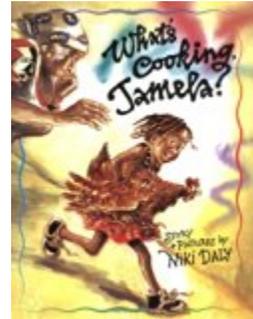


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Niki Daly. *What's Cooking, Jamela?* Hand-lettering by Andrew van der Merwe. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2001. ii + 28 pp. Ages 4-8. \$16.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-374-35602-6.

Reviewed by Elwyn Jenkins (Professor Emeritus, Vista University, Pretoria)
Published on H-AfrTeach (April, 2002)



What's Cooking, Jamela?

What's Cooking, Jamela?

This is another colourful, entertaining picture book by the award-winning South African artist and writer, Niki Daly. The small amount of text on each page could be read by children of about the age of eight, while younger children will enjoy looking at the pictures and will understand if the text is read to them.

The book is a sequel to *Jamela's Dress* and features the same characters: little Jamela, her mother, sister, and special friend, the young Rasta Archie. Jamela has to fatten the chicken for Christmas, but they become friends and she runs away with it rather than have it eaten. Chaos ensues wherever Jamela goes. As usual, she is forgiven and all ends happily.

The book is set in a South African town, and some local vocabulary is used, consisting mainly of exclamations which do not hinder understanding. Their meanings are given in a glossary at the end. The language and names add to the authentic details of the setting and people, which are typical of a modern African working-class community. There is no father in Jamela's home, and their Christmas dinner is a humble one, but every-

one dresses in bright clothes.

Particularly attractive are the large scenes, such as the school nativity play, the bustling street, and the interior of Miss Style hair salon when Jamela chases her chicken through it.

There is plenty of detail for sharp-eyed readers to look out for: the little figures of Mickey Mouse and two African carvings, which are ornaments that also double up as characters for Jamela's nativity scene; the terrifying commercial on the TV screen, advertising fried chicken; the Christmas cards on the wall and the star suspended over the kitchen table; the little boy who regularly appears in the background, playing next door. Even the endpapers are there to be discovered, decorated with a design of chickens.

Among the awards that Niki Daly has won, his picture book *Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky* was selected as a *New York Times Book Review* Best Illustrated Book of the Year in 1995. He also illustrates books by other authors, a classic being *Fly, Eagle, Fly!* by Christopher Gregorowski. *What's Cooking, Jamela?* can only enhance his reputation.

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