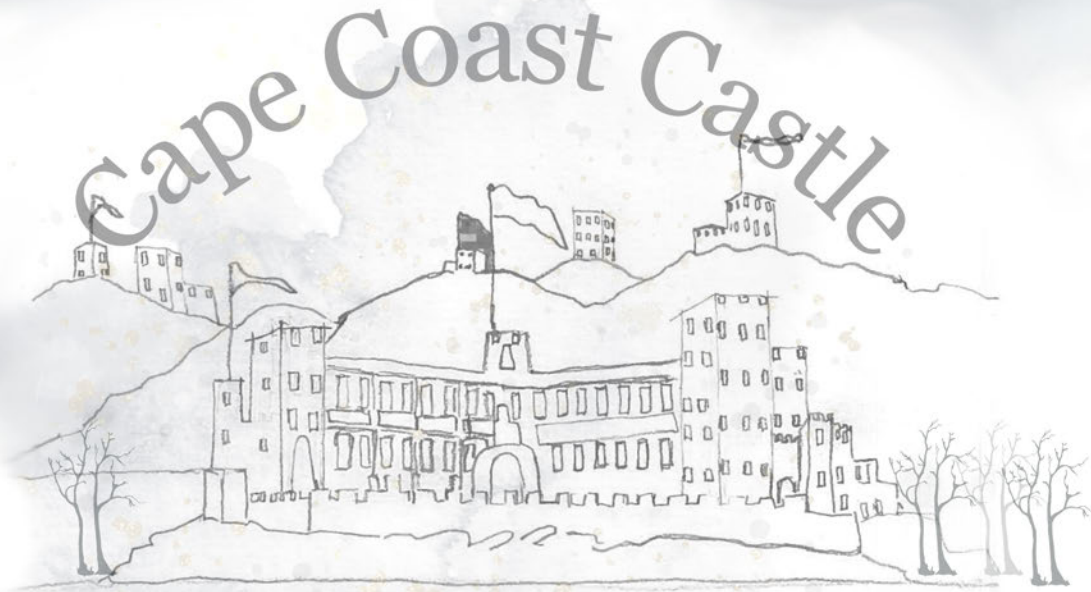




Kumbuka: The Boy Who Was Stolen from Africa

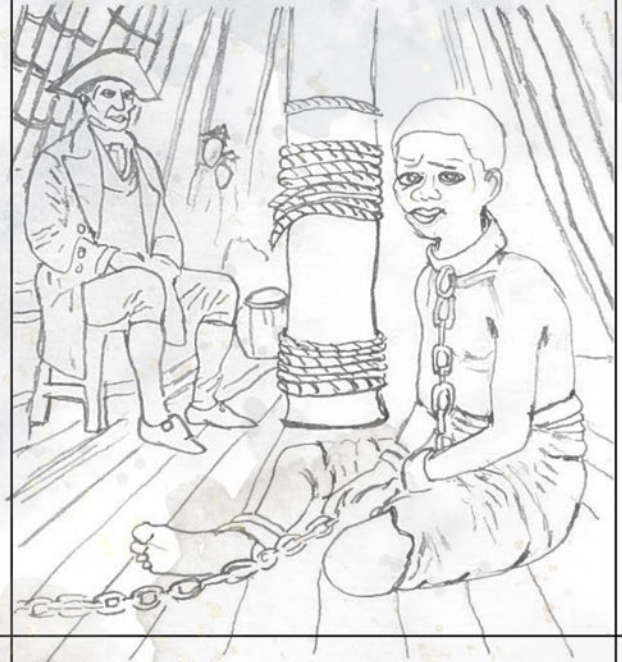
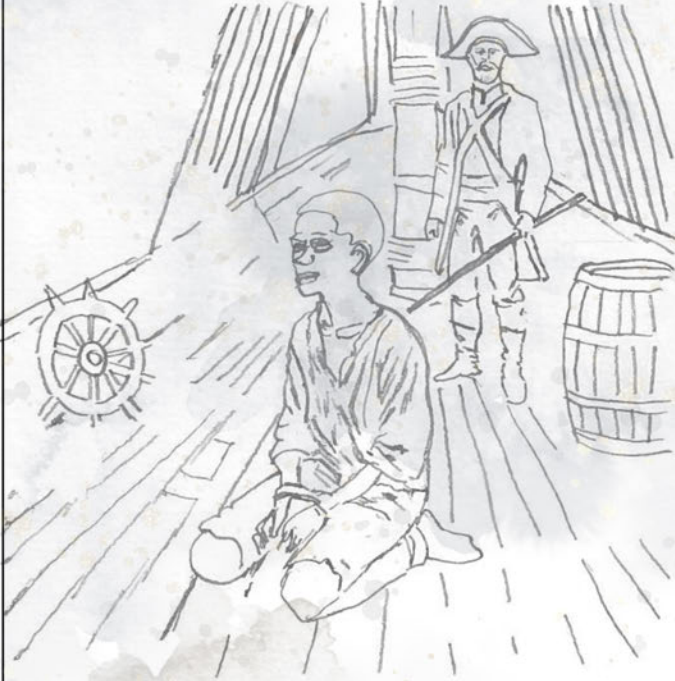
A Story of Courage, Hope, and Freedom

A long time ago, in 1722, a doctor named James Houstoun worked at a place called Cape Coast Castle. This was a large fort where many enslaved people, including children, were held before being taken far away.



Dr. Houstoun noticed something strange and sad: children under ten years old were sometimes recorded as “women” in company books. But why? Maybe it was a way to hide the truth—to keep people from knowing just how many children were stolen from their families and forced into slavery.

This book tells the story of Kumbuka, a boy who represents all the children who were stolen from Africa. Though he is not real, his story is based on the true experiences of millions of children who were sold into slavery. Through Kumbuka's journey, we remember their pain, their courage, and their hope.



A long time ago, a boy named Kumbuka lived happily in Africa. But one day, strangers took him far away from his home. He was scared, alone, and did not understand why this was happening. This is the story of Kumbuka—a story of bravery, friendship, and never forgetting who you are.



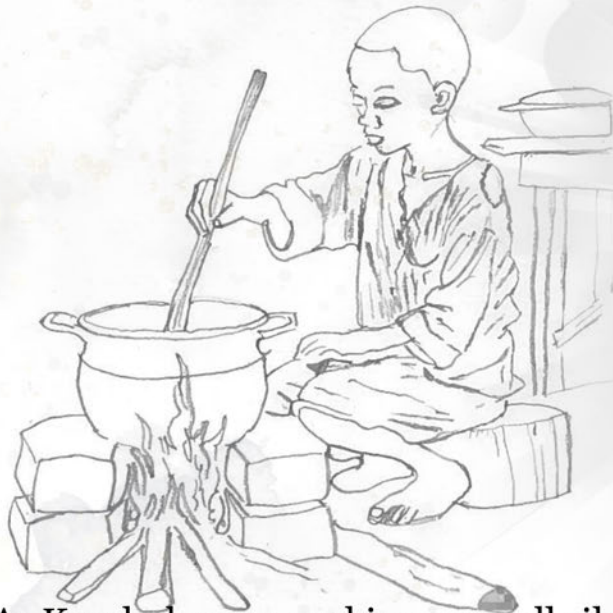
Kumbuka was a happy boy who lived in a village in Congo, Africa. He loved playing by the river, dancing in the rain, and listening to his granddad's stories by the fire. But one terrible day, strangers came. They took Kumbuka and many other children far away⁴ on a big ship.

When the ship stopped in Jamaica, some people were sold, but Kumbuka and the rest were shipped to Canada, where he was sold to a man named Mr. Bill.

“From now on, your name is Bill—just like me!” Mr. Bill said. But Kumbuka never forgot his real name. Because in Swahili, Kumbuka means “remember.” And no matter where he went, he would always remember who he truly was.



Life in Canada was cold and lonely. Kumbuka had no bed—only an old shirt, a worn jacket, and a thin pallet of straw to sleep on. Before sunrise, he had to clean, cook, and tend to the horses. He worked tirelessly all day, yet no one ever thanked him. He missed his family. He missed playing. Most of all, he missed being free. Then, one night, something magical happened...



As Kumbuka was cooking, a small silver rat appeared. Its fur shimmered like moonlight. The rat spoke. “You are kind,” it whispered. Kumbuka gasped. “You can talk?!” The rat nodded. “My name is Mwezi. It means ‘Moon’ in Swahili. And I have come to help you.” Mwezi was no ordinary rat. He was magical. He was wise. He could read many languages—English, French, Swahili, German, Lingala, Kikongo-Kituba, and Portuguese. And most importantly... he was Kumbuka’s new best friend. Mwezi knew Kumbuka’s suffering all too well because he had crossed the Atlantic on ships carrying enslaved people like Kumbuka and the goods they were forced to produce—rum, coffee, and sugar. He had seen the cruelty, the sorrow, and the stolen lives. Turning to Kumbuka, he said, “I came to Montreal on a slave ship that sailed from Barbados.”

One night, Mwezi brought bad news. “Your master wants to sell you—with two horses.

If you don’t escape now, you may never be free!” Kumbuka’s heart pounded. “But where will I go?” Mwezi’s fur glowed like moonlight. “Trust me. I know the way.” That night, Mwezi told Kumbuka about James Somerset, a boy who had once escaped from slavery and found freedom in England. A kind judge had helped him. “You can be free too, Kumbuka,” Mwezi said.



RUNAWAY SLAVE NOTICE

\$300 REWARD. A runaway slave by the name of Kumbuka has escaped and is being sought for immediate capture and return. Age: 13 years old. Origin: African-born and Languages Spoken: English, French, German, Portuguese, and several African languages. Kumbuka is small in stature but quick and clever. He is known for his sharp mind and ability to communicate in multiple tongues, making him a danger if left at large. He was last seen wearing tattered clothing and may attempt to blend in with free persons by using his linguistic skills. It is believed he may be heading north in search of freedom. A reward of \$300 will be paid for his capture and return. Any person found assisting or harboring him will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

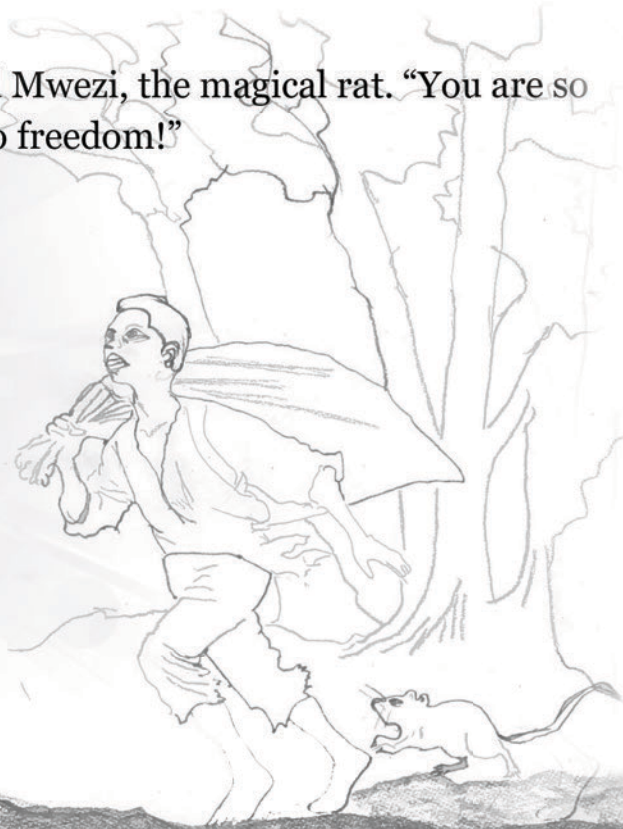


Kumbuka's face lit up like the morning sun. He bounced on his toes, his heart racing with joy as he watched Mwezi tear the paper into tiny shreds. The wind carried away the last pieces of the advertisement meant to stop his escape—freedom was within reach!



That night, Kumbuka and Mwezi ran away under the glowing moon. During the day, they hid. At night, they walked. Mwezi was smart—he chewed up the posters that said Kumbuka was a runaway. This made it harder for people to find him. They traveled far, far away... always moving when the moon was high in the sky.

“Keep running, Kumbuka!” said Mwezi, the magical rat. “You are so close to freedom!”




“Thank you, Mwezi. I will never forget you,” Kumbuka said to his magical rat friend as he prepared to step into his new life of freedom.



Kumbuka was just a boy when he was taken from his home in Africa. He was scared and alone until he met Mwezi, a magical rat with silver fur and a big heart. Mwezi represents Kumbuka's inner life, his memories of Africa, and how he used the power of his imagination to soothe his desperate loneliness and his longing for his home and family.

It is tragic but true that little boys and girls were stolen from their families and African homelands, thrown on slave ships, and sailed an ocean away from their loved ones to places like Canada where they were forced to work tirelessly and without pay for white enslavers. But it is also true that brave little boys like Kumbuka resisted their enslavement by trying to use their imaginations and their feet to escape slavery.





Published by Black Maple Magazine, Amherst, MA, USA
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Edited by Charmaine A. Nelson