



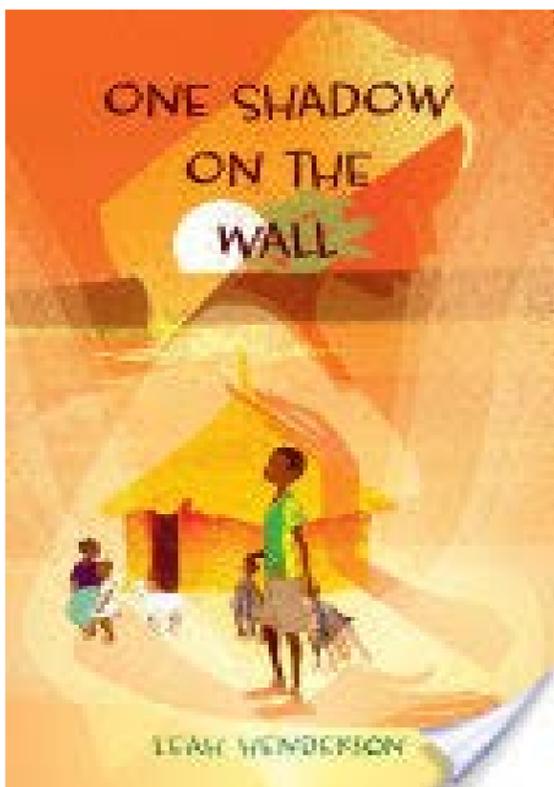
## *Bringing Africa to your Classroom*

### *One Shadow on the Wall* by Leah Henderson

#### *Topics Covered | Things to Introduce:*

- Familial love
- Obligation, Determination, Integrity
- Wolof Language

- Level: Age 8-12
- Country Focus: Senegal
- Language Focus: Wolof



**A**n orphaned boy in contemporary Senegal must decide between doing what is right and what is easy as he struggles to keep a promise he made to his dying father in this “stirring” (School Library Journal) debut novel laced with magical realism. Eleven-year-old Mor was used to hearing his father’s voice, even if no one else could since his father’s death. It was comforting. It was also a reminder that Mor had made a promise to his father before he passed: keep your sisters safe. Keep the family together. But almost as soon as they are orphaned, that promise seems impossible to keep. With an aunt from the big city ready to separate him and his sisters as soon as she arrives, and a gang of boys from a nearby village wanting everything he has—including his spirit—Mor is tested in ways he never imagined.

#### **From Author’s Blog: About Leah Henderson**

Leah Henderson’s novel *One Shadow on the Wall*, is an Africana Children’s Book Award notable book and a Bank Street “Best Book of 2017” starred for outstanding merit. Her short story “Warning: Color May Fade” is part of the YA anthology *Black Enough: Stories of Being Young & Black in America* and her forthcoming picture books are *Mamie on the Mound* and *A Day For Rememberin’*. Leah mentors teens, is an avid traveler, and her volunteer work has roots in Mali, West Africa. She attended Callaloo Writing Workshop at Oxford University, is on Highlights Foundation faculty, and volunteers with *Kweli Journal* and *We Need Diverse Books*. She received her MFA from Spalding University and lives in Washington, D.C.

## Discussion Questions

1. Mor is the only person who can see Yaay and Baay. Why do you think that is? Why can't Amina or Fatima see them?
2. Mor had to grow up very quickly after his baay died. If you were in Mor's shoes, what would you miss most about being a normal kid? What would be the hardest part about caring for your family? Do you think there would be any good things about it?
3. What do you think of Papis? Do you think his way of life is understandable? Or is there never any excuse for being that way? Additionally, Cheikh is able to walk away from the Danka Boys. Why do you think he is able to choose to live differently and Papis is not (at the moment)?
4. It would have been very easy to join the Danka Boys and be taken care of. Can you think of any time in your life when the right choice is not the easy choice?
5. Many people misunderstand Demba and are afraid of him. Why do you think this is? Have you ever been scared of something because you didn't understand it?

## Activity Suggestions/ Resources

### Social Studies Extension

Read the author's note at the end of the book. Pretend you are in the government of Senegal. How can you try to make sure the daara's are good places that fulfill their promise to provide children with a religious education and lessen the number of children that end up like the Danka Boys? Is there anything we can do to help children like Chiekh and Papis from far away?



## Country Fact Box: Senegal



### Capital:

Dakar

### Population:

14 Million People

### People from Senegal are called:

Senegalese

### Main Languages Spoken in Senegal:

French, Wolof, Pulaar, Mandinka, Balanta-Ganja, Hassaniya Arabic, Serer, Noon, Mandjak, Jola-Fonyi, Soninke, and Mankanya.

## Language Box: Wolof

### How many people speak Wolof as their mother tongue?

10 Million, with speakers in Senegal, The Gambia, and Mauritania

### Practice some Wolof

Maa ngi tudd ...

My name is ...

Maa ngi joge ...

I'm from ...

Maa ngi am ... at.

I'm ... years old.

Seynaa.  
Seyuma.

I am married. / I am not married.

Damay (Duma) tukki man kenn.

I'm (not) traveling alone.

Damay tukki ak ...

I'm traveling with ...

For more information on Wolof and what it sounds like, visit

<http://aboutworldlanguages.com/wolof>