

# Educator Guide for *Abeni's Song*

IN DARKNESS, A SONG CAN LEAD THE WAY.  
BEWARE WHICH ONE YOU LISTEN TO.

“A lush and magical fantasy that will leave readers craving more of Abeni’s adventure.”

—KWAME MBALIA,

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE TRISTAN STRONG SERIES

“Simply unlike anything else—  
an astonishing adventure.”

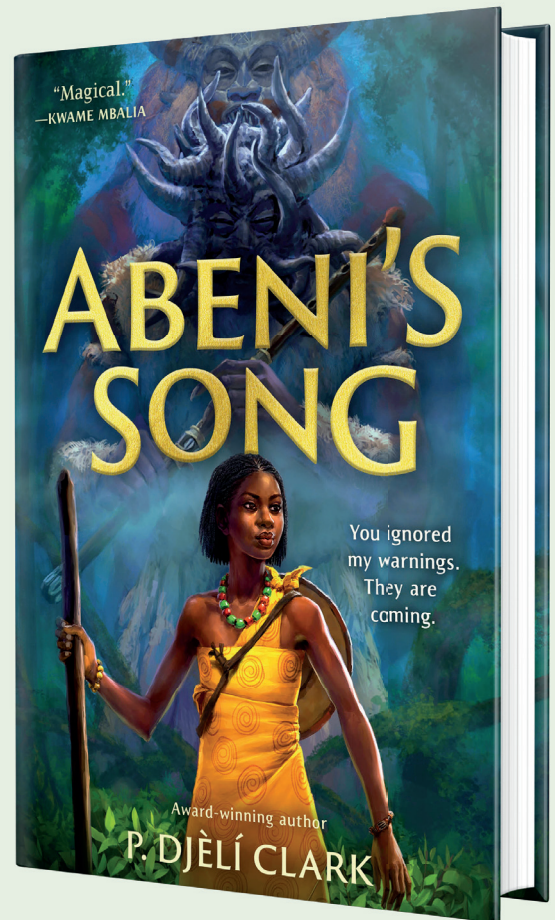
—MARK OSHIRO,

AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF *THE INSIDERS*

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Abeni always looks forward to the Harvest Festival, so she can celebrate her birthday with family and friends. That is, until an old woman who lives in the forest appears at the festival with a haunting message: the townspeople are in danger, and it is too late to run or hide. Warriors storm the village carrying spears and swords. An alluring song lures children to ghost ships set for distant lands. And the old woman has come to collect one child as payment for protecting the village all these years.

Abeni watches helplessly as her family and friends are captured, certain never to return. Somehow, she manages to escape, embarking on a magical adventure that will force her to face the unknown. But nothing will stop Abeni from searching for her family and friends, no matter the danger that lies ahead. Time is running out. She must find them before it is too late.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As Abeni overhears the old woman warning her village of approaching danger, she realizes she is unaware of the happenings outside of her town and the forest. How is this true even in our world? Can you think of examples where you were impacted by events outside your own community?
2. When Abeni realizes that she is a prisoner in the witch’s house, she plans daring escapes in an attempt to return home. For Abeni, home is living with her mother, father, and brother under one roof, and spending time with her best friend Fomi. What does home mean to you? How does Abeni’s longing for home influence her choices?
3. When the witch is revealed to be Auntie Asha, a spirit who holds magical powers, Abeni decides to enter a magical apprenticeship, learning as much magic as she can in hopes of reuniting with her family. What would you have done in Abeni’s situation? Which magical powers do you believe would best help Abeni on her journey?
4. Discuss Abeni’s changing relationship with Auntie Asha as Abeni learns more about magic and ultimately becomes Asha’s guardian. How are Abeni and Asha similar, and why are the similarities important? How does Abeni becoming Asha’s guardian affect Abeni as she continues her ongoing search for her family and friends?

5. Just as Abeni begins to settle into life with Auntie Asha, she is introduced to Obi, a straw man who shows Abeni tenderness and care. What do you think is the significance of Obi in the novel? Have you ever found friendship in an unlikely place or from an unexpected source of support? How so?
6. As Abeni and Asha continue their travels, they meet unlikely creatures along the way, including Nyomi, a porcupine spirit, and Zaneeya, a panther spirit. What do you think unites Abeni, Asha, Nyomi, and Zaneeya as they face the unknown together? How have they each shown acts of courage?
7. As a mortal, Abeni is worried about traveling with spirits, who are often seen as a threat. Look up what it means to be a threat. When you're clear on what it means, make a list of instances when Abeni or other characters in the novel struggle with being seen as a threat. How does it impact their choices?
8. When Abeni runs into Tutuo in the Vale of Lost Things, he wonders if she is "lost on purpose." What do you think about this statement? How does this relate to Asha, Nyomi, and Zaneeya's journeys as well?
9. Discuss the significance of Goat Man. He transforms from a vague monster at the beginning of the novel to a mortal being towards the end. What do you think about Brima's quest for power and vengeance over the years? How might having access to power lead people to make unwise decisions?
10. Once she is reunited with her best friend Fomi, Abeni makes a decision to continue finding her family, especially her mother, father, and brother. What would have you done in Abeni's situation? How did you respond to Nyomi and Zaneeya's decision to continue traveling with Abeni? What did you think of Sowoke encouraging Abeni to continue searching?
11. After being shunned from his village, Songu makes a decision to join Abeni and her friends on their adventure. How do you think Songu felt after being excluded by those who were closest to him? Do you know any real-life examples of people judged for doing something they didn't understand?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

**NAVIGATING HOME:** Auntie Asha's house is filled with several magical rooms. Imagine yourself as the owner of a magical house. Think of all the rooms that your house might have. What objects, such as pots or pans, would be in each room? What powers would these magical objects have? Who else would live in your magical house?

**SAFE TRANSPORT:** When Abeni uses the magical stones that were given to her by Auntie Asha's magical pots, she finds herself, and her traveling companions, transported to a safe but unexpected place. If you were given three magic stones that could transport you to a safe place, where would it be? Choose two places. Describe what you like best about them, and how they provide comfort or shelter.

**PICTURE THE SCENE:** Consider the changing settings throughout the book, from the lush forest to the flowery fields to the muddy desert to the dark pit. Use clues from the book and your own imagination to depict the Vale of Lost Things, using art supplies or crafts. Consider how the physical environment shapes the characters that end up in the Vale, as well as what outfits they might wear on a daily basis.

**LEARN TO LEAD:** Over the course of the book, Abeni becomes an unexpected leader. Imagine yourself as the leader of mortal and spirit beings attempting to search for friends and family. What kind of creatures would you like to have by your side? What types of powers would they have? Think of one of your talents or skills—something that you enjoy doing. How would that skill help you along your way?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Born in New York and raised mostly in Houston, P. DJÉLÍ CLARK spent the formative years of his life in the homeland of his parents, Trinidad and Tobago. He is the author of the novel *A Master of Djinn* and the novellas *Ring Shout*, *The Black God's Drums*, and *The Haunting of Tram Car 015*. He has won the Nebula, Locus, and Alex Awards and been nominated for the Hugo, World Fantasy, and Sturgeon Awards. His stories have appeared in online venues such as *Tor.com*, *Daily Science Fiction*, *Heroic Fantasy Quarterly*, *Apex*, *Lightspeed*, *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, and in print anthologies, including *Griots*, *Hidden Youth*, and *Clockwork Cairo*. He is also a founding member of *FIYAH Magazine of Black Speculative Fiction* and an infrequent reviewer at *Strange Horizons*. *Abeni's Song* is his middle-grade debut.

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