**LIKES**

**Characters:**
- Some liked the strong narrative voice and felt it helped them get immediately into Moa’s head
- Some liked Moa’s overall personality and how he stood up for what was right with passion and conviction- an important lesson for young people to learn
- Some loved that there were positive black and male role models and that there was a sense of triumph in what they achieved
- Some liked the positive male relationships which were tough but also tender particularly between Moa and Keverton

**Setting:**
- Some appreciated the richness of the setting and the cultural references to Akan traditions, gods, songs etc.
- Some loved the atmosphere and how the author built tension- it engulfed the reader
- Some felt that everyone could draw something from the story that they related to even if they weren’t of Jamaican heritage

**Structure and style:**
- Some loved the use of dialect and the musicality of the language especially the repetition
- Some found it cinematic- they could see the story very visually
- Some felt that even without any detailed context, the story was accessible
- Some liked that the author didn’t ‘baby-fy’ the harsh realities of the story and didn’t shy away from anger but still kept it accessible for younger pupils and reiterated the strength of the characters
- Some felt it gripped you into the drama really quickly
- Some loved the structure of the story and the emotional breathers in between the battles
- Some loved the optimistic ending which felt right for the age of the target audience
- Some liked the short chapters that helped build momentum
### Themes:
- Some found it made them more curious about the real-life history of Tacky
- Some liked that it was based on real events - it made the story hit harder
- Some valued the relationships between Moa and each of his parents and the presentation of a concept children might not understand e.g. families being deliberately kept apart, people not knowing who their family is
- Some liked the ‘found family’ theme and the sense of community between the brothers
- Some appreciated that it was telling a story about a time when a lot of black history has been erased - we need more stories like this
- Some liked that it was endorsed by Amnesty International - could research the charity and their work etc.

### DISLIKES
- Some found it hard to get into the story
- The violence and constant struggle was hard to read
- Some disliked the cover art
- Some felt it lacked character development and that they didn’t know the characters well enough to root for them
- Some disliked the ‘weak’ female characters who were ‘only there as plot devices’
- Some disliked the repetition of everyone remarking on how young Moa was
- Dialect was mostly used for conversation but occasionally in the narrative which some people found confusing
- Some felt the final battle was anti-climatic
- Some disliked that we never found out how Keverton’s father was
- Some found it too hard to stomach given Moa’s age and would have preferred he was 15/16 - but also recognised the truth and necessity of him only being 14
- Some struggled to pinpoint what year group it would work for as year 7s maybe too young for violence but year 9s too old for story
- Some found the dialect jarring to begin with - worried about ‘mimicing’ the accent
- Some felt the writing style would put off reluctant readers especially boys
### PUZZLES

- Unresolved nature of Moa and his father’s relationship
- What was the author’s intention? To raise awareness about a period of history or the challenges of coming of age?
- Continuity between Keverton not showing interest in girls but then wants two women and lots of children?
- What happens in the end? Do Moa and Hamaya make it somewhere better? Do they survive?
- What’s on the other side of the mountain?
- Will Moa become like Pappa – or carry on as a Warrior?

### PATTERNS (Within this book and links to other books and real-life experiences)

**Within the novel**

- Dreamland- rabbits in Of Mice and Men
- Positive male relationships- empowering male role models who are tough but also tender
- The comfort of food
- Sense of community- I am because you are and you are because I am
- Repetition of ‘de blood remembers’
- Spirituality and connection to ancestors
- Contrast between violence and silence
- Water- life-giving, drinking it, buried by it, cave by the sea, watching the water, ancestors who were ‘lost souls at sea’
- Moa sleeping after battles- highlights his youth compared to others
- Keverton looks after Moa then after he is gone, Moa is going to look after Hamaya
- Fluctuation between English and “mother-tongue” throughout the book
- Italic sections highlighting Moa’s internal thoughts
Real life links
- It is an ‘untold’ story from history, based on true events.
- Real-life connection to author and his own history
- References to Anancy and other culturally significant stories
- Counteracting toxic masculinity

Links to other books / film
- The theme of the difficulty of coming of age relates to Purple Hibiscus, Great Expectations and Oliver Twist
- Another novel written in dialect is Trainspotting
- Catherine Johnson’s Sawbones and Freedom are both about slavery
- Maggot Moon by Sally Gardner is also about an adolescent trying to survive under a brutal regime—though 1950’s dystopia very different
- ‘Do they bleed the same?’ reminded some of Merchant of Venice ‘If you prick us, do we not bleed?’ and the idea of common humanity under race divisions.
- 12 years a slave by Steve McQueen
- Blood and Sugar by Laura Shepherd Robinson- 1780s docklands, abolitionism etc.
- Non-fiction texts like Black and British by David Olusoga and Black Skins White Masks by Frantz Fanon
- Queen of Freedom by Catherine Johnson – suitable for younger year groups – focuses on “Queen Nanny” who is mentioned in CW

HOOKS
- Focus on the language as it will be challenging for some to understand
- Focus on reluctant or low-ability readers, particularly boys, as it is accessible
### Reading Aloud, Having Ignited Their Curiosity

- Some teachers expressed discomfort about reading it aloud themselves because of the dialect and many suggested using an audio book instead read by somebody of Jamaican heritage for authenticity.

### Outputs Following Reading (Oral and Written)

- Add to a reading list in the History department for when they are teaching about slavery
- Researching female slave leaders such as Queen Akua, ‘the Queen of Kingston’ who led a rebellion after Tacky
- A discussion around the moral complexities of the books e.g. the killing of the slave owner’s children
- Use with Ghost Boys by Jewell Parker Rhodes as a comparison around historical and contemporary racial injustice
- Use specific extracts in a topic around journeys, particularly journeys from other cultures
- Use extracts in conjunction with Words that Burn- for those who take part in this project
- Use for speaking aloud practice with specific individuals of the same cultural heritage
- Alex Wheatle is now one school’s Author of the Month
- Year 9 read Crongton Knights by Alex Wheatle in Year 9 – now continuing with Year 10 reading Cane Warriors
- Will use it as a tutor read in Years 7/8 or 9 or an intervention book in Autumn Term
- Asked library to order copies
- Developed lesson plans and sent to whole department to deliver to all classes, including questions on slides on key topics (will share with group)
- Year 10 workshop as part of Literature Festival in school
- Look at poems in this dialect, especially power and conflict
- Research lost/hidden histories of the revolution
- One school is holding a Literature Festival in December 2021 – developing a workshop on Cane Warriors – will focus on toxic masculinity with combined vulnerabilities eg feelings the night before the battle
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| • Reading the book will build self-esteem, especially amongst Black Afro-Caribbean pupils  
• Using Cane Warriors as part of programme to promote diversity in the curriculum, with Alex Wheatle as author of the month. Learning about slavery through literature – liaising with history department, too. |