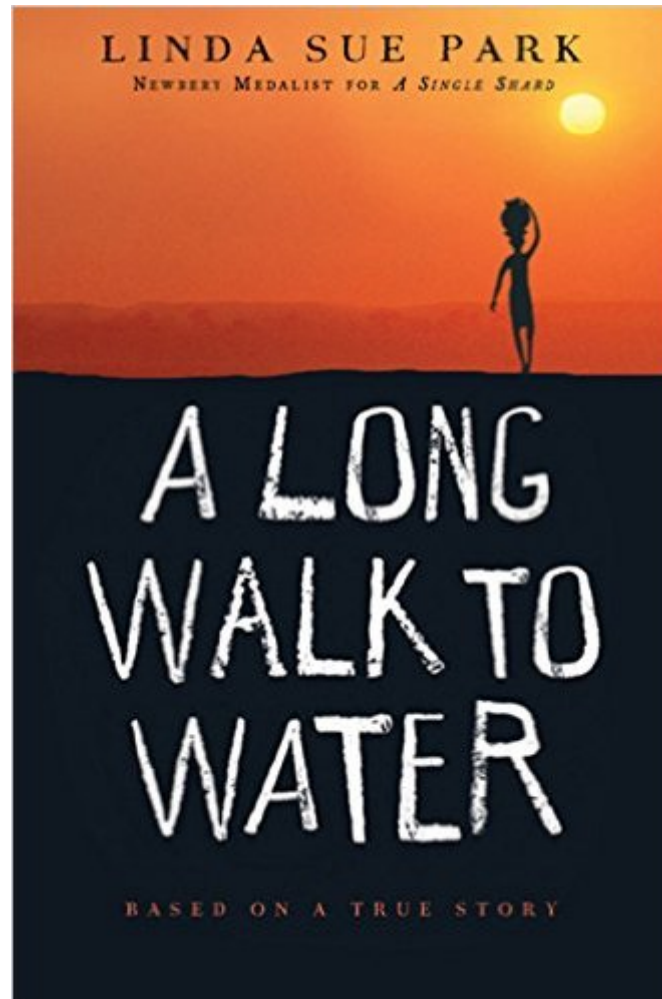


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# A Long Walk To Water: Based On A True Story



## Synopsis

The New York Times bestseller *A Long Walk to Water* begins as two stories, told in alternating sections, about two eleven-year-olds in Sudan, a girl in 2008 and a boy in 1985. The girl, Nya, is fetching water from a pond that is two hours' walk from her home: she makes two trips to the pond every day. The boy, Salva, becomes one of the "lost boys" of Sudan, refugees who cover the African continent on foot as they search for their families and for a safe place to stay. Enduring every hardship from loneliness to attack by armed rebels to contact with killer lions and crocodiles, Salva is a survivor, and his story goes on to intersect with Nya's in an astonishing and moving way.

## Book Information

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (October 4, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0547577311

ISBN-13: 978-0547577319

Product Dimensions: 0.2 x 5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (1,035 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## Customer Reviews

I have mixed feelings about this book. The book follows a lost boy of Sudan and is based on a true story. There are many fine details about life in Sudan, starting with the young girl (Nya) who spends most of her waking hours walking back and forth to bring water to her family. What an essential topic for young adults (and adults) to read and learn about. As a teacher, I wanted to like the book, recommend the book, teach the book before I ever opened it. It's very short, a major plus for many reluctant readers, and the reading level is not challenging. But for such a short book, it feels long. The chapters alternate between main characters Salva and Nya. Only at the end of the book is

the connection between the two characters revealed, and it's the greatest pleasure of the book. Unfortunately, it doesn't rescue the book for me. For most of the book, the alternating chapters irritate because they are so disparate. Furthermore, the book covers some 20+ years of Salva's life in a span of 128 pages, most of which is spent walking. It's one of those books that we want children to love and some certainly will, but many will declare it boring. I couldn't help wondering if the book might be better told in flashback by Salva. With all that walking, Salva had plenty of time to think, yet there is no feeling in the thoughts. He misses his family. He worries the group will leave him behind. He wonders what will become of him. These are thoughts we need not be told--that much is obvious. I know this is Linda Sue Park's writing style, but it's not to my personal taste. Based on what I know about the lost boys in Sudan, I braced myself to feel sick to my stomach while reading the book, but I never really did, except for one scene involving crocodiles (and soldiers).

Hardship is in the eye of the beholder. Here at home, most of us are experiencing it to some extent. Whether it's just cutting back a little, or facing down the barrel of a mortgage payment you can't meet, life has become harder. Does it help to get some perspective? Does it help to know that, right now, there are places where the cost of a bucket of water is measured in human life? In the Sudan, water is more precious than gold. You can't eat gold, and without water, you can't eat. It's a dry country at best, but when droughts come, lasting months or years, crops fail, cattle die, and people starve. Water, when available, isn't always clean, so at the best of times, cholera and dysentery are common. The simple act of getting that water is beyond imagining. It means walking miles to the nearest source, hoping that rival groups don't arrive at the same time so you won't have to fight or risk being killed to get your jug filled. It means filling that jug and carrying it back home, emptying it into a pail and setting out again. Over and over again, dusk until dawn. Venomous snakes and dangerous animals are so common, they barely rate notice. Children, being of less value than adults, are usually given the job. Since girls are not as valuable as boys, this is typically their task. In families of wealth, the boys attend school while the girls learn to become wives and homemakers...and water carriers. In the dry season, or during a drought, things get trickier. Entire families spend their days trekking for water, and deadly battles over who got there first are much more frequent. At any time of year, drought or no drought, an added attraction would be run-ins with militia groups...

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