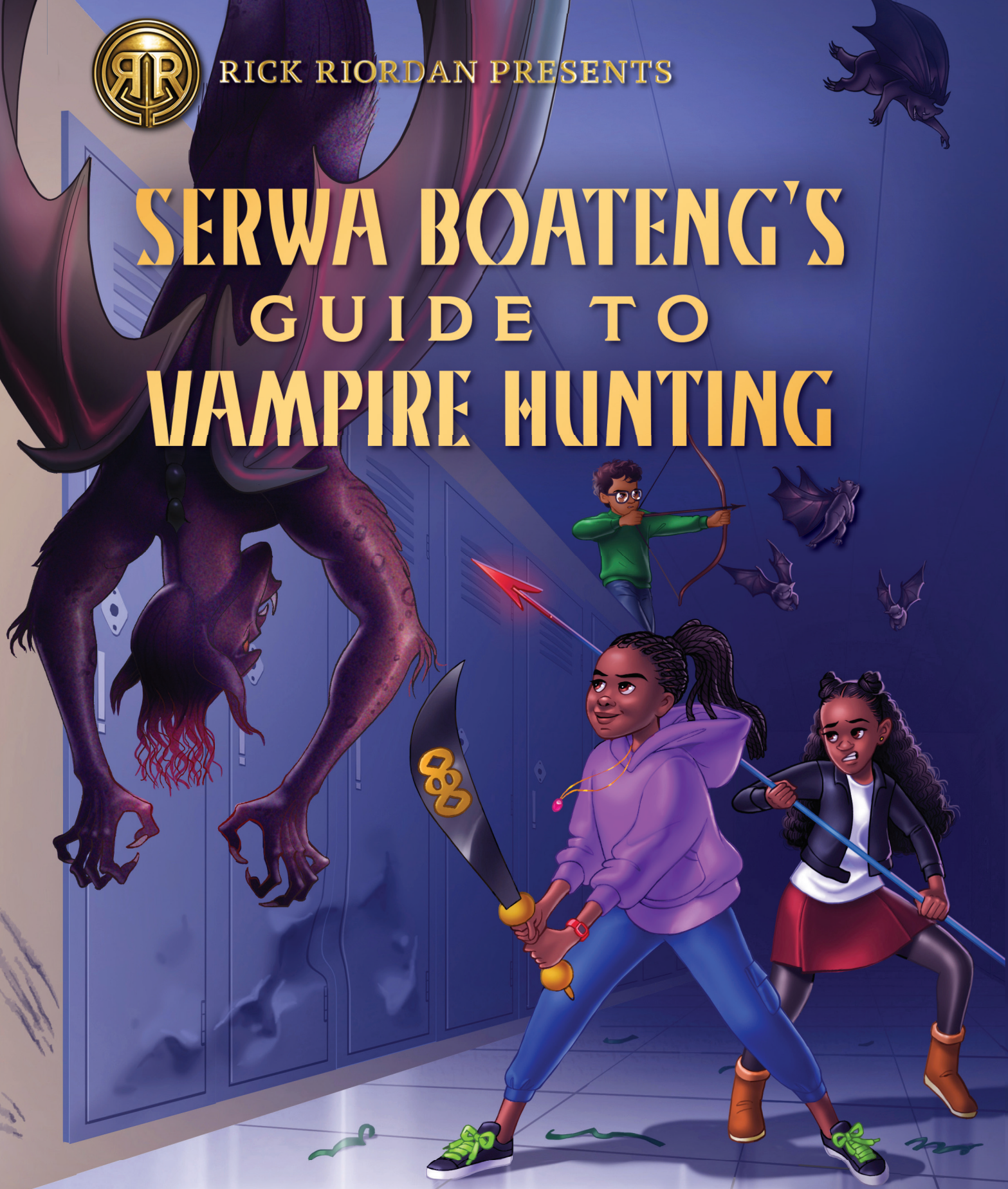




RICK RIORDAN PRESENTS



# SERWA BOATENG'S GUIDE TO VAMPIRE HUNTING



BY NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR  
**ROSEANNE A. BROWN**

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Disney·HYPERION

# ABOUT THE BOOK

Serwa Boateng is a twelve-year-old with a talent for vampire slaying like both of her parents. That's because Serwa knows that some fireflies are really adze, shape-shifting vampires from the forests of southeastern Ghana. Adze prey on the blood of innocents, possessing their minds and turning them into hulking monsters, and for generations, slayers like Serwa's family have protected an unknowing public from their threats. But when an obayifo (witch) destroys her childhood home while searching for a drum, do Serwa's parents take her with them on their quest to defeat her? No. Instead, she is sent to her aunt's home in Rocky Gorge, Maryland. Amid the change, she must navigate the difficulties of middle school while longing for home. And just when Serwa thinks everything is normal in her new town, she discovers that an adze is in her middle school. She must fight, train others, and uncover a difficult truth to save the day.



## COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT

The novel *Serwa Boateng's Guide to Vampire Hunting* provides a great opportunity to apply complex literacy skills such as inferencing, deconstructing vocabulary, author's purpose, and textual connections. This discussion guide contains suggestions aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Reading: Literature, Writing, and Speaking and Listening. Each activity in this guide includes a reference for the CCSS strand, domain, and standard that is addressed. During the activities and questions, encourage students to support their claims with textual evidence. To obtain additional information, visit the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) website [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

## ACTIVATING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

### Explore Important Connections Before Reading

1. In your opinion, what makes a mythology or folklore novel exciting? What are important story elements in this type of text? What personality traits do characters often possess in a story influenced by folklore? Be specific. (Literature: Craft and Structure: RL. 5.5, 6.5)
2. Engage in a small-group discussion using the following questions: What do you know about Ghanaian culture? Have you read any books that reflect Ghanaian culture? Why is diverse representation in literature important? In the books you read, are many different voices and cultures represented? Why or why not? Provide examples. (Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: SL. 5.1, 6.1)



3. Read the description of the novel, chapter titles, and quotes at the beginning of each chapter. What events do you think will happen in this novel? Based on your preview, how might this text be similar to other novels or stories you've read in the past? How might it be different? Support your prediction with textual evidence. (Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, R.L. 5.9)
- a. Why is it important to read the quotes at the beginning of each chapter? How can the quotes help the reader better understand the novel? In your opinion, why did the author include the quotes as part of the overall structure of the text? (Literature: Craft and Structure: RL. 5.5, 6.5)
4. Review the glossary (p. 375) and Adinkra dictionary (p. 383) at the end of the novel. Be sure to try the correct pronunciation of each word. How can this section of the text be helpful while you read? What are five terms or symbols that you are excited to learn more about as you read the book? Place them in the table below. As you read, record the page number and your own definition for each term or symbol that you selected. (Literature: Craft and Structure: RL. 5.4, 6.4)

Glossary Term or Adinkra Symbol	Where did you find the term or symbol in the text? Why is this vocabulary word important? Define the term or symbol in your own words.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## Explore the questions individually and in small groups while reading

1. In Chapter 1, Serwa says, “But it’s my birthday this week, and it’s a family tradition that the birthday person have whatever they want for seven straight days” (p. 1). What is a tradition? Can you think of traditions that are important to your family? What can be positive about traditions? What are potential challenges with traditions? As you read, discuss the traditions mentioned in the text.
2. How are Serwa and her family connected to the Abomofuo (p. 4)? Describe the character traits of Serwa, Mom, and Dad. What makes each of them skilled vampire slayers? What steps are required to fight vampires? Use text-based details in your response.
3. Serwa’s mom says, “You have the whole rest of your life to be a slayer and only a handful more to be a regular kid. We don’t want you to look back one day and regret rushing through this period” (p. 9). Why doesn’t Serwa agree with her mom? As you read, consider whether you believe this statement is accurate? How does Serwa’s perspective develop and/or change throughout the story? Which events cause Serwa’s view to change? Provide examples.
4. In several chapters, the significance of names is mentioned by different characters.
  - a. In Chapter 2, what is the distinction between a day name and an English name? Who would you expect to call you by each name?
  - b. In Chapter 6, Mrs. Dean says, “This is your first warning, Sarah.” (p. 60) Why are her actions so offensive? Why is this type of microaggression problematic in our society? Support your response with textual evidence.
  - c. In Chapter 17, what is the origin of Roxy’s full name, Roxanne Aba Darlene James? How is her name connected to her ancestry? Explain.
5. How do Serwa and her parents communicate with the gods? In Chapter 4, describe the compound, the characteristics of the gods, and the interaction with the gods. How does Serwa protest during the conversation? What is the result of the conversation? Be specific.
6. Do you agree with Serwa’s parents decision to leave her in Rocky Gorge? How is Rocky Gorge “too perfect” (p. 43)? Describe Auntie Latricia and Roxy. How are “terms like cousin, uncle, and aunt” (p. 45) used in Ghanaian culture?
7. Serwa often discusses her feelings about moving to the United States from Ghana. She shares, “I was only five when we left Ghana, so I don’t really remember the move itself” (p.45). Why might it be difficult to move from one place to another at any age? What could make moving feel easier? How does Serwa’s experience living in multiple places impact her view of home?
8. In Chapter 6, describe Serwa’s first day of middle school. Who does she meet in class and in the cafeteria? What events take place throughout the day? What do you think happened to end the friendship between Roxy and Ashley? As you read, note each character’s unique story, challenges, and strengths.



9. Ashley asks Serwa, “Where are you really from?” (p. 61). Why is that a difficult question? What are misconceptions of Ghana during her first day at school? Later, Serwa says, “I’m Black and I live in America, but I’m not Black American like Mr. Riley, Gavin, and Roxy. I’m not even a full citizen yet. If I’m not Ghanaian and I am not really American, what am I?” (p. 96). Based on the text, what are important parts of Serwa’s identity? Why is identity complicated? Provide text-based details.
10. Consider how it might feel to learn a new language or forget a familiar language. Serwa says, “Even now, my brain struggles to translate Twi words, like they’re friends whose faces I know but whose names I just can’t remember” (p. 22). What does this quote suggest? Later, Roxy says, “What if she thinks I’m not Ghanaian enough? Because I can’t speak Twi, and I’ve never actually been to Ghana?” (p. 181). Why does Roxy have this concern? How do Serwa and Roxy share parts of their identity? How do they differ?
11. In Chapter 7, Serwa encounters a challenging situation at school. What is the significance of “#PastaPants Epic Fail” (p. 74)? Why is this event connected to cyberbullying? How does social media influence the students at the school? In your opinion, what are the benefits and challenges of using social media in middle school? Why?
12. Using details from the story, is the Rocky Gorge Good Citizens Committee (GCC) a good idea? Why might Mr. Riley think the committee will have a positive impact? Why is everyone upset about participating? In Chapter 13, Serwa says, “Maybe this whole team thing wasn’t such a bad idea after all” (p. 142). What events caused her opinion to change? How does the relationship between the different GCC members transform throughout the chapters? Why is this important to notice? Explain.
- a. In the novel, Serwa learns that one member of the GCC has a very challenging past connected to abuse. What happens between Serwa and Gavin that reveals his past? How does she mend the relationship? If you or a friend is experiencing any type of abuse, what should you do?
13. Describe Mrs. Dean’s character traits throughout the novel. What is she assuming about Serwa when she says “students like you” (p. 136)? What negative actions show that Mrs. Dean has many racist and biased views? Provide textual evidence.
14. How are girls depicted by the author in the novel? Serwa says, “Lots of people, especially girls, feel like they can’t be honest when they’re good at something” (p. 151). Why is a positive depiction of girls important? Can you think of other novels that have strong leading girls as characters? Why? Can you think of novels that have negative portrayals of girls? Be specific.
15. What does the phrase “Yeni aseda” (p. 157) mean in Twi? Why is this term important during the interaction between Serwa and Auntie Latricia? Provide textual evidence. Can you think of a similar phrase in your own culture?
16. Why is Asaase Yaa Roxy’s favorite god? Describe her powers. Why does Asaase Yaa consider herself an “eco-influencer” (p. 190)? What image do Roxy and Serwa have about Asaase Yaa before meeting her? How is the actual goddess different from what they imagined? How does Roxy show “leadership” and “wisdom” to the goddess?
- a. In Chapter 25, what does each GCC member receive from the goddess, and how is it aligned with their strengths and character traits?



17. While searching for the adze, Serwa says, “I wonder if Ghanaian grocery stores, like diners, are liminal spaces, too, because they all feel the same no matter where you are in the world—a little too small, a little too crowded, a whole lot like home” (p. 179). What other places in the novel make Serwa feel at home? In Chapter 22, what does each GCC member sense in Asamando? How is this connected to home? Why is the feeling of calm important when arriving in Asamando? Provide textual evidence.
18. In Chapters 28 and 29, what is the history of Rocky Gorge? How is the history connected to Mr. Riley and Roxy? Why is a keeper an important role? How does Rocky Gorge go against beliefs of Abomofuo? How does this history complicate Serwa’s view of dark magic? Explain.
  - a. “RGMS used to be Harrison Manor. They built this school on the site of a former slave plantation” (p. 164). Why is this surprising? Why does Mr. Riley think many people are choosing to deny history (p. 168)? Can you think of locations in your own city or town that have connections to slavery?
19. Describe the sequence of events that occur during Back-to-School Night when the battle begins. What actions does each character take to win the battle? Who is the adze? Were you surprised? Why or why not? Be specific.
20. After Serwa screams, she says, “What the heck did I do?” (p. 325). Explain the source of her magic? Why is this concerning for Serwa? What history does she learn from Boahinmaa? What is the possible “gray area” when thinking about “black magic”? Provide details from the novel.
21. Explain Boahinmaa’s statement “Our skin color, our culture, are considered dangerous to a system that thrives when we hate those things about ourselves” (p. 354). How does this quote apply to Serwa and the Abomofuo? How could this quote also apply to aspects of our current society? Support your response with evidence.
22. Think about Serwa’s perspective of Rocky Gorge from the beginning to the end of the novel. Toward the conclusion, she states, “I haven’t even been in Rocky Gorge that long, but it feels like my life was an empty canvas before I came here and now every corner is filled with friends” (p. 361) What does this quote suggest? What events and interactions caused this shift in her perspective? Be specific.
23. How does the conclusion of the novel connect to Serwa’s dreams? Based on the events, what is the meaning of her dreams? Explain the significance of the following quote: “It’s like all my life I’ve been asleep and now, for the first time, I’m truly awake” (p. 364).
24. There are often many sides to the same story. Think about Mom, Dad, Boahinmaa, and Nana Bekoe. How might they each describe the events leading up to Nana Bekoe getting trapped in the drum? What might be similar and different between their accounts? According to Boulder, why was the circumstance of Nana Bekoe getting trapped in the drum special? Where do you think the drum is located? Support with textual evidence.
25. In the Author’s Note, what new information did you learn about the author, Rosanne A. Brown? Why does the author explain the novel as a “remix” and not a textbook on Ghanaian folklore? What examples and events from the text highlight this “remix.”



# POST-READING QUESTIONS

1. Novels often have a central message or important theme for the reader to consider. For example, home is mentioned multiple times throughout the text by Serwa. What is the important lesson or theme that readers should think about during and after the novel?
2. If you could write an alternative ending to *Serwa Boateng's Guide to Vampire Hunting*, what would happen? Why? What events, problems, and/or solutions should occur in the sequel? What unanswered questions do you want the author to address in the sequel? Which relationships do you think should develop further in the sequel? Why? Be specific.
3. Which Adinkra symbols are mentioned in the novel? How are Adinkra used by Serwa? Which one is your favorite? Why? If you were in a battle with an adze, which Adinkra would you use? Are you familiar with any other Adinkra that you think should be included in the novel?
4. How does this novel connect to others folklore-inspired stories you've read? Have you heard other versions, depictions, or stories of the gods, black magic, Abomofuo, or adze? Did you notice the connection to another popular folklore trilogy on page 35? Based on the events shared in the story, what folklore would you like to learn or read more about? Why?

## Standards Aligned to Discussion Questions

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3

Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.5.4, 5.5, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6

Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RL.5.9

# POST-READING ACTIVITIES

## Creative Projects and Writing Extensions

1. **CREATIVE POETRY PROJECT:** In Chapter 13 of the text, Mr. Riley shares that the theme of the mural is “Where We’re From” (p. 139). He explains, “For some people, the answer is the city they were born in, or the country their parents came from. For others, it’s not a place but a person or an experience.” Create a poem that explains where you are from using the following steps (Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.5.3, 6.3):
  - a. Brainstorm ideas, then group similar ideas together and include your top three in the poem.
  - b. Decide how to start your poem with a phrase that explains the purpose, such as “I am from . . .”
  - c. Draft the main message for your poem that explains your perspective of “home.”
  - d. Pick a phrase to conclude your poem, such as “That’s where I’m from.”
  - e. Allow a peer to read over your poem and make suggestions.
  - f. Revise the poem based upon suggestions and add personal photographs to help others understand your poem.





2. **CYBERBULLYING RESEARCH:** In the story, Serwa has a very difficult first day at school, which includes an embarrassing video posted to social media (p. 74). With the assistance of an adult, research a current event related to cyberbullying. Based upon the issue, generate a list of things that friends, families, teachers, and school systems should do to prevent cyberbullying. Then, in a paragraph, explain the impact of cyberbullying on others, why it must end, and how you can be part of the solution. Lastly, be sure to cite your sources. (Writing: Research to Build and Present Ideas: W.5.8, 6.8)
3. **HISTORICAL EXPLORATION:** Readers learn a lot about Rocky Gorge’s historical connections to slavery while reading the novel. Research the history of your own town or another town that you find interesting. Explore positives in the town’s history as well as ways that people were negatively impacted or marginalized. With a small group, share the facts you learned and answer the following questions: (A) Why might people only want to share positives about a town and not the difficult aspects of history? (B) Why is it a problem to avoid those conversations? (Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL. 5.5, 6.5)
4. **IMMIGRATION CONNECTION:** Prepare to engage in a small group discussion about immigration by thinking about the text and reading an autobiography. (Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL. 5.5, 6.5; Reading Informational Text: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity, R.L. 5.10, 6.10)

**STEP 1.** Consider what Roxy shares about her father, why was he deported (p. 293)? In your opinion, does the decision seem fair or unfair? How does the absence of her father impact Roxy? Provide specific details from the novel to support your response.

**STEP 2.** Select the autobiography of an individual who immigrated to the United States. After reading the book, create a poster that depicts their journey, challenges, and successes. Be prepared to orally present your poster to others, answer questions about the autobiography, and explain how we can better support people who immigrate to the United States.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roseanne “Rosie” A. Brown was born in Kumasi, Ghana, and immigrated to the wild jungles of central Maryland as a child. Writing was her first love, and she knew from a young age that she wanted to use the power of writing to connect the different cultures she called home. She worked as an assistant teacher, journalist, and editorial intern before writing her first two young adult novels, *A Song of Wraiths and Ruin*, an instant *New York Times* best seller, and the sequel, *A Psalm of Storms and Silence*. Rosie currently lives outside Washington, DC, where she can usually be found explaining memes to her elderly relatives or thinking about Star Wars. She can neither confirm nor deny if she has ever been possessed by a vampire. Follow her on Twitter @rosiesrambles.



## Q&A with Roseanne Brown about Serwa Boateng’s Guide to Vampire Hunting

**Q:** Why is it important to tell the stories of people from many different cultures in literature?

**A:** Because people from many different cultures exist! I think it’s both that simple and that complex. By creating art of any kind, we are saying that this element of the world is worth preserving and sharing with one another. When you only ever tell stories from a handful of cultures, what you’re saying is that only certain people and their way of being is worth celebrating or acknowledging. Everything I write is my shout against that. I believe that historically marginalized cultures are worth celebrating, and that by telling these stories, we are telling the world that we aren’t going away and that we deserve to have the same prominence that we’ve historically been denied.

**Q:** In the Author’s Note, you mention that this depiction of the folklore may be different from other versions. In your opinion, why is it important to recognize many different versions of the same story?

**A:** It’s understood within the oral storytelling tradition of Ghana that no story is ever told the same way twice. Even if two storytellers used the exact same words to tell a tale, they’d end up completely different just from the differences in their performance styles. How then do you decide which version is true? Simple answer: you don’t!

That’s why I always recognize the tales I’m drawing from rarely have a single interpretation. I truly believe these myths and legends are made greater, not less, by the variations of them.

**Q:** What did you enjoy most about writing this novel? Why?

**A:** The best part was developing the GCC, Serwa’s squad of friends, both as individuals and as a team unit. I’m a sucker for a ragtag group of misfits banding together to save the day. All five kids couldn’t be more different from one another, but when they band together, they become more than the sum of their parts. Plus, it’s so fun to take the usual school kid tropes (“the smart one,” “the class clown,” etc.) and flip them on their heads!



**Q:** At the end of the novel you stated, “I wrote this book for anyone who relates to the feeling of straddling two worlds yet never fully belonging in either” (p. 373). What advice would you give to others who have similar feelings?

**A:** My advice would be to find your people. That’s what Serwa does in this book, and it’s what I had to do as well. And oftentimes, those people might be in the last place you’d expect. On the surface, the school’s star athlete and the kid who always has their nose stuck in a book have nothing in common, but then they talk and realize they both know what it’s like to have people assume they know everything about you. It’s only by giving one another a chance we truly find ourselves.

**Q:** Serwa is a very dynamic character, what do you want readers to learn from Serwa? How do you see her evolving in future novels?

**A:** I want readers to learn that opening yourself up to new possibilities doesn’t mean losing yourself. Serwa takes a lot of pride in her Slayer heritage, which sometimes manifests as very black-and-white thinking. Her worldview changes and grows as her new friends and lifestyle challenge her beliefs, and while she later adapts to new information, she never stops being the confident hero we meet at the start of the book. It’s sometimes scary to embrace things that challenge what we were taught, but that doesn’t mean we’re losing anything.

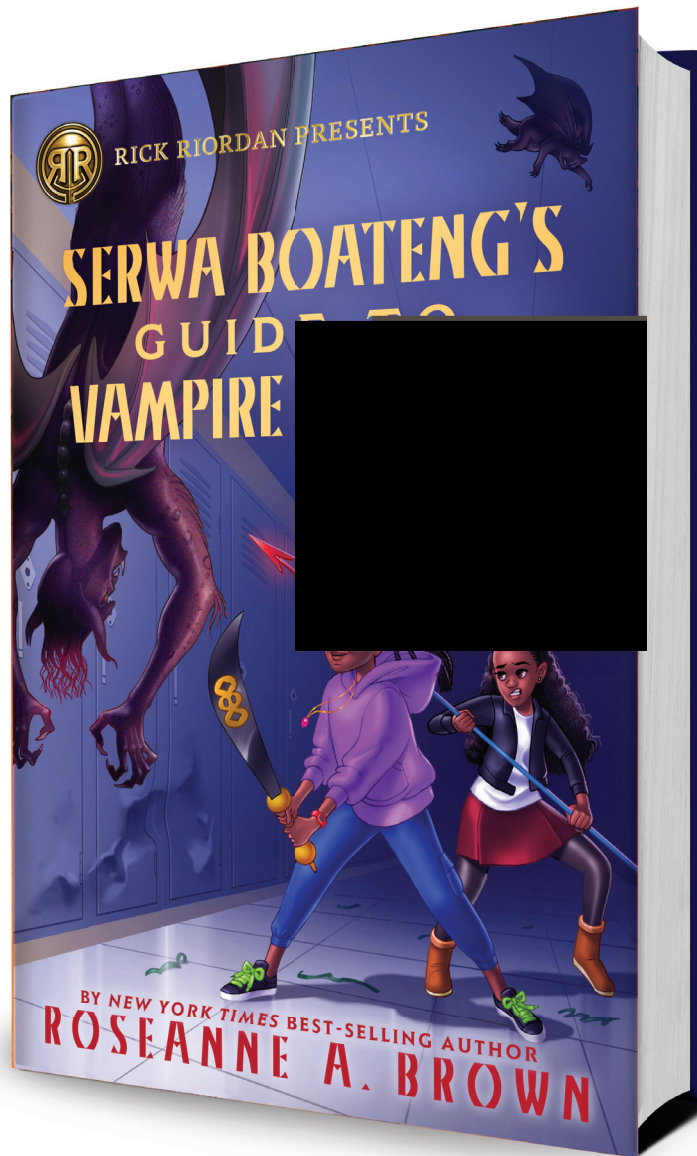
As for future books, I think we’re going to see Serwa step from being a follower into more of a leader. And there will probably be explosions. Many, many explosions. It wouldn’t be a Serwa Boateng book without some chaos!



This guide was written by Dawn Jacobs Martin, PhD, an associate clinical professor at the University of Maryland, College Park. She has spent her career supporting students with disabilities through various roles as a practitioner, researcher, special education director, and teacher educator. She continues to improve the academic outcomes for students with disabilities through teacher development, instructional design, and research in the areas of literacy intervention, social support, and parent involvement.

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