



# Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story

*Angela Shelf Medearis , Daniel Minter (Illustrator)*

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**Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story** Angela Shelf Medearis , Daniel Minter (Illustrator)

In an African village live seven brothers who make life miserable with their constant fighting. When their father dies, he leaves an unusual will: by sundown, the brothers must make gold out of seven spools of thread or they will be turned out as beggars.

## Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story Details

Date : Published September 1st 2000 by Albert Whitman Company (first published 2000)

ISBN : 9780807573167

Author : Angela Shelf Medearis , Daniel Minter (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Cultural, Africa, Holiday

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## From Reader Review *Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story* for online ebook

### Laura (Book Scrounger) says

A nice example of a story that's written like a folk tale and communicates several important lessons without hitting the reader over the head with them.

Full review here: <https://www.theproblemsite.com/book-s...>

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### Jaret says

This story was wonderfully illustrated. The story teaches students a wonderful lesson tied into the seven principles of Kwanzaa. The author gives an excellent description of Kwanzaa's history and principles in the beginning and even gives a fun craft activity at the end. However, the principles will not be obvious to children through the story alone. Connections need to be made through the information at the beginning or through discussion. But, it's an excellent book to discuss with children.

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### Mary Ann says

This original folktale helps introduces children to the seven principles of Kwanzaa, but through a creative story instead of a didactic lesson. Seven Ghanaian brothers continuously bicker, arguing from sunrise to sunset. When their father passes away, he leaves a will that instructs them to spin seven spools of thread into gold in only one day—with no arguing. At first, the brothers are stunned and cannot think of how to accomplish this. But soon they start working together, combining their different colored spools of thread to create Kente cloth – the first multicolored cloth their village has seen – which they sell to the king for the required gold. The story weaves in the Kwanzaa principles, such as Umoja, or unity, and Ujamaa, or co-operative economics. The introduction explains the seven principles, but Medearis lets the story unfold on its own without explicitly connecting the dots. It makes for an interesting, enjoyable story to read and talk about as a family. Minter's linoleum block-print illustrations complement the story, showing rich details of African village life that children will enjoy looking at again and again.

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### Ben Truong says

*Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story* is a children's picture book written by Angela Shelf Medearis and illustrated by Daniel Minter. It is a book about seven brothers who are constantly fighting and manages to learn to get along after a seemingly impossible task.

Medearis' text is rather simplistic and straightforward. It is a wonderful fable-like tale about seven brothers who constantly argues and how the seven principles of Kwanzaa are weaved into the narrative – one for each brother. Minter's illustrations are done rather well and are reminiscent of the African art style. It complements and depicts the narrative rather well.

The premise of the book is rather straightforward. The seven principles of Kwanzaa are outlined rather well in this story of seven brothers who are constantly fighting until their father dies and they are given a seemingly impossible task to complete together.

All in all, *Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story* is a wonderful nod to unity, faith, collective work and responsibility, and the rest of the seven Kwanzaa principles.

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## Rebecca Han says

### Reading Log #3

Title: Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story

Author: Angela Shelf Medearis

Illustrator: Daniel Minter

Genre: Non-European folktales

Theme(s): Family, community, bond, season

Opening line/sentence: In a small African village in the country of Ghana there lived an old man and his seven sons.

Brief Book Summary: Seven brothers hold grudges against each other and constantly fights with one another, bringing hostility within the family and the community. The old father leaves an unusual death will to his seven sons to make gold out of seven spools of thread by sundown. If they fail to do so, they will turn out to be beggars. Adapted from the seven principles of Kwanzaa.

Professional Recommendation/Review #1:

- Name of Reviewer: Not mentioned
- Name of Source: Booklist
- Link to source: <https://browse.nypl.org/iii/encore/re...>
- Short blurb from the review:
  - Ages 5<sup>^</sup>-8. In *The Seven Days of Kwanzaa: How to Celebrate Them* (1994), the author offered ideas, including crafts and recipes, for celebrating the cultural holiday. This latest title is an original folktale that will help introduce children to the holiday's seven principles, while also suggesting how Kente cloth was first created. In a Ghanaian village, a father's will commands that his seven argumentative sons must make gold from silk thread "by the time the moon rises," without fighting. Working together, the brothers create a tapestry of Kente cloth, the first multicolored cloth the village has seen, which they sell to the king's treasurer for gold, before returning to their village to farm and live harmoniously. Well-paced, the story incorporates the Kwanzaa values without spelling them out too much. Minter's attractively composed, dramatic painted linocuts, with strong community images and lively, silhouetted figures, root the story in a sun-drenched, magical landscape that will draw children even after repeated readings. An introductory section, with glossary and pronunciation guide explaining the principles, and an appended craft activity round out the volume. --Gillian Engberg Copyright 2000 Booklist Reviews

Professional Recommendation/Review #2:

- Name of Reviewer: Not mentioned
- Name of Source: Horn Book Guide
- Link to source: <https://browse.nypl.org/iii/encore/re...>
- Short blurb from the review:
  - This story is based on the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Seven quarrelsome brothers from a small Ghanaian village are a source of disappointment to their father. When he dies, he leaves his sons a challenge to earn his inheritance. They must work together to make gold out of silk thread; if they argue and fail, they receive nothing. Vibrant linoleum block prints accompany the rhythmic text, which concludes with instructions on

weaving Kente-style cloth. Copyright 2001 Horn Book Guide Reviews (PUBLISHER: Miramax Books/Hyperion Books for Children (New York:), PUBLISHED: c2005.) (PUBLISHER: Little Brown, PUBLISHED: 1995.)

Response to Two Professional Reviews: Although I haven't read the seven principles of Kwanzaa, I think this book stresses valuable principles. The seven principles of Kwanzaa were not explicit, but implicitly embedded into the story.

Evaluation of Literary Elements: Characters and plot are some elements I want to point out in this book. The character development in this story was meaningful in that the sons overcame their hostilities for the good of their family and their community at large. The plot contained morals that are worth noting for children such as looking after one another, living in harmony and valuing teamwork.

Consideration of Instructional Application: A mini-lesson that can go with this book is looking into principles and morals from other cultures. This way, I can promote multiculturalism in my classroom and allow my students to explore other cultures through books. Discussions on the similarities and differences of values across cultures would be great as an activity.

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### **Catherine Sotir says**

Seven Spools of Thread is a folktale that is about 7 brothers who fought and bickered from sunrise to sunset. They live with their father who passes away, but in his passing he is able to teach them a valuable lesson. He teaches them to work together, be nice to each other and to think about others, not just them selves. It is a wonderful story with beautiful illustrations.

My favorite saying in the story is ... "Perhaps, said the oldest, we can teach them how to turn thread into gold. The chief smiled. You have learned your lesson very well."

These two sentences show how much the brothers changed in one day going from bickering and fighting to being cooperative, supportive, and caring.

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### **Maggie Rappleyea says**

This book is appropriate for 1st grade and up.

This book tells a tale of 7 brothers from Africa who were always arguing. Their father died and left them 7 spools of thread made of different colors, and in his will he said that if they could make gold from the thread they could split his inheritance evenly. The brothers worked together to make a multicolored, beautiful cloth, and sold it for gold.

This is a great story that includes all the principles of Kwanzaa. It's a nice tale to introduce students to a different culture and holiday, as well as include students of African descent in a society that usually puts Christmas in the forefront.

I would have students collaborate peacefully to create a colorful work of art in which each student has equal opportunity to participate. I would also go over the principles of Kwanzaa, have each student pick one, and create a story around it.

This story has won several awards:

OPPENHEIM TOY PORTFOLIO PLATINUM AWARD 2001

NOTABLE SOCIAL STUDIES TRADE BOOK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FOR 2001

2001 ALA NOTABLE BOOK FOR CHILDREN

2002-2003 SHOW ME READERS AWARD MASTER LIST

2003 LOUISIANA YOUNG READERS' CHOICE AWARD MASTER LIST

NOT JUST FOR CHILDREN ANYMORE! 2001

2001 NOTABLE BOOKS FOR A GLOBAL SOCIETY HONOR BOOK

2003 WINNER, STORYTELLING WORLD AWARD

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### **Elyssa DeAngulo says**

Seven Spools of Thread is the story of Kwanzaa told through seven brothers and the puzzle they must solve after their father's death. The story provides students with both windows and mirrors into a cultural celebration. The story emphasizes that you need to work together, fighting gets you no where, and giving is what makes the world work.

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### **Alyssa Crabb says**

Picture Book - I loved this book! It was a great read about how fighting brothers learn to work together to make gold from multiple colors of thread (they sew the thread colors together, which has never been done before). Great feel good book, short, nice illustrations.

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### **Michelle says**

Seven Spools of Thread is an African folktale introducing the 7 principles of Kwanzaa. It could be used to discuss and illustrate other cultures and their celebrations. The book has wonderful, vibrant illustrations. The message of this story is to appreciate and look out for others and to work together which is a meaningful one for all.

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### **Stevie Cupp says**

I didn't have a clue what Kwanzaa was about before reading this story. This is a great book to teach a lesson, and a holiday to children. Many kids don't know about diverse holidays. Christmas is the typical go to. I enjoyed learning the history behind Kwanzaa and the meaning of it. This book would help teachers to understand more about students in their classroom, and help broaden holiday projects past making Christmas trees.

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### **Makenzie Soeken says**

Kwanza is an African Holiday that celebrates ancient African harvest celebrations and traditions. Kwanza doesn't celebrate a person or thing, but rather the African way of life and how each person can better themselves based on the Nguzo, or seven principles. The Nguzo Saba are unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, co-operative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. This story was based upon 7 brothers who struggled to get along. After their father passes away, he leaves his fortune to them based on the condition that they will spin 7 spools of thread into gold, and work together to do this without arguing. If they are unable to do so, their shares of his inheritance will be given to the poorest people in their village. The boys work together to create a beautiful cloth, fit for the King! They earn back their inheritance, but still wish to help the poor people in their village, so they teach them how to spin the multicolored cloth. The story is based on all seven principles, representing the purpose of Kwanza.

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### **Donna Hines says**

This is about helping one another through shared efforts especially among families.

Seven brothers with non stop bickering, a father's dying wish and a remarkable turn of events in what is sure to entice readers of all ages.

This is a beautiful story with an even more eloquent premise and characters that everyone can relate to regardless of any other dynamic in one's life.

This was truly one of the best children's books I read and I was so blessed to receive this from Albert Whitman Company through a twitter giveaway.

I have donated this book in loving memory of my 12 yo niece Cassie Ann Gatcha to the Hoyt Library Kingston Pa.

Thank you so much for this powerful story that shows working together truly is a remarkable blessing not just for the immediate family but all the lives that are touched through one act of kindness.

Will these brothers come together to make gold out of seven spools or will something else be uncovered?

What a beauty!

Thank you again to Angela, Albert Whitman, and Twitter for this wonderful book.

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### **Hannah says**

I really didn't know anything about Kwanzaa until we read this book. I LOVED it!! I would be able to read this book in my class to learn more about different cultures and holidays that are celebrated. I think this is a good book for teachers to read as well to learn more about students in their classroom.

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### **Kim says**

The illustrations are vibrant; I am amazed by the work lino cutters create, so much exquisite detail.

The prologue to the story explaining each day of Kwanzaa was useful; I didn't know there were different coloured candles for the days of celebration.

The story itself is very fable-like; it would make an excellent read-aloud for young children at Kwanzaa or any time of the year.

The how-to on making a simple cloth is a lovely way to end.

