

# Young Heroes



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**Fictional accounts of the National Heroes of  
Jamaica as children and young people written by  
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**Illustrations by Taj Francis**

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# Sam Sharpe

## Teach True Wisdom



From the vantage point of the back of his farm horse, Bakkra Lynch smiled broadly and enjoyed the fight. On the stubby grass at the edge of the cane piece two small boys - each was about eight years old - were on the ground locked in a fierce struggle.

They were skinny but the way that they handled each other: grabbing the opponent's arm or leg or ear or cheek, spoke of the intensity they brought to the battle. Sam, at the moment, heavily kneeling on one knee, pressed his elbow in the ribs of Cicero who was pinned on the ground. Obviously in pain, Cicero, got his leg hooked into Sam's supporting leg and gave it the hardest jerk that he could. Sam cried out in pain as his ankle twisted, and as he reached to hold it, Cicero jumped on him and pummeled blows hard in his face. Sam managed to grab Cicero's arm and bit down hard on his wrist, causing the other to squeal. At that point, a pair of thick arms dislodged the two and bore a tearful Sam away.

Annoyed that his sport had been spoiled, Bakkra Lynch nevertheless did not stop Brownie, the plantation's brawniest and gentlest worker. Bakkra Lynch's eyes slid to Daddy Servius the cart driver. Brownie was not known for his initiative, but the old African was just staring into space. Bakkra Lynch spurred his mount and rode off.

There was little peace that evening in the village as the mothers of Cicero Ellis and Samuel Sharpe had it out in a tracing match with each other. Cicero's mother pointed to the scar on her son's wrist caused by the wicked beast Sam; and Sam's mother said that her boy was probably lamed for life because of a thieving snake. It went on until another chorus of women reminded them that the missionaries said that that true Christians must be patient in affliction.

The following morning, Sam's ankle was swollen and his mother pleaded with the headman to have him taken up to the slave hospital for treatment, which was agreed and arranged.

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Sitting with his back against the cool cut-stone limestone blocks of the hospital building, Sam rested and tried to make sense of how he and his best friend, got into a terrible fight.

They were both gathering the short stalks of cane left behind in the fields by the men; running jokes with each other. Their game was to see who could make the highest pile before Daddy Servius came with the cart to collect the cane for crushing.

On return from a long row there was one pile instead of two and each boy claimed it as their own. Sam threw a verbal taunt at Cicero, and Bakkra Lynch, who was nearby, laughed and said that Cicero was a likkle mawga dawg who will serve Sam forever....that was when the fight started.

From where he sat, Sam could see the great house, the factory, rolling cane lands, the jungle-thick grove of trees fringing the river that cut through the land, and further away

on a rocky piece, the village. He counted as many of the workers as he could see in the fields; then counted the overseers; then he looked for Bakkra Lynch.

Sam wondered why the world was the way it was.

He returned to his mother Saturday night, three days later, and as soon as she had finished fussing over him, Sam limped to Cicero's family hut, looking for his friend. He found him looking at the book with pictures that one of the missionaries gave to him. Some of the children had already given Cicero the nickname, Bookman. But before they could settle down to make amends, from not too far away, a voice called.

"Bra."

It was Daddy Servius sitting in the doorway of his hut, beckoning to them. He had some curious ways, the old African, and every now and then he reverted to his mother tongue instead of English.

They went to him and sat in the dirt as directed. Daddy Servius drew the web of Ananse and said "Know how to use the web; it teaches true wisdom."

He drew a fat belly animal with four legs and said, "Live like the crocodile and adapt."

Beside it, he drew a knot, "Strongest bonds are made in the spirit of peace and reconciliation."

One by one Daddy Servius drew the symbols of his people that encouraged contemplation and thought. Cicero pleased the African by showing how he could draw the symbols on his own.

At Church, the next morning, the Baptist preacher read a different set of wisdom from a book. It fascinated Sam that, like Daddy Servius did, the missionaries could put down thoughts and save them for later, like food or money. He decided then, that he must learn to do that; learn how to read and to write.