

The Life Chest: Africa: Greed Loses What It Has Gained

Kim Yost

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This exciting adventure tale teaches many valuable life lessons to those who seek earthly rewards.

Kim Yost's novel *The Life Chest: Africa* is an adventure story with deep historical background. The narrative relates a contemporary parable about greed, good, and evil told through the lens of an extended family sharing generations of experiences.

Two cousins, Josh and Bernie, follow a treasure map through the wilds of Africa on a search for missing diamonds. These two are experienced adventurers, having shared an exciting trip through Asia in the prequel to this installment of the Life Chest series.

The novel is challenging to classify, as it operates on a couple of different levels. The historical background of the trip forms part of the detailed narrative and relates the development of the African continent over the past century or so. On another level is the cousins' journey itself. Character development is not essential to the purpose or success of the book, the point of which seems to be the lessons learned along the way, not the people who populate the pages.

Even so, many characters and generations are involved. To help in keeping track of them, there is an appendix titled "Character Map." This map includes a page for the "American, Canadian and British Characters," two pages for the "good Guys," and another page for the "bad Guys" in Africa. Most of the African characters have names that translate as symbolic concepts: Winna Sylla means "friend," and General Erasto Okoro is "Man of Peace."

An inanimate object, the "Life Chest," plays an essential role in the novel. At critical points in the story, the adventurers discover a chest, and in it, along with other objects relating to the life of its owner, important clues needed to move the plot forward. Disbelief must be suspended to accept the premise that many people in Africa have such chests. The book also promotes a company (operated by the author's wife, Donna) that markets "Life Chests." Still, the story teaches valuable life lessons. The intrepid treasure seekers, Josh and Bernie, are continuously dedicating whatever rewards they find to worthwhile causes, such as schools and community farms.

The Life Chest is handsomely printed on magazine-quality paper with plenty of colorful illustrations that cleverly enhance the plot and heighten the reading experience. This intriguing package contains an exciting tale that is fun to read, a valuable history lesson that educates the uninformed, and a message on positive values for the modern world. Middle school students will enjoy this book, as will older readers.

JOHN SENGER (March 27, 2016)

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