writing about when he was a small child, he writes as if he believes what he sees and as the book nears its end, he comments more on the natural and logical as opposed to the supernatural and the impossible. Laye begins his life story at the age of 5 or 6, neither he nor the reader are really sure which it is. He opens with a fictitious aspect to grab the reader; the aspect being a magical snake. His father is a well-known blacksmith by those both near and far. He is held in great esteem. To be its representative. This enralls Laye and he grows even more respect and admiration of his father. His mother is also well known for a special ability: This means that she could sense evil and wrongdoing, call it out, but had no powers to actually cast a harmful spell. This is why the people never feared her, and greatly respected her. She also had abilities such as walking next to alligators without being harmed, due to her totem, and commanding animals to do as she said, i. These are the stories Laye relays to us from when he was a small child. The school he attends when he is a little older is a school by any means, but there is great turmoil. Often the older boys pick on the younger ones and while this may be brought to the attention of the director the principle, headmaster etc. This section is actually one of my favorite parts. As he grows older, his style changes and he sees the real world as it really is as opposed to his fantasies he had when he was younger. A major development in the story is the actual act of becoming a man. Boys his age have a festival for many days that lead up to their circumcision, after which they become men. After this accomplishment, he still writes about his fears and his thoughts but he is much more wary to keep them to himself. And as he grows even older he moves away from home to attend Technical College for four years. These years change him very much and when he returns home he is much more of an adult and conducts himself in such a manner. The ending of the book was very disappointing to me. I really enjoyed reading about how his mother was in pure denial and wanted to keep her son near her forever and how his father knew how hard it would be but he also knew that there would never be another opportunity like this for his son. After a family brawl, which was eerily similar to one that I had with my own parents, he is allowed to go to Argenteuil, an outlying city of Paris, France, to finish his studies. This is all good and fine, the part that irritated me was the ending: It ended with him sitting on the bus feeling the map in his pocket. For me, that was the greatest, and one of the very few, letdowns of the book. As I stated previously, I thoroughly enjoyed this book. There were several chapters which I enjoyed even more than the others; one of those chapters was chapter 2, my favorite part of the book. This chapter was all about his father and his craftsmanship with metals, but above all, gold. The way it is described it is almost as though there is a magical quality to the way his father works. The way he strike is so precise and destined to land, the way the go-between would sing of his praise; it was a near godly act. Of course they would never say this in the book; that would be blasphemy. It also is very characteristic of his age. Most children that age look up to their fathers with awe and see them above other men and as the true definition of a man. Laye clearly felt this towards his father. Never before have I read anything from Guinea. Truth be told, and as ignorant as it truly sounds, I believed Guinea to be in South America. I had never really given it much thought. I had never really given much thought to the life and beliefs of the different African villages. Similarly, Things Fall Apart has a coming of age tale; something that I am starting to believe is very important to different African villages. More essays like this:

Chapter 5 : The African Child - Wikipedia

*The Dark Child tells the story of the author's youth. Yet, the style, structure, and purpose of the book cause it to be classified as a novel as well as an autobiography; Camara Laye has molded.*

There seems to be some disagreement about whether *The Dark Child* is a memoir or an autobiographical novel; my library shelves it as nonfiction, though given the abundant dialogue, the author clearly took some creative license. There are no atrocities, no violence except from bullies at school, no political themes: Later chapters are spent on harvest and coming-of-age rituals. Only toward the end does Laye leave the village to study. French speakers interested in African culture. I used several chapters of this book in my 4AP French classes. I have read the book many times. The book has an outlook which is unique. Camara Laye has a foot in two worlds. We see him as a boy in the villages of his father and grandmother. He opens a window for us into a world where spirits reside in every living thing and where a snake can speak and share knowledge with the leader of a clan. He also shows us his introduction to European science-based culture. And even though the two worlds seem to be mutually exclusive, he does not invalidate one at the expense of the other. I found it to be thought-provoking. The book allows the reader to question almost all of the givens in the knowledge bank he or she has acquired from Western civilization. Those who read the book carefully can never fully trust their belief in the inferiority of an animistic culture to their own. In one memorable chapter, Laye reminds us that politeness and good manners are never more important than in a small village. I have only read this book in French. I have no idea if the English translation comes close to capturing the essence of the book.

**Chapter 6 : The Dark Child by Camara Laye**

*The book, originally written in French by Camara Laye under the title "l'enfant noir" in (the dark child), was translated by James Kirkup. In The African Child, Laye describes life, growing up as an African child in Guinea, West Africa.*

He participates in a festival consisting of public and private ceremonies for "several days" and later a period of physical healing and recovery from the circumcision itself for over one month Laye , Laye spends his days of recovery lounging on a mat with the other young men, isolated from his family for the most part, allowed only to visit with his mother and father from a distance between the end of the ceremony and the day he is able to walk home comfortably Upon his return, he is moved to his own hut, separated from his mother and father though, "still within earshot" of the family hut, as his mother tartly reminds him This pivotal scene closes with Laye turning to his mother to thank her, who he finds standing quietly behind him, "smiling at [him] sadly" In the school, in a new city for the first time in his experience, Laye encounters difficult language barriers and a hot, humid climate more taxing and oppressive than that in his Koroussa home In some sense it is a metaphor for the psychological and sociological systems under which he finds himself strained. He laments, "without them [my uncles] I should have been really miserable, lonely, in that city whose ways were foreign to me, whose climate was hostile, and whose dialect I could barely follow. All around me only Soussou was spoken. And I am a Malinke. Except for French the only language I speak is Malinke" Colonialization is more evident in Conakry than in Koroussa. Interestingly enough, as Laye experiences and more European education, adopting the ideas and appearances associated with it, the decor of his hut become altered by his mother to, "acquire a European look" which he notes he is aware of because the changes were making "the hut more comfortable," and also offered "tangible proof of how much my mother loves [ed] me" Several years after leaving for Conakry, Laye returns home with his "proficiency certificate" and a "troublesome" offer from the director of his school to continue his studies through a scholarship, in France, many hours from Koroussa The map is an extremely powerful symbol to carry as he leaves the land of Guinea completely, and for a time, the continent of Africa His father gives him the physical, practical tools for surviving in the city, but with that comes a compass directing the learning and success of his son. The fear, excitement, anxiety and sadness culminate in the last vignette of the autobiography, with Laye crying as he goes to exit the plane, lightly placing his hand over the map in his left shirt pocket Dialogues The Dark Child fits well with a number of postcolonial works of literature, both within the continent of Africa and in the world at large. The perspective Laye uses to track the story behind growing up in rural and later urban Guinea, is similar to I, Rigoberta Menchu where the Guatemalan woman tells her coming of age story in a similar way, though the motives for constructing each novel are vastly different. The first person point of view invokes a comfortable intimacy to follow Laye as he guides us almost two decades of his life within and outside of the Malinke. This European vantage point of colonization does not surface as strongly in The Dark Child, but acts more as a back story to the action Laye takes to attend school, leave home, etc. We can certainly speculate the role of the French colonizing Guinea, but actual French personas are not revealed. He seems somewhat unaware of the magnitude of the French influence until he leaves to attend school in the capital of Conakry. There he finds a separation between "industrial" or "trade" schools like the one he attends, and "classic academics" of more affluent schools where economically well-off children are placed. The divisive, controversial debate over whether their sons should attend European or missionary schools is a point of convergence between Arrow of God and The Dark Child. Ezeulu sends his son off with feelings of hope and anxiety, knowing his "blessing" to attend the school has sent a strong political message to British colonizers. By accepting the offer, he too sends a message of support for French values despite objections by his mother. Edogo and Laye, as sons, each face similar struggles in becoming more educated see also the text, I, Rigoberta Menchu who also struggles with the ideology behind learning the Spanish language of her government, and attending school despite the wishes of her ancestors to help protect the culture of their tribes, yet also risk "selling out" the ancient traditions and values of their elders as they slowly embrace British and French educational ideals and approaches to life. These battles later take on more of a sad tone than that of anger, as

each parent relinquishes control over their son, and allow them to operate independently, as their own chiefs, even if it means separation from their native society. The theme or idea of education in each novel are also like that of a game, on the side of both European colonizers and native people in each region of Africa. With the offer for education comes political, social, and religious strings that create a push-and-pull between the boys and their families. Education and religion appear less as intangible ideas and more as functional tools that act as means of control, domination and to display a type of psychological representation to colonial powers in Guinea and Nigeria.

### Chapter 7 : The Dark Child Themes - [racedaydvl.com](http://racedaydvl.com)

*"The Dark Child" by Camara Laye Reading 17 November 6 Comments This is a fairly short and simple autobiographical account of a boy growing up in Guinea in the s and 40s.*

### Chapter 8 : The Dark Child - Chapter 1 Summary & Analysis

*The Dark Child Summary & Study Guide Camara Laye This Study Guide consists of approximately 35 pages of chapter summaries, quotes, character analysis, themes, and more - everything you need to sharpen your knowledge of The Dark Child.*

### Chapter 9 : The African Child | work by Laye | [racedaydvl.com](http://racedaydvl.com)

*Study Guide for The Dark Child (The African Child) The Dark Child (The African Child) study guide contains a biography of Camara Laye, literature essays, quiz questions, major themes, characters, and a full summary and analysis.*