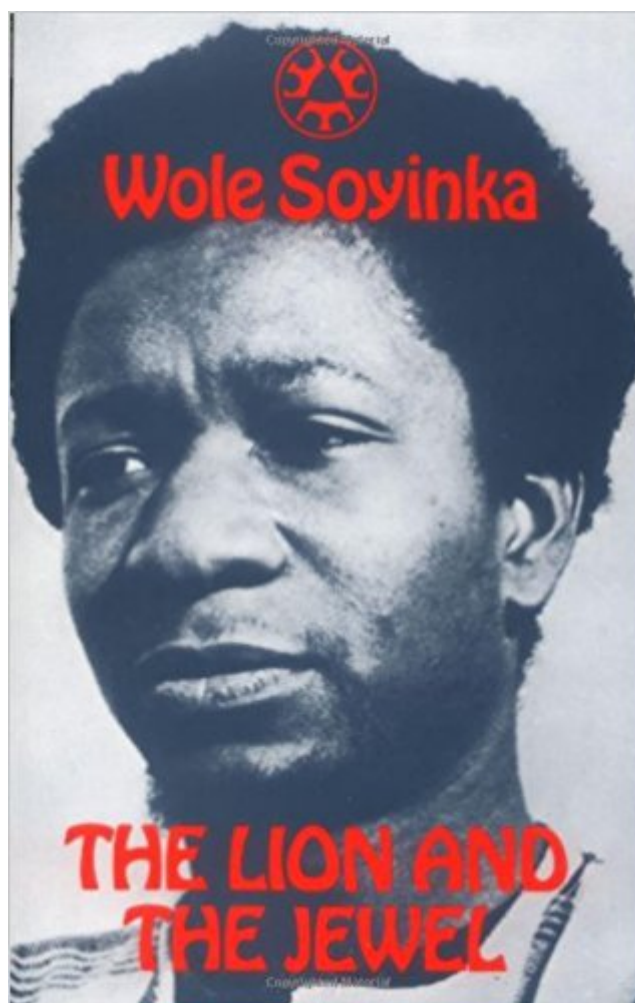


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# The Lion And The Jewel (Three Crowns Books)



## Synopsis

This is one of the best-known plays by Africa's major dramatist, Wole Soyinka. It is set in the Yoruba village of Ilunjinle. The main characters are Sidi (the Jewel), 'a true village belle' and Baroka (the Lion), the crafty and powerful Bale of the village, Lakunle, the young teacher, influenced by western ways, and Sadiku, the eldest of Baroka's wives. How the Lion hunts the Jewel is the theme of this ribald comedy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you've ever found the world around you changing and weren't quite sure where you fit into the scheme of things, this play is one you'll want to read. Soyinka develops several themes throughout the work- some of the most relevant themes include the struggle for power between men and women and tradition versus modernization. The play takes place in a small African village that has been relatively untouched by Western civilization. The plot centers around a beautiful young girl named Sidi and her experiences. The greatest conflict is presented in the two men who have fallen in love with her- Lakunle, the modern schoolteacher who wants to marry for love and honor, and Baroka, the village bale (chief), who wants Sidi for himself because she is beautiful and he traditionally has a right to any woman he wants. Sidi, who is stubborn and haughty, is caught not only between these two men, but between the ideals they represent. Lakunle's ideas seem to make sense to her but the tradition by which the people of the town govern their daily lives has been all she has ever known. Soyinka uses humor and biting sarcasm to set his scene and sharply

characterize Sidi, Lakunle, Baroka, and the Bale's oldest wife, Sadiku. Who and what will Sidi choose? And what does that decision say about our human nature? Soyinka lets you make your own judgement. Sidi: "Come to my wedding if you will. If not... [She shrugs her shoulders. Kneels down at Sadiku's feet.] Mother of brides, your blessing..."

Marriage, love, education, loyalty, power, and roles of men and women are many social issues that are portrayed in Wole Soyinka's play, *The Lion and the Jewel*. This play is outstanding, in that it leaves the reader full of emotions such as anger, a sense of reflection, confusion, and joy. Wole Soyinka successfully portrays society in this play. Each of the characters in the play represents a part of human nature. Baroka (the Bale) represents the power and manipulation in a person. Sidi represents the naïf and egotistical qualities of humans. She believes that her self worth is above and beyond others, including Baroka, the most powerful man in the village. Lakunle represents the human nature of changing what has already been established, such as his want to change the village of Ilujinle, into a modernized city as that of England. He seeks to make people more educated and believes that he has power to change the world, when in reality he is not respected, because the village does not accept change. Sadiku, Baroka's main wife, is his betrayer. She betrays him and receives satisfaction when she hears that the most powerful man has become impotent. She represents a part of humans in that some of us have betrayed others in some way. She represents those who are overjoyed when hearing about others disadvantage and tries to gain something out of the situation. Wole Soyinka's play is exceptional. It will keep the reader interested and it will make the reader reflect on him/herself as well as the society that they live in. It delves into the issues of power, modernization vs. tradition, deceit, love, marriage, and the roles of men and women.

*The Lion and the Jewel* has been a part of my study experience since 1994, when I bought my first copy. Since then I have both studied and taught this play as a drama text and it has been excellent in both cases. It combines humour and romance with more serious themes of tradition versus progress and age versus youth. On the stage, it is a wonder to enjoy. Three things which make this play so marvelous are firstly, its heavy and accurate representation of Yoruba traditions; secondly, the inspired dramatic style of its world renowned writer; and finally, the use of the mime/dance traditions as breaks in the action of the play. One other thing which I really like about *The Lion and the Jewel* is that it inspires reaction in just about everyone who reads it. You may not agree with everything that Soyinka suggests as appropriate, but you will respond in some way, whether it be

laughter, anger or just a nod of the head at a portrayed attitude which rings a bell. If you haven't read this play, get a copy of it today!

When I read this play as part of a World Lit. class in my high school it changed the way I look at literature. To that point I had been mainly interested in history and politics. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, Soyinka combines his political ideas about colonization, cultures, and gender roles into this vivid play. He creates multiple conflicts between the very well-defined characters and over the course of the play the conflicts evolve into macrocosmic conflicts that readers and audiences alike can relate to. The themes in this play are very strong and speak loudly when juxtaposed against current world events. I cannot recommend this play enough!! Check it out.

"*The Lion and the Jewel*" is a wonderful play that portrays African culture and society and the effects of Western civilization upon it. "*The Lion and the Jewel*" is a great work to read for its content as well as its ability to entertain its reader. Wole Soyinka brilliantly writes this play to both provoke discussion and serve as a pleasure reading book. It is amazing to watch Sidi, the African protagonist, hold her African traditions despite being barraged by the Western ideals suggested by Lakunle, the schoolteacher. Although Sidi was featured in a Western magazine, she still held true to her culture and society. The conflict between Sidi and Baroka, the town's chief, was also a joy to read about in the play. The strong and young Sidi was a threat to Baroka's traditional and male dominated society. The conflict between the lion (Baroka) and the jewel (Sidi) was a conflict that brought the reader closer to the book. The way Soyinka adds humor through the characters' actions makes the play even better. While you read the play for its deep themes, you are also entertained with Soyinka's humor.

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