

# The diamonds (author j sorie conteh)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Diamonds Human misery is the central point in J. Sorie Conteh's debut novel - The Diamonds. Conteh in this novel offers an intriguing contemporary look at Gibao, a man who finds wealth in the diamond fields of Sierra Leone, West Africa. The reader is fed the smells and feel of an West African Culture, filled with polygamy, divination, soothsayers, virgin sacrifices, crowded trains and buses, diamond towns, delicious dishes and religion and death.

Conteh discussed the value of Sierra Leone as a rich country with diamonds. As a country Sierra Leone found itself rich in diamonds. This novel represents recent happenings, when Gibao, a strong and determined man, feels forced by his circumstances, his wives and his inner greed to become wealthy. The story is a classic example of traditional African culture in disagreement with contemporary justice.

" A truly universal tale. A must read. A strong dramatic story by a very gifted writer. A major addition to Africa's contribution in the world of 20th century world writing."

The Diamonds explores the human misery and social meltdown caused by Sierra Leone's great diamond rush of the 1950s. Gibao Semabu, a successful peasant farmer, leaves his village for the Brave New World of diamond mining at Sewa. It is a totally different, corrupt world, where money is made quickly and then lost, theft is accepted, as long as one is not caught, and prostitution is very much a part of life. Initially timid but driven by an extraordinary ambition to get rich quick, Gibao succumbs to the greed and graft of the mines, and takes things further: he commits ritual murder after being told by a sorcerer that this will help him find large-size diamonds.

The Diamonds, on one level, is a parable of the destruction of peasant life by encroaching modernity - in the manner of Thomas Hardy, it juxtaposes the

bucolic, beautifully ordered society of rural Sierra Leone with the graft-ridden, violent world of unregulated capitalism, showing how a clash between the two leads to the destruction of the former. But Conteh, a Sierra Leonean scholar with the UN mission in Kuwait, seems determined to make a more profound statement, and his authorial voice concluding the novel may seem like a fad-driven intrusion to literary purists: '.. what was to become a diamond boom became a curse on the nation. Herein lies the irony. The economic benefits of diamonds, which were meant to free people from the clutches of poverty, instead enslaved them in the clutches of greediness. The Diamonds provides an opportunity to understand the human nature with human miseries.

#### Reference

Conteh, J. Sorie The Diamonds, Lekon New Dimensions Publishing, New York, 2001, 248 pages