

Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan Study Guide

Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan by John Dau

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Plot Summary

"Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan" by John Bul Dau tells the story of two young children who had their lives disrupted by war. They each traveled far by foot, fighting rebels and starvation, to reach a refugee camp. They grew up in the camp, without immediate family and eventually made their way to America.

John lived in a rural village where his family raised cows. He had a pleasant life until he was 13. At that time, soldiers attacked his village, and he was separated from his parents. A neighbor named Abraham helped him, and they walked for months, traveling over 500 miles to Ethiopia, where they were headed for a refugee camp called Pinyudu.

Martha lived in the city of Juba. She was five years old when her mother took her sister and her to live with a cousin in the country because war was coming to their city. While their parents were away at church, the country home was attacked. Martha's relative took her, her sister, and her own five children on a very long journey to find shelter at a refugee camp called Pinyudu. Along the way, they hid from soldiers and fought illness, dehydration, and starvation.

Once they reached the camp, they joined many others. The adults lived together, and the boys were separate. They were called the "Lost Boys." The United Nations brought them food, and they set up shelters. The refugees continue to fight disease and starvation. The girls were placed with families, and Martha lived with a woman named Yar. One day they were told that they would have to leave because the new government was closing the refugee camps.

They left at night and walked toward a safer place. Along the way, John's group was attacked, and many people died as they tried to cross the river. They finally made it to the border, but there were many refugees and very little food. Martha remembered how difficult it was. They had to go three weeks without food. Eventually this area was affected by the violence of war as well. Airplanes began dropping bombs on the refugees, and they had to leave once again. John and the Lost Boys walked the 500-mile journey. Thanks to Yar, Martha got a ride for part of the way.

Both Martha and John finally found refuge at a camp in Kenya. They began to attend school and learn English. While they were at the camp, they met each other at a dance. After some persistence on John's part, Martha agreed to let him visit her so they could be boyfriend and girlfriend.

Martha was worried that she was going to be forced to get married to a much-older man, and she learned that some of the Lost Boys were able to go to America. She talked with the people at the United Nations, letting them know that there were some Lost Girls as well.



She went through the application process and received permission for herself and for her sister to go to America. They kept this secret from her family so she wouldn't be forced to marry. She and her sister went to America and joined a foster family in Seattle.

Eventually John came to America as well. He was sent to Syracuse, New York where he worked and earned a college degree. He and Martha married, and they both were reunited with their birth families. They did what they could to help this situation with the refugees back in their homeland.

Part One - Peace

Part One - Peace Summary and Analysis

"Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan" by John Bul Dau tells the story of two young children who had their lives disrupted by war. They each traveled far by foot, fighting rebels and starvation, to reach a refugee camp. They grew up in the camp, without immediate family and eventually made their way to America.

John wrote about how when he was a young boy his great uncle died trying to protect their cattle from a lion. He was proud of his uncle. His people, the Dinka, lived in southern Sudan and raised cattle. They used the cows as a form of money so it was important to protect them.

After the death of his great-uncle, the entire village honored him. Even though John was only seven or eight, he knew why they did so. His great-uncle had demonstrated the values taught by the Dinka: respect, courage, hard work, and self-sacrifice. Although he understood the rules, at that point, John didn't realize how much he would have to live by the rules in order to survive in his own life.

In southern Sudan, nobody kept exact records. However, his family thought he was born in July of 1974. His father was a wrestler who became a judge. The man taught his son not to show respect. His mother was the daughter of a great Dinka chief.

The village they lived in hadn't changed in centuries, and the people liked it that way. They lived in houses made of mud, sticks, leaves, and grass, and they had no paved roads. The land was flat and hot. Missionaries came to the area, and that was how John's family became Christians.

John began to do chores when he was very young. His mother and father tended the garden, and his older brothers watched over the cattle. He did this as well as he became older. Like the other boys in his village, he learned to fight with spears, clubs, and knives. He didn't go to school, but he learned everything he needed to know through storytelling.

Martha didn't grow up in the countryside like John. She grew up in Juba, the most important city in southern Sudan. Her family lived in a compound with another family. Before he went to work at his job as a policeman each day, her father would bring his wife, Martha, and Martha's sister Tabitha to a garden where they grew peanuts.

Juba was a large city, and there were people from all over. Like John, Martha was from the Dinka tribe. This was the largest tribe in southern Sudan. John was part of the Bor Nyarweng clan, and she was from the Abek clan. Martha's parents were Christians, and she was raised to go to church regularly.



Young Martha hadn't understood that southern Sudan had been dangerous for decades. There was a war between Arab Muslims and the southerners when her parents were young, but it ended in a treaty. Trouble began brewing again shortly after Martha was born. The southern people became angry at the Arab government because the government wanted to build a canal into the swamp called Sud. The government also imposed Muslim law on the entire country even though the black Africans in the South weren't Muslim. The Arabs didn't respect the black Africans. In her city, students protested against the government, and the men formed the Sudan People's Liberation Army. She was only five years old so she didn't notice this very much.



Part Two - War

Part Two - War Summary and Analysis

War came to John's homeland when he was 13 years old. They had been expecting it, but it still shocked them when their village was actually attacked. Various people had visions that predicted war and death. One man prophesied that theirs would be a generation of black hair. The elders of the village felt that this meant that the oldest and youngest would die.

At that time, John didn't know much about his country's history. Sudan had gained independence from Britain in 1956. The new nation was comprised of two people groups who had very little in common. The Arabs dominated the northern half of Sudan, and the black skinned tribes dominated the southern half. In the early 1980s, the northern Arabs tried to impose laws on the entire nation, and civil war broke out. The northern soldiers had better equipment and more soldiers.

John remembered the night the soldiers came to his village. In the summer of 1987, he was trying to sleep on the floor of a hut with about a dozen boys and girls. The soldiers had bombed other villages, and refugees moved south, coming through John's village. He heard explosions near the village and realized that his own village was getting attacked. He and the other children tried to escape, and mothers were calling out for their children. Everyone was running around in panic.

John couldn't find any of his brothers, sisters, or parents. As he was running around, someone put them into the grass and told him to be quiet. Nine soldiers from the north passed by, inches from his face. At daybreak he looked around and noticed that the soldiers were gone, but his village was destroyed. The man who saved him was a neighbor named Abraham. John's family was missing, and he thought that they had been taken prisoner or killed. Abraham said that they had to run away if they wanted to stay alive so they ran east.

As they traveled, they avoided soldiers. They had no food or water, and John was naked. For a while they traveled with some other refugees. It was very tiring, and John's feet bled, but they pushed eastward. Sometimes soldiers found them, and Abraham was beaten. The soldiers took the woman and her two daughters they were traveling with, and John never saw them again. Abraham said they had to keep walking until they were killed. They were destined for Ethiopia.

John learned that it was 500 miles of walking before they reached the border, and he didn't think they would make it. Each day he thought he would die. Abraham told him stories as they walked and taught him how to survive. They joined up with other refugees, including 15 boys and two adults. In October, the land became extremely dry, and they had a hard time finding water. When they arrived at the border of Ethiopia,



members of a friendly tribe gave them food, a blanket, and told them to head for a refugee camp called Pinyudu.

The happy days of childhood for Martha disappeared before she turned six. She, her mother, and her little sister left home to stay with her extended family. When she was older, she realized that her parents moved them away from their home in the city because war had broken out, and they thought the city was too dangerous. Life in the country was very different from what they were used to.

One afternoon, her parents went to church and left Tabatha and Martha behind with a cousin of the parents. The afternoon was quiet until they heard gunfire, and the cousin yelled at the girls to come to her. They thought it was a neighboring tribe called the Murle attacking, and they ran to escape from the village. The girls managed to stay with the cousin and her five children, but they had no food to eat. They slept for a few hours, but as soon as the dawn broke, they moved on. They moved from village to village warning people about the soldiers that had attacked. It was scary for Martha, especially since she was scared of animals, and they had to walk through many forests.

After they left the forest, the travelers had to cross a desert. It was very difficult since they had no food or water. They came to a dry riverbed and ate the mud as if it were food, and many of the children became ill. Later, Martha realized that she most likely had malaria. They rested for a few days then crossed the creek. People began shooting at them, and they realized that this time it was the Murle. Some people were killed and others were wounded. For some reason, it knocked Martha out of her sick daze. She ran with her sister and escaped. They found a town where they could rest for a few days, and the villagers gave them some food.

While they were in this town, they learned about two different refugee camps in Ethiopia. One camp was closer, but they weren't sure that the United Nations was there with food and supplies to help them so they decided to go to the camp that was further away. It was called Pinyudu. They walked for another week and a half or two before they came to the border where they would cross into Ethiopia. The people at the border were good to them and gave them some food.



Part Three - Refuge

Part Three - Refuge Summary and Analysis

By the time Abraham and John reached Pinyudu, many others joined them. They were the lucky ones, although they didn't feel lucky. There were over a quarter million refugees from the Civil War in Pinyudu and three other camps in Ethiopia in 1988. Those were the survivors. Others died along the way from animal attacks, thirst, hunger, and disease. Both John and Martha arrived at the camp in the same year, but they didn't meet each other until much later.

Almost all of the survivors were boys as young as three or four as well as male teenagers. Most of the older men became soldiers or were killed in battle. The women and girls were captured and raped or enslaved. Only a few hundred females actually reached Ethiopia.

At this point, the world hadn't really noticed the war in East Africa, but soon news reporters from America and Europe began to learn about the refugees. They called John and the other ones "Lost Boys." Although Pinyudu was called a camp, it was really an open place that didn't have housing. There was no running water or electricity, and people tried to make shelters with sticks.

Abraham stayed with John for around two months before he went to live with other adults. John continued to live with the boys who were his age or younger. The older boys were put in charge of the younger ones, and when John was 13, he became the supervisor of 1,200 boys.

Martha and Tabitha lived in the wilds of Southern Sudan for months. They finally got to Pinyudu only to discover that the United Nations was not there, and there was no food. After a few days, things changed. The United Nations refugee agency heard about them and arrived with food. The refugees ate as fast as they could, but their stomachs couldn't take the hard food so they became ill and disease spread.

After the United Nations brought food, the group of children John lived with pooled and rationed their food. The United Nations also brought them tools, blankets, and secondhand clothing. John was very proud of his shirt. Cholera struck victims in the camp, killing one to three boys a day in John's group of 1,200. Because of their crude tools, the boys could only dig shallow graves, and the hyenas and lions came at night to eat the bodies of the dead.

Eventually some adults came to show the boys how to dig latrines downstream from their camp. Slowly, the cholera went away. In addition to the disease, the boys also had to deal with an African insect that burrowed under the skin of the feet. Some boys went insane after the horrors they had to live through. John tried to keep spirits up by singing hymns and helping wherever he could.



The boys were put in their own groups, but the girls were placed with other families. Tabitha and Martha were placed with a nice woman named Yar. At first they lived in tents given to them by the United Nations, but later the Lost Boys helped them build a house. Yar began to raise chickens and grew a small vegetable garden in the yard beside the house. Martha could almost feel carefree during the day as she did her chores and played with the children.

As they went down to the river for water, they saw Anyuak people. These people traded them for items given to the refugees by the United Nations. While she was living in Pinyudu, Martha met a girl named Myayik, and they became good friends. They went to church together on Sundays. The United Nations started schools, which the boys attended, but the Dinka didn't believe that girls needed education so Martha didn't go to the school.

New people kept arriving in Pinyudu, and the Lost Children would go to search for their mothers and fathers. They were always filled with sadness when their family wasn't found. Martha missed her parents. One day, after three years of living in camp, there was an announcement that they had to pack their belongings and get ready to leave.

In May of 1991, John was 16, and the rebels drove the president out of the country and set up a new government. This new government decided to close the refugee camps so they had to leave. They had to head south toward Pochala.

Part Four - War

Part Four - War Summary and Analysis

Martha couldn't believe that they had to move. They packed all the food they could and kept quiet. They left their camp at bedtime and walked through the forest in a single file. By the next day, they made it to the Gilo River. United Nations people had food waiting for them since it would take many days for all of them to ferry over to the Sudanese side. Martha was in one of the first groups of people across the river because Yar's cousin was one of the boat organizers, and she explained that it was going to be difficult for her to get across and walk all the way to Pochala with her own three children and the two children she had taken in. It was a peaceful crossing, even though the current was rough. They made it safely across, spent the night on the riverbank, and began walking once again.

John came to the river after Martha, and his crossing was very different. An Ethiopian army attacked them, and they had to swim across the river in order to save their lives. There was complete chaos, and people died from bullets, crocodiles, and drowning. Of the approximately 20,000 Sudanese who went into the river, around 2,000 to 3,000 died attempting to cross.

Martha made it to Pochala safely, even though her group heard guns behind them. The Lost Boys banded together once again and joined thousands of other boys on the hike to Pochala. More and more refugees came into the town, and the soldiers didn't have enough food to share with other people.

Martha and the people she was with cried when they heard about the killing at the river. Many people they knew were gone, and they knew danger was always around. They traded the few clothes they had for food, and Martha was left with one torn and dirty dress. They went three weeks without any food. The Lost Boys helped them build a shelter, and Martha was able to feel happiness as she spends time with Myayik once again.

One day John heard an airplane, and he thought it was more food from the United Nations. However, the plane flew over the camp and dropped bombs. This didn't stop the Red Cross and the United Nations from bringing the refugees food, clothes, and medicine. John noticed that more bombers arrived in early 1992. The adults eventually decided that it was unsafe to stay there so they began walking toward the border of Kenya.

Martha began packing so they could start walking to Kapoeta, a large town near Kenya's border.

John began what became a 500-mile journey. As they walked, he sang Christian songs and led the younger boys. At one point they were too hungry and thirsty to continue on,



and John thought he would die. At that point, as if by miracle, the United Nations truck arrived bringing water to the boys. It gave them the strength to move on. The United Nations truck drivers visited the refugees every day after that, bringing food and water. They also brought news from the outside world.

As they walked, the refugees encountered different tribes. Some of these tribes attacked them. Yar was smart, and she traded a chicken with a Kenyan driver in exchange for a ride for herself and the children. It was the first time Martha had been in the vehicle since she was separated from her parents four years prior.

Part Five - Refuge

Part Five - Refuge Summary and Analysis

John and the others kept walking. One day they crossed the Kenyan border without noticing. They felt relieved that soldiers wouldn't follow them anymore, and they stopped in the town of Lokichokio where they stayed for two months. Since there were too many of them to stay in the town, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees relocated them to a new camp in the desert. The boys got to the new camp by trucks, which are sent to them by the United Nations.

They set up their new home in Kakuma, and although they were not allowed to go out to find jobs in cities, they knew that they could live without fear. For the first time in a long time, they had hope for their future.

When Martha got to Kakuma, she and her sister were allowed to stay with Yar. Once again the Lost Boys helped them build a house, and they planted a garden. Yar's husband's brother, Deng, came to live with them a bit later.

According to tradition, Dinka boys went through an intense ritual of initiation when they were 15 or 16 years old. John regretted that he never had the opportunity to go through the initiation. He had spent his initiation time on the run. The Lost Boys had to raise themselves and each other in a refugee camp, and it wasn't easy. They had fun times, but they also had many problems. They ran out of food even after they rationed, and they constantly had to battle illness.

Even though they were raising themselves, church and school were of primary importance. The children would gather every night to sing and worship God. John started a school, and he was excited to learn since he had never been to school before. The teacher was a Sudanese man named Arak. He taught the boys respect, and he also taught them how to speak English.

John worked and studied hard, and he eventually made it through high school. The boys would get up at four in the morning to start their school day, and they studied with each other and drilled each other from sunrise to sunset. The test to graduate high school was very difficult, but he passed. The boys celebrated the earning of their diplomas with music and dancing. Some of the Lost Girls came to the party and danced with them. John knew that he was a man, but he was not in a hurry to marry. First, he wanted to get a job.

The United Nations allowed girls to attend their schools, and Martha was able to attend sometimes. She could only do this if her chores were complete. After she attended some classes, she began to understand English. When she was in Kenya she saw women who were teachers, doctors, and nurses. She began to wonder why she couldn't



do that. She began to work hard to complete her chores early so she could get herself to school.

It became particularly difficult when she got to be 14 or 15 since that was the age most girls in the countryside got married. Deng wanted to marry her off to an older man. She made sure she was never alone so she couldn't get abducted by a man. For two years, she made sure she always had girlfriends with her wherever she went. During that time she met John. They met at a dance.

John remembered when he met Martha. Some of the Lost Boys were teasing her, and she was ignoring them. He admired her courage. He persistently tried to get her to spend time with him, and after many days she allowed him to visit her so they could become boyfriend girlfriend. Martha and John would sit together and talk. She was still worried that an older man would abduct her, and she didn't want to get married.

One day she went in Nairobi to visit a friend who gave her money. Martha heard about Lost Boys going to America and wondered if she could go as well. She asked a friend about it, and he asked an American woman who was a social worker. The woman didn't even know there were Lost Girls. She thought all the girls lived with parents.

They set up a meeting, and the woman listened to Martha's story. A few days later, Martha received two applications to go to America-one for her, and one for Tabitha. Three weeks later, she was called in for an interview. Their applications were accepted, and they were going to America. She would not be forced to marry.

The girls had to take cultural orientation classes, but they didn't let anyone know what they were doing. Martha was worried that they would marry her off so they could get cows. Martha told John that he was going to America when she knew it was a reality. He said that maybe he would join her soon.

In 1999, when John was 24 years old and Martha was 16, the United States decided to let some refugees from the Sudanese Civil War into United States. Approximately 3,600 Sudanese passed the interviews and relocated to America. John was one of those invited to apply to go to the United States.

He went to classes to learn how to be an American. He learned to do things like speak on a telephone. The biggest surprise was learning about cold weather. It was the first time he had ever seen ice.

Part Six - Peace

Part Six - Peace Summary and Analysis

On the day she was going to leave, Martha told her foster parents that she was going to visit a friend for the day. She explained to her sister that Tabitha needed to leave after she did and meet her at the friend's house. Together they hurried to the United Nations compound where they were taken to a tiny plane. The journey was filled with strange experiences from food they didn't know how to eat to moving stairs at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York. Tabitha and Martha were joining two other Lost Children headed for Seattle. They arrived on December 19, 2000.

Their new foster family greeted them with a big sign welcoming them. The family gave them gifts and took them to their new home, which seemed very large to them. Many people came to visit on Christmas Day, and Martha loved being around so many loving, warm people. She felt as if everything was going to be okay, and she could finally relax.

School started after the holidays, and Martha felt odd since she was the only black person there. She had a hard time with the language and adjusting to the new culture. She began having nightmares about people shooting and running. She talked with her foster mother about it, and her foster mother talked with other foster parents and found out that this was happening with many of the Lost Children.

Martha's foster mother arranged weekends at her house where the Lost Girls in the area would gather together to talk, listen to music, and cook Sudanese food. Soon they began to feel better, and Martha began to get used to life in America. Yar contacted her, and she began writing back. Yar had been concerned about her and was relieved to know that she was all right. Martha graduated from high school and began to take classes to become a nurse. Tabitha made it through high school as well, and she began attending a community college.

Just before she turned 21, Martha moved out of her foster parent's house and moved in with some friends. Over the years, she had been in contact with other Lost Kids, including John.

When John left the camp, he found out that he was going to Syracuse, New York. The day his name was posted, he saw a man holding a big video camera on his shoulder. He introduced himself and found out that the man was an American documentary filmmaker named Christopher Quinn. Christopher wanted to interview him about going to America, and John agreed. Christopher filmed John that they and over the next few years as he settled into life in America. His film was entitled "God Grew Tired of Us." It introduced Americans to the plight of the Lost Boys.

John arrived in Syracuse in August of 2001. A group from a sponsoring church met him outside the terminal and drove him to his apartment, which he shared with other Lost



Boys. He began to work right away, working in a factory, a fast food restaurant, and a parcel shipping center. Eventually he worked as a nighttime security guard at a hospital. During the day, he earned an associate's degree from Onondaga Community college, and he began to work on a degree in public policy at Syracuse University.

John never gave up hope that he might reconnect with his family someday. While he had been in the camps, he had written letters to the International Red Cross asking for help in finding his family. He kept in touch with his friends in Africa after he moved to America, and one day he learned that a friend of his had spent some time in Uganda. While he was there, the friend talked about his friend John who lived in America. A man heard the story and asked about John. It ended out that the man was John's brother. His entire family had survived.

It had been 15 years since John had seen his family, and they arranged to talk to each other by phone. His mother refused to speak to him at first because she couldn't believe that he was really alive. When they finally got her to speak on the phone, she asked him what his secret name was. She finally believed him after he told her the name. They began to talk to each other several times a week, and his mother and sister flew out to live with John in Syracuse in February of 2004.

While John was a student at Syracuse University, he set up a foundation to improve the lives of Sudanese refugees. With the help of American friends, he raised enough money to open a medical clinic in Duk County where he grew up. It was the first medical facility of any kind in Southern Sudan. At this point, he knew he still wanted to do one thing. He wanted to marry Martha.

After John moved to America, Martha called him to welcome him. They talked on the phone frequently. After about a year, he came to Seattle to visit her. She agreed to marry him. They decided to marry in the Dinka manner. Their marriage took place in the winter of 2005, and Martha moved to Syracuse. Tabitha came later.

In addition to the Dinka marriage, they also decided to have an American wedding. This wedding took place on June 2, 2006. Later, they had a daughter. In November of 2007, Martha awoke to the sound of the phone ringing. It was a cousin she had reconnected with, and he told her that he had been at church in Sydney, Australia when some visitors introduced themselves. They said that they were praying that they would connect with their daughters who were lost years ago. They were her parents. The next month, Martha and her baby flew to Australia to reunite with her parents, who she hadn't seen in more than 20 years. They spent a month getting to know each other again. She was no longer lost.

John and Martha continued the storytelling tradition by telling their children stories from southern Sudan.

Afterword

As John looked into the future, he could see more work he could do to help in Southern Sudan. The civil war ended, and life began to return to normal, but there was an

enormous amount of work to do in order to bring prosperity back. In addition to the clinic, he had plans to set up an educational institution.



Characters

John Bul Dau

This character had the traditional Dinka name, Dhieu-Deng Leek. He was baptized at the age of four or five and was given a name from the Bible. The boy spent his early years in a very rural setting and was raised in the Dinka tradition. Soldiers attacked his village, and he was separated from his parents. A neighbor led him to safety, and he ran away. After battling wild animals, illness, hostile tribes, soldiers, and starvation, this character spent his growing-up years in a series of refugee camps where he found himself in charge of 1,200 young boys as part of the Lost Boys in the camp. He eventually made his way to America where h

Martha

This character had the traditional Dinka name, Arual. She had a happy childhood and lived in an urban setting. As war came closer, her family moved in with relatives in the countryside. Still, it wasn't safe, and they were attacked. She was separated from her parents and she and her sister found themselves struggling to survive the arduous journey to a far-away refugee camp. Incorporated into another family, this character spent her growing-up years in refugee camps. She finished her chores quickly so she could attend school in the refugee camp. Instead of marrying at a very young age, she decided to travel to America. Once there, she was adopted into a family and finished her education. Eventually she married another refugee she had met back in her homeland and kept in touch with after she moved to America.

Dinka

This was the tribe that both John and Martha were part of. It was the largest tribe in Southern Sudan.

Aleer-Manguak

This was John's great-uncle who was killed while trying to protect their cattle from a lion. John was very proud of him.

Anon Manyok Duot Lual

This was John's mother. She was the daughter of a chief. John was her youngest son.



Deng Leek Deng Aleer

This was John's father. He was a wrestler who later became a judge.

Deng Malual Aleer

This was John's father's father's brother. He was a big chief in Southern Sudan who fought against the Arabs and gave permission for missionaries to work in the southernmost part of Sudan.

Tabitha

This was Martha's younger sister who she escaped with.

Bor Nyarweng

This was the clan that John belonged to.

Abek

This was the clan that Martha belonged to.

Ngun Deng

This man was a prophet who had a vision and prophesied that theirs would be a generation of black hair.

Abraham

This man was a neighbor who helped John escape after the soldiers attacked his village and his family was missing.

Nyanriak

This woman was Martha's father's cousin. She helped Martha, Tabitha, and her own five children escape after their home was attacked by soldiers.

Murle

This was a tribe in Southern Sudan that raided villages and stole cattle.



United Nations Workers

This was a group of people who brought food and supplies to refugees.

Yar

This woman had three children of her own, yet she also cared for Martha and her sister. She was smart and traded a chicken for a ride so the children wouldn't have to walk so much as they traveled.

Deng

This was Yar's husband's brother. He came to live with them in Kakuma. He wanted Martha to marry a much-older man so he could get cows.

Arak

This was the Sudanese man who taught the Lost Boys when they set up a school.

Christopher Quinn

This man was a filmmaker. He was making a documentary on the plight of the refugees and asked to highlight John in his film.

International Red Cross

This organization helped refugees find family members after the civil war had torn them apart.



Objects/Places

Southern Sudan

The was the hot, flat land where John lived.

Paguith

This was the first village John lived in.

Christianity

This was the religion both John and Martha followed.

Stories

These were how the Dinka children learned what they needed to know. John learned by this method when he was young and didn't attend school.

Juba

This was the city where Martha lived when she was young. It was the most important city in Southern Sudan.

Duk Payuel

This was the village where John's family lived when they first began hearing about omens of war.

Ethiopia

This was the destination for the refugees who were escaping the attacks in Southern Sudan.

Pinyudu

This was one of two refugee camps. Both Martha and John walked for very long distances to get there.



Wernyol

This was the village where Martha's father was born. They moved there when her father became concerned that the war would reach their city.

Pochala

This was the place the refugees went to after the camps were closed.

Gilo River

This was the place Martha crossed safely, but John's group was attacked here. Several thousand people died trying to cross it.

Kapoeta

This was a large town near the border of Kenya. The refugees went there after bombers kept attacking the refugees in Pochala.

Lokichokio

This was the town where John and the others stayed for two months after crossing the Kenyan border.

Kakuma

This was the camp in the desert where the refugees were sent. It was here they were able to stop their wandering and set up schools.

John F. Kennedy Airport in New York

This was where both Martha and John first landed when they reached the United States.

Seattle, Washington

This was where Martha and Tabitha went to live with a foster family.

Syracuse, New York

This is where John went to live, study and work in the U.S.

Themes

Living as a Refugee

Life as a refugee was extremely tough. Both Martha and John were ripped away from their homes so suddenly that they were separated from their families. This held true for many of the other refugees. They did what they could to survive, but as they ran for safety, they realized that they weren't just running from soldiers. They also had to watch out for other tribes who might do them harm. They battled starvation, wild animals, and illness.

Martha had to learn how to adjust to living with a family that wasn't her own. She was very concerned about her younger sister and took on the role of a mother for the sister at a very young age. In the household she joined, she had to follow their rules and accept their decisions even though they were very different from decisions her own family might have made. This is shown when the man of the household was trying to marry her off an older man to against her wishes. Life became very stressful for her as she tried to make sure that she was never alone so she wouldn't become abducted. It ultimately led to her escaping to America so she wouldn't have to marry young.

While John didn't have to live with another family, he found himself a father figure at a very young age. He was responsible for 1,200 boys who are trying to survive. He took on their education, their safety, and shelter. While the refugees had to deal with all these hardships, they also had to deal with uncertainty about their future. They never knew when they might have to move on or when they were going to be attacked.

The Importance of Education

In the early years of their life, education did not play a huge role for either John or Martha. They learned through stories, and Martha was thought more about taking care of the household since she was a female. Her people didn't believe that a formal education was important for females. When they got to the refugee camps, John noted how important education was to the Lost Boys. Even when everything else has fallen apart around them, and they lived life as they wanted to, the boys continued to educate themselves religiously by setting up a church, which they attended every evening.

Later, when they finally got to a refugee camp where they would settle for a long period of time, they set up a more formal school. It was here that John received the first formal education he had ever had in his life. He woke up extremely early to begin his studies and continued throughout the day until he had finally earned his high school diploma.

The schools in the camp were open to females as well as males. Martha was allowed to go as long as her chores were done. She had noticed in her time as a refugee that some places had women who had careers. She felt that this would be a good option for herself so she hurried to get through her chores so she could attend the school. The



schooling benefited Martha and John because they learned to speak English, and this helped them when they eventually moved to America.

The Importance of Family

Both John and Martha had very happy early childhoods. They had very different upbringings since Martha lived in a city area while John was raised in a very rural area. However, both of them had parents who clearly loved them and taught them respect and a love of their own culture. John particularly loved the stories his family told, and he was particularly proud of an uncle who had died well lion hunting. He loved hearing stories about this uncle.

Both Martha and John had to leave the family unit suddenly as soldiers invaded their home towns. When they were on the run, Martha became part of another family unit. While she appreciated her new family, it wasn't the same as living with her own mother and father, and she missed them greatly.

As the years went by, family members never gave up hope in finding each other. Wherever they went, they asked about lost family members, and the refugees posted lists of those who traveled through the refugee camps.

The refugees were scattered around the world over the decades, and both Martha and John eventually reunited with their families. They had lost many years together, but the bond was still strong, and they got to know each other once again. They realized that one of the hardest parts of living as a refugee was a loss of parent's love.

Style

Perspective

This is a true story told from the viewpoint of adults who experienced life as refugees during their years of growing up. Although they came from different backgrounds (Martha, an urban background and John, a rural background), they both ended up in refugee camps, separated from their parents. Their stories were similar to each other, and yet different because of their ages and the fact that one was male and one was female. Because of this, they are able to share the refugee stories and experiences with universal appeal.

Both Martha and John were part of the Dinka people group. They both were grounded in Dinka traditions, yet had to let go of some of the traditions due to the war and life in the refugee camps. This story shows how they continued to keep the Dinka traditions such as bravery and storytelling alive in order to instill them into the next generation.

Tone

"Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan" is written in a first-person subjective point of view from both John's perspective as well as from Martha's perspective. The story is told factually, with glimpses of inner feelings yet not overwhelmed by emotion. Devastating statistics are offered pragmatically such as when he discusses the crossing of the Gilo River. The emotional part of the telling occurs when John writes "I still have bad dreams about crossing the Gil River." The pragmatic part merely points out that "Of the roughly 20,000 Sudanese who went into the Gilo River, maybe 2,000 to 3,000 died in the attempt to get across.

Structure

"Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan" by John Bul Dau begins with a dedication to Martha and John's children then another dedication to the lost children in the world and the spirit of Sudan. The book has a Table of Contents, which shows there are six parts of the book: Peace, War, Refuge, War, Refuge, and Peace. Each of these parts are broken up into sections where the first person narration is from John's point-of-view then Martha's. They take turns telling their stories throughout the same periods of time. The main part of the book is followed by an Afterword, a timeline of events and a series of photographs from their time as refugees and after they came to America.

Quotes

First, they never, ever give up, no matter what the odds are against them. And second, like the lions, they work together.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 11).

There are no paved roads and virtually no buildings of metal or brick. Mud, sticks, leaves, and grass are our construction materials.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 13).

Our culture has not changed much in hundreds of years, and we like it that way.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 13).

Night after night I drifted off to sleep, never dreaming how soon our beautiful storytelling evenings would end.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 16).

I didn't understand that Southern Sudan had been a dangerous place for decades.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 20).

War came to my homeland when I was thirteen years old. We had been expecting it, but nevertheless it came as a shock when my village was actually attacked.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 25).

Then one day the sun glowed blood red. My mother said it meant that blood would flow.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 27).

The soldiers had gone. My village was destroyed.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 29).

But at the moment of my greatest despair, we found hope.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 34).

I was too scared and shocked to understand it then, but now I think of that night as the beginning of a bad dream that would last for years.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (pp. 38-39).

At only thirteen years old, I became the supervisor of 1,200 boys.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 50).

I still have bad dreams about crossing the Gilo River. I still wonder what war does to people to make them shoot unarmed children. Do those Ethiopian soldiers ever get



nightmares?

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 72).

And in Kenya I saw women who were nurses and doctors and teachers, and I started to think: If this woman can do it, why can't I?

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 109).

Now, among the Dinka, a man can abduct a girl when she is walking alone, and then she has to marry him. So I was very, very careful, always surrounding myself with my friends when I was out and about.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 112).

After many, many days, she finally said yes, she would allow me to visit her and we could be boyfriend and girlfriend

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 114).

When you feel that love for the first time, people caring about you, it's a wonderful feeling. No one had treated us like this since we had lost our parents. Finally, I could relax.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 132).

For all of the blessings I had received, there was one I still yearned for. I wanted to marry Martha.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 142).

Normally, the husband's family would give the wife's family a dowry of cows, but in this case, John agreed to send money worth the equivalent of eighty cows. In the winter of 2005, once the dowry was settled, we were considered married in the eyes of the Dinka tribe

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 148).

The next month I flew to Australia with my new baby and reunited with the parents I hadn't seen for more than twenty some years.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 154).

I also discovered what I had lost years ago in that village in Southern Sudan: a parent's love.

Dau, John Bul. *Lost Boy, Lost Girl: Escaping Civil War in Sudan* (p. 154).



Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast Martha and John's living situations before the attacks.

How did Martha and John end up living without their parents, and how did they survive?

What religion did Martha and John follow, and how did they come to have their beliefs?

What were the pros and cons of living in Pinyudu? Why did they have to leave?

Compare and contrast the traveling experiences Martha and John had when traveling from Pinyudu to Pochala.

What were some of the hardships John and Martha faced when traveling to and living in America, and how did their lives change for the better?

What happened to the family situations for both John and Martha?