



Death and the King's Horseman: A Play

By Wole Soyinka



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Death and the King's Horseman: A Play By Wole Soyinka

A Nobel Prize-winning playwright's classic tale of tragic decisions in a traditional African culture.

Based on events that took place in Oyo, an ancient Yoruba city of Nigeria, in 1946, Wole Soyinka's powerful play concerns the intertwined lives of Elesin Oba, the king's chief horseman; his son, Olunde, now studying medicine in England; and Simon Pilkings, the colonial district officer. The king has died and Elesin, his chief horseman, is expected by law and custom to commit suicide and accompany his ruler to heaven. The stage is set for a dramatic climax when Pilkings learns of the ritual and decides to intervene and Elesin's son arrives home.



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Editorial Review

Review

Death and the King's Horseman blends European literary theater with total-theater traditions from the Yoruba tribe in Southwest Nigeria. Through poetry, chorus, politics, and storytelling, Soyinka both entertains and asks subtle questions about mass psychology, individual psychology, and universal human struggles of the will.

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About the Author

Wole Soyinka, one of Africa's foremost writers, won the Nobel Prize in 1986 and is the author of Death and the King's Horseman, among other works.

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