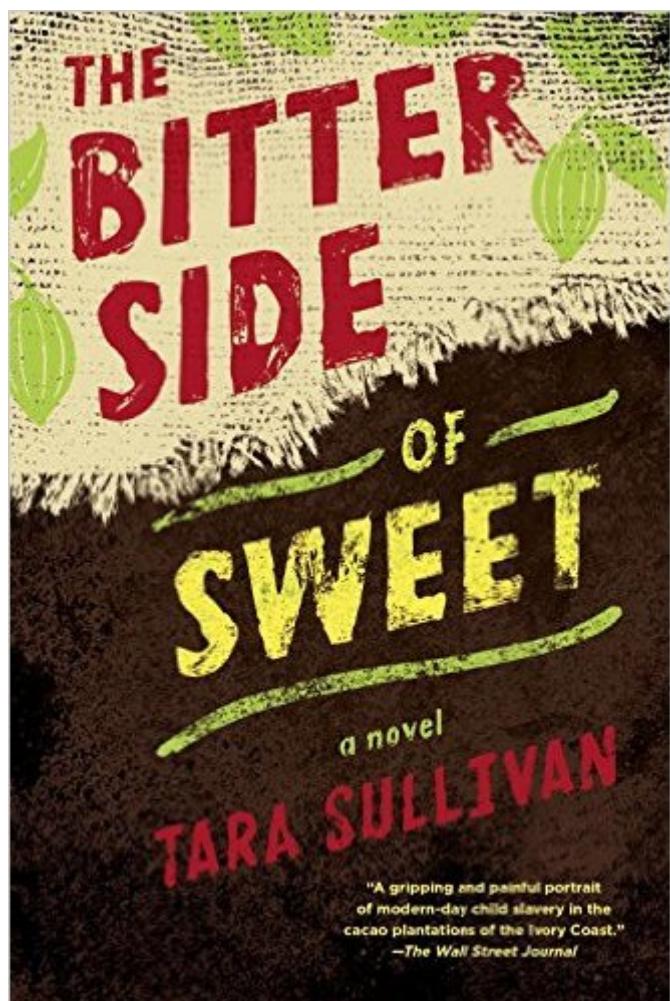


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# The Bitter Side Of Sweet



## Synopsis

For fans of Linda Sue Park and *A Long Way Gone*, two young boys must escape a life of slavery in modern-day Ivory Coast. Fifteen-year-old Amadou counts the things that matter. For two years what has mattered are the number of cacao pods he and his younger brother, Seydou, can chop down in a day. This number is very important. The higher the number the safer they are because the bosses won't beat them. The higher the number the closer they are to paying off their debt and returning home to Moke and Auntie. Maybe. The problem is Amadou doesn't know how much he and Seydou owe, and the bosses won't tell him. The boys only wanted to make some money during the dry season to help their impoverished family. Instead they were tricked into forced labor on a plantation in the Ivory Coast; they spend day after day living on little food and harvesting beans in the hot sun. "dangerous, backbreaking work. With no hope of escape, all they can do is try their best to stay alive" until Khadija comes into their lives. She's the first girl who's ever come to camp, and she's a wild thing. She fights bravely every day, attempting escape again and again, reminding Amadou what it means to be free. But finally, the bosses break her, and what happens next to the brother he has always tried to protect almost breaks Amadou. The old impulse to run is suddenly awakened. The three band together as family and try just once more to escape. Tara Sullivan, the award-winning author of the astounding *Golden Boy*, delivers another powerful, riveting, and moving tale of children fighting to make a difference and be counted. Inspired by true-to-life events happening right now, *The Bitter Side of Sweet* is an exquisitely written tour de force not to be missed.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0810 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers (February 23, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0399173072

ISBN-13: 978-0399173073

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 1 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (13 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #57,132 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #27 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Violence](#) #41 in [Books > Children's Books >](#)

Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Africa #53 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction >

Social & Family Issues > Violence

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Well-told story of the love siblings share, the power of random acts of kindness, and the strength of human spirit, set amid the tragic terrible circumstances of forced child labor in the cacao trade in the Ivory Coast. The powerful arc of the tale is, at the same time, dramatic and educational. Makes you think more than twice about the Halloween candy so casually bought and distributed.

I received a copy of this book through Penguin's First to Read program in exchange for an honest review. I liked how the book started and ended with "I only count the things that matter." It really brought the story full circle and worked well to set the scene in each instance. It also helped to plant me firmly in the main character's shoes right from the start, and kept me from abandoning them before the book was ready to let me go. The descriptions were vivid and I had a very clear image in my head of what the camp and la brosse looked like while I was reading. I felt the sting of the whip and cowered in fear from the bosses wrath. These are not things I have personal experience with, but I felt them anyway. Although this book is fiction, it seems clear to me that the author did her research about this very real problem. I am ashamed to admit that this book was even eye opening for me. It never occurred to me to wonder under what conditions cacao is grown for our chocolate. I love chocolate and have a particular weakness for Reese's peanut butter eggs, but now I will be doing research to ensure that I'm only buying chocolate from companies that do not use cacao harvested by child slaves in the future. Overall I give this book 5 out of 5 stars because it was an engrossing read and socially enlightening for me. I would urge anyone that eats chocolate to read it, and at least consider changing your chocolate buying habits. Reviewed on Just Another Girl and Her Books blog

I enjoyed this book very much. It was as good or better than her first book. I was not aware of the problems with the chocolate business. Ms. Sullivan's books have both been very informative regarding issues that are not well known. I am looking forward to her next book.

The Bitter Side of Sweet hooked me from the beginning and kept me thoroughly engaged

throughout!! I connected with the characters immediately and found myself really feeling for them as they dealt with their struggles. I fully recommend this book as it not only provides an excellent story but connects to issues in the real world that students (and adults, too) can then research and take action to improve. :)

If you'd like "to count the things that matter", then read this book. It matters! It is one of those stories you just can't put down. From page one you are emotionally invested in the lives of these characters. Ms. Sullivan's words make you feel as if you on the Ivory Coast sweating and hurting along with these new friends. It seems initially that the main character Amadou doesn't always make logical choices. However you soon understand that he's in such a no win situation on the cacao farm, that his choices are all about survival. This compelling and action packed story shows the growth of a guarded young man who trusts no one, but realizes that family is everything that really matters. It is an eye opening read for young people as well as for adults. I give it 5 well deserved stars.

It is a beautiful story of two brothers working on a cacao plantation in Ivory Coast that manages to be both heart-breaking and uplifting at the same time. I flew through every page, pulled forward by the author's descriptive and lyrical prose. I felt every emotional step of this story and ached with the characters through every trial they faced. It's a moving story of resilience, compassion, friendship, and brotherhood. Sullivan provides additional information about the cacao industry in Africa and includes resources for readers to learn more about the issues of childhood slavery and information on more ethically sourced chocolate. It is a thought-provoking reminder of the hidden price that is paid in order for us to consume the goods we love.

A compelling story that exposes the grueling conditions under which much of the world's cacao supply is harvested. Amadou and his brother Seydou are brought from Mali to Cote D'Ivoire to work as forced laborers. Without spoiling too much, circumstances start to feel life or death and they must depend on strangers to help them start a new life. A deeply affecting story.

I loved Golden Boy and was excited to read The Bitter Side Sweet. She unfolds a gripping story involving child labor in the Ivory Coast. Sullivan has a gift for taking a human rights issue and telling it through the eyes of children. The novel is never boring, tugs at your heart, and leaves you thinking long after the last page. It's great book for teens as well as adults.

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