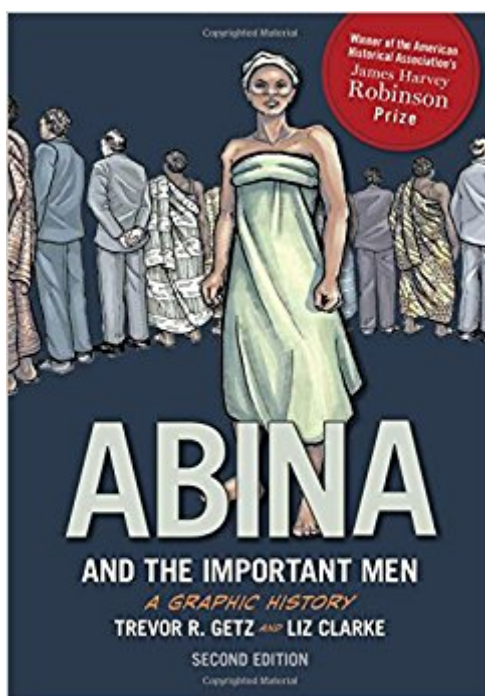


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# Abina And The Important Men: A Graphic History (Graphic History Series)



## Synopsis

Winner of the James Harvey Robinson Prize from the American Historical Association--and widely acclaimed by educators and students--*Abina and the Important Men, Second Edition*, is a compelling and powerfully illustrated "graphic history" based on an 1876 court transcript of a West African woman named Abina, who was wrongfully enslaved and took her case to court. The book is a microhistory that does much more than simply depict an event in the past; it uses the power of illustration to convey important themes in world history and to reveal the processes by which history is made. The story of Abina Mansah--a woman "without history" who was wrongfully enslaved, escaped to British-controlled territory, and then took her former master to court--takes place in the complex world of the Gold Coast at the onset of late nineteenth-century colonialism. Slavery becomes a contested ground, as cultural practices collide with an emerging wage economy and British officials turn a blind eye to the presence of underpaid domestic workers in the households of African merchants. The main scenes of the story take place in the courtroom, where Abina strives to convince a series of "important men"--a British judge, two Euro-African attorneys, and a jury of local leaders--that her experiences and perceptions matter. "Am I free?" Abina inquires. Throughout both the court case and the flashbacks that dramatically depict her life in servitude, both the defendants and members of the court strive to "silence" Abina and to impose their own understandings and meanings upon her. Following the graphic history in Part I, Parts II-V provide detailed historical context for the story, a reading guide that reconstructs and deconstructs the methods used to interpret the story, and strategies for using *Abina* in various classroom settings. This second edition features a new gender-rich section, Part V: Engaging Abina, which explores Abina's life and narrative as a woman. Focusing on such important themes as the relationship between slavery and gender in pre-colonial Akan society, the role of marriage in Abina's experience, colonial paternalism, and the meaning of cloth and beads in her story, this section also includes a debate on whether or not Abina was a slave, with contributions by three award-winning scholars--Antoinette Burton, Sandra Greene, and Kwasi Konadu--each working from different perspectives. The second edition includes new, additional testimony that was rediscovered in the National Archives of Ghana, which is also reflected in the graphic history section.

## Book Information

Series: Graphic History Series

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 2 edition (June 1, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0190238747

ISBN-13: 978-0190238742

Product Dimensions: 9.9 x 1.2 x 7.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 47 customer reviews

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## Customer Reviews

"Weaving together a court transcript from 1876 and Abina's story before the trial within a broader context of gender, colonialism, and world history, the book shares historical evidence as well as interpretation to present a powerful tool for teaching history and teaching about history."--The American Historical Association "Abina and the Important Men is a tremendous step forward for the world-history community."--Journal of World History "This is an important book that takes history into the public domain in a very accessible form."--Journal of African History "Getz and Clarke have produced a text of historiographical and pedagogical significance. They illustrate with elegance and conviction the importance and potential of forging new interdisciplinary approaches."--Journal of Women's History "Although ultimately unsuccessful in her lawsuit, the intrepid character of Abina shines through in every panel, incarnating a very different kind of colonized African woman, one that threatens to replace the historian's standard for the representative with the novelist's ideal for the exceptional. By the end, Abina voices one of the conceits of the entire project: not to exert a retrospective and largely empty expression of sympathy for those wounded in the traumatic past, but to allow their stories to be heard."--Biography "Abina and the Important Men emphasizes the agency of ordinary individuals and the processes by which obscure voices are silenced in historical records. Getz and Clarke's auto-criticism actually bolsters confidence in their interpretations, while providing a most instructive example of how historians recapture the past."--Choice "The second edition of Abina's story presents a powerful human struggle paired with an engaging, honest example of historical inquiry in the form of questions and debates. It is accessible for students and provocative for readers at all levels."--Laura J. Mitchell, University of California, Irvine "The juxtaposition of multiple historical accounts from graphic history (a secondary source) to the court case transcript (a primary source) enables multiple classroom conversations about historical

presentation. The graphic history concludes with a twenty-first century historian (Dr. Getz) discovering Abina's court case. The delightful inclusion of the researcher as a key 'character' in a textbook helps stress a key pedagogical point: it often takes new research interests to recover 'lost' lives, such as Abina's. Such emphasis makes the book an ideal text for introductory level history students. It is also one that will be of interest to students thinking ahead to their own careers using history degrees. Abina is a work that has something for many students."-- Andrea Felber Seligman, City College of New York, in World History Connected

Trevor R. Getz is Professor of History at San Francisco State University. Liz Clarke is a professional illustrator based in Cape Town, South Africa.

This is one of the most interesting books I've ever seen because it is not just another piece of literature written in the graphic novel style, it is history, and it provides opportunities for the reader to experience that history in several ways. It is a fantastic representation of the way that literature is influenced by history.

Abina and the Important Men is a powerful graphic novel based on an late 1800's court transcript of a west African woman, named Abina. Abina believed she was wrongly enslaved so she ran away and took the case to court. The book empowers slavery and the impact it had on the justice system and how it collided economically. As college students this book was an excellent read as it portrayed many things. The "Comic-Book" like of this graphic novel made it visually enhanced while reading. The illustrations were not like the average graphic novel. They were scholarly like as it enhanced the knowledge of the reader. Getz also incorporated the actual court transcript of the case in the book and it was relative short. So the question that arises from that is how did Getz get the majority of Abina's aspect from just that minimal transcript. That is one downside to the novel is how much of the novel is actual true. What we did like is how Getz formatted the novel. He broke it up into five parts, "The Graphic History", "The Transcript", "Historical Context", "Reading Guide", "Abina In The Classroom". He also incorporated maps and figures to help the reader visualize more. The Graphic History was the actual novel detailing Abina's story. Following that Getz put in the actual court transcript which helped with the dialogue but was hard to visualize emotions since it is just words on a piece of paper. The Historical context helped us as readers by giving background knowledge of Africa when the court case took place. Overall Abina and the Important Men was a great informative read for anyone looking to expand their knowledge on the Colonialism Era slavery and the impact it

had on the justice system and how it collided economically. We read this book for Dr. Rhonda M. Gonzales' HIS/AAS3603 class at the University of Texas At San Antonio Blue Group- Jimmy, Efiom, Charles, Paola

Brilliant interpretation of a woman's story. So useful for the history classroom

I learned a lot and the story is so good because it is something you don't normally see or expect. Great pictures help you understand the story.

Great book, in beautiful condition. Couldn't be happier with this purchase!

Thank you.

The story of Abina and the Important Men, not only presents a personal account of the struggle experienced by West African women and children, it also provides readers a rare insight in how historical analysis is conducted. Trevor R. Getz, author of the graphic history, provides explanations on how he gathered the surrounding information on Abina's court transcript. By understanding the culture and social systems of the West African region during British rule, he is able to reconstruct an authentic landscape through pictures and dialogue, giving the reader the ability to feel if he or she was actually living in West Africa at that time. Trevor R. Getz is able to allow Abina's voice be heard at last; a goal she was not able to achieve during her lifetime. To provide insight in the world of historical analysis, Getz discusses historical bias and offers a technique to "read against the grain." Along with the court transcripts and graphic story, Getz provides an introductory lesson in how to analyze historical documents from a critical perspective. He walks the readers step by step through the various questions historians must ask themselves when reviewing primary sources. He is very open and honest about his personal bias of telling the story from Abina's viewpoint after carefully researching the community the case was presented in, the time period and the background of the various parties involved in the case. In the same chapter he reminds people that historical research is not just the study of written works, but a balance of all sources that can provide insight into a person, period or society that are available to them. Art, archeological evidence, literature, linguistics and anthropological information provide a more well rounded picture to interpret events that occurred so long ago that we cannot easily observe them or understand the nuances between then and modern day. Abina and the Important Men is a great way to share history with diverse

audiences. The graphic format makes it easy to teach a complex subject to kids, teens and adults. Having the courage to develop a historical work in this format dispels the myth that history textbooks are boring and simply a compilation of cold facts and data. Getz and Clark present the case of Abina in an effective fashion that enables readers to identify with each character. The artwork draws the reader into the story in a manner that the court transcript on its own simply cannot do. The affordable, yet beautifully printed book ties together the astonishing story of Abina's trial along with a historiography lesson from Dr Getz.HIS/AAS3603@UTSA - Red Group

a nice book for all ages... a microhistory on an african slave girl. Could be great for classroom use.

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