Title: *Cane Warriors*  Author: Alex Wheatle

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| **LIKES** |
| * The voice – a 14 yr old doing the right thing, with passion and conviction.
	+ An untold story, based on true events.
	+ Use of dialect:
* Adds to the sense of it being a real but ‘untold’ story
* Musicality of the language
* Moa and Keverton’s relationship. Looking out for each other.
* Gripping and pacy.
* Tackles difficult subject matter.
* Respect for elders.
* Doesn’t shy away from righteous anger.
* Strength of the people and their belief that they could be free.
* Hamaya – reason for doing the right thing
* Cultural details – Akan language, gods traditions etc. Keeping up their own culture in spite of oppression.
* Family dynamcis – different responses of mother and father. Sense of how these relationships fractured by cirumstances. Many with no family at all.
* Setting and rich description. Characters so close to their surroundings.
* Independence, action choice, needing to break the rules as the only way out of an impossible situation.
* ‘If you live for yourself, you’re not really living’ – holding on to their humanity in terrible circumstances.
* Optimistic ending – good for the target audience.
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| **DISLIKES** |
| * Hard to get into the story.
* Are black stories always ones of pain and struggle? An important story to tell. A hard one to read.
* Hate the cover!
* Lacks character development, relationships between characters and narrative arc. Is this why the book is hard to get into? We don’t get to know the characters well enough – we should feel we are rooting for them more than we do. Weak female characters mainly there as plot devices.
* A lot of repetition – everyone constantly remarking how young Moa was. ‘If Misser Donaldson sees you…’ – surely all concerned would be only too aware of the constant threat of punishment?
* Dialect used mostly for dialogue, but also sometimes in the narrative, a bit randomly which was a little confusing.
* Everything building to the final battle but it was over so quickly it was a bit of an anticlimax.
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| **PUZZLES** |
| * Unresolved – his relationship with his father. This was frustrating.
* Why does Hamaya go if Moa’s little sister is considered too young?
* Keverton ‘had never shown any interest in girls’ but then talks about wanting two women and lots of children?
* Would like to ask Alex Wheatle about his intention: raise awareness of a period of history? A coming of age story? Both?
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| **PATTERNS (Within this book and links to other books and real-life experiences)** |
| ***Within the novel**** Dreamland over the mountain. A bit like the rabbits in Of Mice and Men.

***Real life links**** ***‘Untold’ story from history.***

***Links to other books / film**** Difficult coming of age: *Purple Hibiscus, Great Expectations, Oliver Twist*.
* Other novels in dialect – *Trainspotting.*
* *Sawbones* by Catherine Johnson – YA historical novel with a former slave as a main character.
* *Maggot Moon* by Sally Gardner – adolescent surviving under a brutal regime (alternative 1950’s dystopia).
* ‘Do they bleed the same’? Reminder of *Merchant of Venice* ‘If you prick us, do we not bleed?’ – common humanity under the race divisions.
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| **HOOKS** |
| * Well-pitched for a reluctant reader. Pacy but accessible if they can manage (or are familiar with) the dialect.
* KS3 students often enjoy books which play with language.
* Wouldn’t do this as a class novel, and may be not as an individual recommendation either. What are we saying to someone if we say ‘we think you would particularly like this book’? Perhaps more mne to mention, talk about, have around and let kids opt in to reading it.
* Has gone down very well with a student in a small group of underperforming boys.
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| **READING ALOUD, HAVING IGNITED THEIR CURIOSITY** |
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| **OUTPUTS FOLLOWING READING (ORAL AND WRITTEN)** |
| * A good one to put on a reading list in conjunction with the history dept if/when they are teaching slavery.
* Research female slave leaders e.g. Queen Akua ‘the Queen of Kingston’ who led a slave rebellion in Kingston after Takyi’s rebellion failed.
* Discussions around the moral complexities of the book e.g. the killing of the slave owners’ children.
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| **RESOURCES** |
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| **OTHER** |
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