

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Angela Shelf Medearis. *Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story*. Morton Grove, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Company, 2000. 40 pp. Ages 4-8. \$15.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8075-7315-0.

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## <cite>Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story</cite>

### *Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story*

After the death of his wife, an old Ghanaian man becomes mother and father to his seven quarrelsome sons. When the old man dies, the village Chief summons all seven sons and mentions the inheritance their father has left them. Each son boastfully proclaims that he is the sole beneficiary of their father's estate. A belligerent scene erupts. The chief quells the disturbance by announcing that their father has equally divided his estate among them and that they must work cooperatively to earn their share. Together they must make gold from seven spools of thread, each a different color: blue, red, yellow, orange, green, black, and white. For the first time in their lives, the brothers work together, argue positively and objectively about issues, and produce outstandingly beautiful pieces of multicolored cloth. The king's treasurer buys the cloth with one bag of gold.

The book is an amazingly wonderful way to teach the significance of the seven principles in our daily lives and the lives of those around us. The story challenges readers to find all seven principles or the Nguzo Saba, i.e. Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (co-operative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith).

*Seven Spools of Thread* is a tremendously resource-

ful way to educate people of all ages about Kwanzaa. An African proverb, an introduction and explanation of Kwanzaa, the description of the seven principles, the process of cloth weaving in Ghana, and a step-by-step guide to weaving cloth to make a belt are among the rich resources that make Medearis' book a gold mine of information. The text is easy to read and to follow. Medearis' words and Minter's delightful illustrations demonstrate a true understanding of Kwanzaa by both author and illustrator. A poetic, musical text that is almost audible sends readers on a journey that truly leads to unity, self determination, collaborative work, and the various other facets of Kwanzaa. The story depicts how by working together, even in the modern condition in Ghana, people can enhance their own economic situation, improve societal values, and provide an example of how group work can produce end results that benefit the entire society in the long run. The Ghanaian proverb "Two heads are better than one" becomes even more meaningful in the story. The youngest son's question "What about the poor people in the village ... we receive an inheritance, but what will they do?" is a strong message about how community work can improve the lives of all in society. Classroom teachers will find the book to be one of the best resources on this important African American holiday. All types of libraries, especially school and public, must add *Seven Spools of Thread* to their collection.

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