

Helping you choose books for children



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opening extract from

One Hen

written by

Katie Smith Milway

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This is Kojo.



Kojo tugs the knot tight and hoists a bundle of firewood on to his head. Since his father died, he has had to leave school and help his mother collect wood to sell at the market. It is the last load of the day and he is tired and hungry.

Kojo and his mother live in a mud-walled house with an open fire for cooking. Beside it is a garden where they grow their own food. They never have much money or much to eat.

As Kojo nears the house, he can smell *fufu* cooking. This is their main meal, made from cassava and yams. He begins to walk faster.





One year later Kojo has built up his flock to 25 hens. He thinks the sound of chickens clucking and skittering about their enclosure is better than the beating of festival drums. But collecting eggs from so many hens is hard work. His speckled hen tries to hide her eggs. Today he finds one under a cassava plant. And his white hens peck at him when he checks their nests. Then there is his brown hen with the bright red comb – his first and still his favourite. She always seems to have a smooth, brown egg for him.

Selling eggs at the market has given Kojo some savings. Maybe he will use his egg money to build a fine wooden chicken coop. Maybe he will buy some things his mother needs, such as a new water bucket and a good knife. Or maybe he will pay for something he's been dreaming of: fees and a uniform so that he can go back to school.

"Your eggs have made us stronger, Kojo," says his mother. "Now go to school and learn ... for both of us."



These are the chickens Kojo buys with the money he got from selling the eggs.