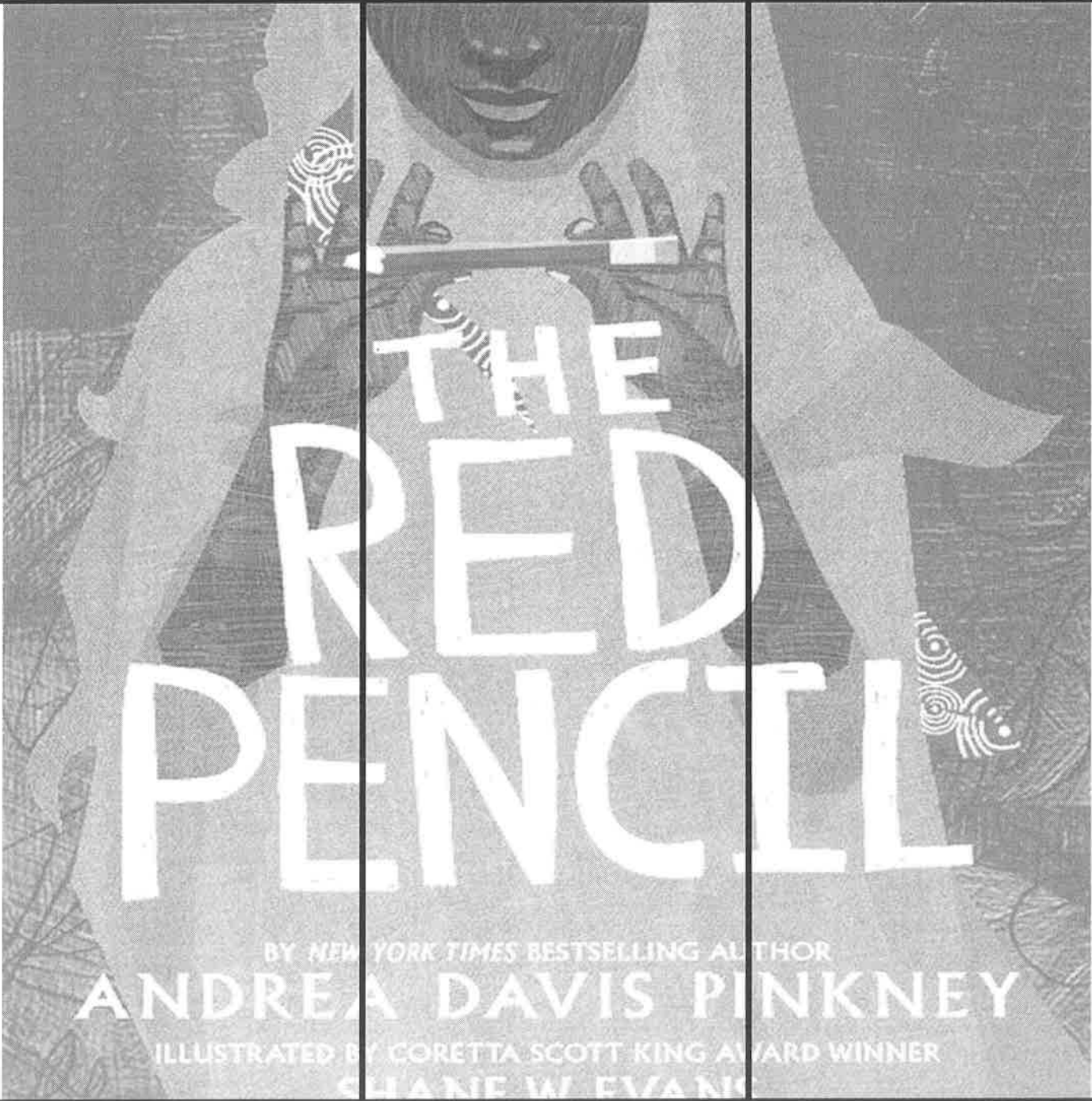


The Red Pencil
By Andrea Davis Pinkney

K	W	L
What do you KNOW now that you've finished watching the video and reading the article?	What do you still WANT to know about Darfur? What are things that you are still wondering about?	What have you LEARNED about the conflict in Darfur after finishing <i>The Red Pencil</i> ?
 <p>THE RED PENCIL</p> <p>BY NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR ANDREA DAVIS PINKNEY</p> <p>ILLUSTRATED BY CORETTA SCOTT KING AWARD WINNER SHANE W. EVANS</p>		

NAME: _____

The Red Pencil by Andrea Davis
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Land of the Fur

The Darfur conflict unfolded in early 2003 in the western region of Sudan, a country in northeast Africa. The conflict sprung from an ongoing civil war. Fighting escalated when the Sudanese Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement accused the government of Sudan of neglecting Darfur both politically and economically. As a result, the two armed movements declared war against the central government. The government relied on the Janjaweed, an ethnically based militia composed mainly of Arab groups, to fight the rebellion.

The largest tribal group in Darfur is that of the Fur people. Darfur, which means "land of the Fur," has suffered as warring groups fight over land and animal-grazing rights between nomadic Arabs and Fur farmers. Because of the staggering number of human casualties, the United States government describes what has happened in Darfur as genocide. Since 2003, at least 300,000 people have been killed and more than 2.5 million have been displaced inside Sudan and elsewhere.

These people have been uprooted from their homes, which were bombed or burned in brutal raids by the Janjaweed militia. In the aftermath of military slaughter, they have been forced to flee in search of safety. Many families travel great distances to reach one of several relocation camps throughout Sudan and Chad, a neighboring country. When a family sets out from their village, they often don't know where they're going, exactly. When they flee, their course is determined by what routes appear to be the safest, those free of potential attacks. To ensure they will not be seen, they travel mostly at night, hoping to get to the safety of a displacement camp.

Use your map!

*genocide:
the deliberate destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group.

While the refugee camps provide a haven¹, they are often overrun with people living among squalid² conditions.

A
Setting
during
part of
the
story.

Kalma Camp, located in South Darfur, was considered one of the largest refugee centers as the conflict grew. At its peak, it accommodated nearly 90,000 residents. Those living in Kalma have very little hope of ever returning to their homes.

Finding Hope

When I first learned of the struggles unfolding in Darfur and Sudan, my heart broke. As the crisis worsened, I felt compelled to present the ugly effects of war to young readers in a way that could help them understand their impact. That is how *The Red Pencil* began.

Although I have traveled through several parts of Africa, conducted extensive research for this novel, and consulted with several experts, I am not an expert on the crisis in Darfur. As a novelist, I felt it vital to write a book that speaks to the human condition in times of war and to present this information in a way that is accessible to young readers. This story has been heavily vetted³ and fact-checked. Any errors or omissions are unintended. My hope is that I've written a book that is true in its soul and that speaks to the indomitable spirit of a people.

The Red Pencil is a work of fiction inspired by several accounts that I read about children growing up inside an unthinkable reality.

Young people witnessed horrific acts of war. With their families and surviving neighbors, they fled to refugee camps in search of safety.

The Red Pencil's illustrated poems follow one child's journey through grief and possibility. Part novel, part sketchbook, this story celebrates the power of creativity, and the way that art can help us heal. It is intended to be a book about hope, the resilience of the

1. haven - a place of safety
2. squalid - filthy & unhealthy
3. vetted - to be sure of background knowledge

human spirit in the wake of devastating circumstances, and how artistic expression can transcend the wounds of war. I wrote this novel with a weeping heart. The use of prose poems to tell Amira's story is deliberate. I found that verse could be a means of insulating young readers from the tragic realities of genocide and could offer a way to make the horrors of war easier to comprehend.] main character

Poetry also encourages young readers to express their own emotions and troubles, and to find comfort in the most upsetting circumstances.

According to LitWorld, a global literacy advocacy organization, 523 million girls and women worldwide cannot read or write. This is especially true in developing nations. In Darfur, the illiteracy rate among girls is alarmingly high. Darfurian schools cost money that each family must pay if they want their children to attend. Many families do not have the funds for education. Girls are often forced to stay out of school to help with household tasks and farming chores. Also, in rural areas, education for girls can be seen as a threat to traditional values. Girls are often expected to marry young and work on their family land, herding animals and tending the home.

Fortunately, teachers and international aid groups are working to increase educational opportunities for girls, especially those in cities, small villages, and safety camps.

→ the Refugee Camp

In 2004, when most of this story is set, Kalma was just beginning to entertain the idea of creating a school. There were fledgling attempts, but because the war was new and tensions were high, people were still trying to determine what would happen after the initial crisis. At that time, within Kalma's confines, school was not a priority. Also, families still clung to traditional values, which discouraged educational access for girl children.

On the dusty outskirts of Nyala, South Darfur's largest town, there is a school called Qud al Haboob, also referred to as Gad al Haboob. This school is known for its rare distinction—the sizable population of

4. transcend - to rise above

5. prose poems - poems that are not written in traditional verse & tell a story

girls who attend. In 2012, among the school's 186 students, 98 were girls. For the sake of this novel, I've modified the school's name to Gad Primary School to avoid confusion with the story's references to the *haboob* sandstorms that sweep across the Sudan region.

It is not fully known how the Qud al Haboob got its name. Some believe it was named for its location in the region, where the *haboob* storms are prevalent.

The vignettes that make up this novel were inspired by personal accounts, interviews, transcribed narratives, and news stories.

As part of my research for *The Red Pencil*, I spent countless hours interviewing individuals who have lived through the Darfur conflict, and also workers who have traveled into refugee camps providing aid to families and children.

These courageous people were eager to share their stories with me, in the hope that *The Red Pencil* could be a means by which young readers can understand the shocking complexity of Darfur's struggle and the tragedies and triumphs of those who have survived.

characters
in the
story

In addition to recounting details about the war, these men and women shared colorful stories of village life, tribal customs, local agriculture, and farming practices. Several bits of detail about conditions in Darfur and Sudan in 2004 came from these [conversations. *Dando* and *Muma* are Amira's own terms of endearment for her parents. The tribal beliefs about calling the moon, and the moon's showing power, are based on my interviews with Darfurian refugees. So are the references to animal habits, life in a refugee camp, clothing, and weather patterns.

Many brave people have spoken out against the struggles in Darfur. Governments are working to end the war. But the atrocities continue. Children and their families still suffer.

The Red Pencil is written to honor them.

↳ vignettes - a short description or section



