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Abina and the Important Men

Although, Abina was wrongfully enslaved, slavery and imperialism were meant to give her life meaning. It was slavery that encouraged her to fight for her freedom and with this initiative, she contributed towards uprooting years of torment that were faced by the young, enslaved women. It showed the horrible face of a society that was solely based on men's privileges. Flourishing slavery even if it's illegal greatly influenced the social organization. On the other hand, Abina was the one whose slavery became her strength which made her fight for her freedom (Getz and Clarke). Despite, all the challenges that she faced in her life, she was able to make people hear her voice.

*Abina And The Important Men* is a graphic novel that gives a visual representation of a court transcript (Getz and Clarke). It is composed of writers Trevor. R. Getz and Liz Clarke. It mainly illustrates the viewpoint of a young lady who spent years enslaved by men when slavery was considered a crime. Later, she takes a case of her being kept in slavery to the court. It goes through a series of trials to hear both sides of a story. The second perspective in a story is illustrated by the important men. The major portion of a book gives the visual perspective of the Abina’s tale through a series of graphic like portrayal. The second part consists of an actual transcript of a court case. The third part is mainly focused on the historical background of the British Empire and slavery. The rest of the parts gives a reader to discuss the wide range of historical themes other than a court case.

Britain was known to have significant ties with slavery due to the glorious era, she experienced as a conqueror. Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Databases have estimated that during the years 1501- 1866, thirty-two billion slaves were transported by British ships out of a total of 12.5 million. However, slavery was outlawed in many regions by the late 19th century (Getz and Clarke). During the time of Abina’s case trials, although slavery was illegal in the Gold Coast Colony, it was still tolerated by the British. This was due to the region’s economic system which was dependent on the export of real products. Gold Coast was the major producer of palm oil which had a significant share in the country’s exports. Plantation and harvest of the palm trees were at a mercy of forced labor (Getz and Clarke). As the abolition decree did not seem to influence the women, they became the ultimate victim of labor slavery. Young girls were imported by slave owners to carry out the activities of plantation and harvest. Eventually, it emerged as a business and female slaves were accepted as wives by an influential family. Through this journey, Abina Mansah came to existence as a slave on the Gold Coast (Getz and Clarke).

Part I of a book gives an artistic demonstration of Abina throughout her testimony against Quamina Ebbo. Quamina Ebbo was a rich man who had a business of palm oil and slavery. Even when slavery was abolished, he kept many people at his knees (Getz and Clarke). One of them was Abina Mansah. Quamina had strong trade relations with the British. In the book, he is referenced as one of the important men. He was known to have a great influence on the British Empire. When Abina gets free, she meets a person called "William Melton" whom she requests to put Quamina in jail. He decides to take the case to the court. Throughout the trials, the judge, Melton and this jury of "important man" struggle with deciding between justice and profit (Getz and Clarke). The whole incident of injustice and inequality allows the reader to pity Abina and her desires to get justice.

A major thing that played an enormous role in giving a proper shape to Abina’s story was the envisioned prejudice. It seemed like everybody was against her. She was against the system of inequality, gender discrimination, and racism that no one seemed to acknowledge. She was the only one in favor of herself. Her youth, race, and gender played a major role in building up her story of continuous struggle. I believe the first part was positive in depicting Abina and her struggle. It has a sense of hope and future that was envisioned by Abina throughout the trials. If she did not have hope for the future, she would not have decided to take the case in the first place. She had a notion that history has changed. Eventually, she realizes that powerful people are capable of controlling everyone (Getz and Clarke).

Part II of the story gives the primary source of Abina unheard plead. It is titled “the transcript” which gives the events from the courtroom (Getz and Clarke). It demonstrates the actual courtroom transcripts that were used to formulate the graphical section. According to my opinion, this portion does not emphasize depicting the story of Abina but is more focused on the “important men” (Getz and Clarke). It lets the reader walk through the courtroom filled with important men. The defendant, the judge, and the jury are characterized as an “important men” who have control over others due to their power. The perspective of these men was that women play an important role in community thriving and this makes them doubtful to be reckoned as slaves.

Although Abina lost the case, I believe that her voice was heard. History is filled with instances where weak were silenced and powerful were allowed to speak and make decisions. Abina was heard which can be demonstrated by four pieces of evidence. First said that *“views of some individuals never get heard”*. However, testimonies of Abina were taken in a record (Getz and Clarke). Second states that *“Due to little or no worth, booklets are thrown away instead of turning into the archives”*. However, Abina’s testimonies were saved into archives (Getz and Clarke). Third says that *“People who write history, focus more on the voices of an influential people than that of weak”*. However, Abina was weak whose history is written by writers of this book (Getz and Clarke). Last and the most significant one states that *“Only incidents classified as ‘classics’ are kept in count while others are discarded”*. Although, viewpoint of Abina was not deemed worthy of importance by the important men in court but her courage to get justice overcame her silence (Getz and Clarke).

Writers of a graphic novel have contributed their best to uncover the life story of Abina and other understated individuals of that timeframe. According to my perspective, I am convinced that writers have contributed their best in representing a graphical history of a story instead of putting everything into a group of words. They have wonderfully depicted the scenario from facial expressions to the abstract characteristics of a setting such as attire, ethnicity, gender, etc. The differences in these characteristics mainly demonstrate the inequality of a judicial and cultural system.

Overall, I appreciate how writers have contributed to preserving the life history of Abina who is thought to bring a major change in the life of understated people. She made them acknowledge their right to freedom and speech. Although, perspectives of weak may not be given importance as that of powerful this piece of writing played a major role in documenting Abina's life as a symbol of hope.

**Works Cited**

Getz, Trevor R., and Liz Clarke. *Abina and the Important Men: A Graphic History*. Oxford University Press, 2016.