

SILENT SONGS AND OTHER STORIES

QUICK REVISION GUIDE

ENGLISH & LITERATURE

SERIES 1

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MWALIMU CONSULTANCY

SILENT SONG AND OTHER STORIES GUIDE

Introduction

- ❖ “A Silent Song and other Stories” is a unique collection of short stories from various societies across the world. They have been carefully selected to represent various generations of writers from diverse backgrounds. The stories are meticulously sought and packaged to provoke interest in young Kenyan readers and help them encounter in-depth literary experiences.
- ❖ A wide range of techniques, settings and themes that are relevant to the contemporary issues affecting Kenyans have been addressed in the collection. These will expose the students to a rich diversity of perspectives that will result in appreciating the uniqueness of cultures across the globe.

AUTHOR - Godwin Siundu

ANALYST - Mwalimu Consultancy Ltd.

The summary guide covers all the following stories of the silence songs

- ✓ A man of awesome power (Naguib Mahfouz-Egypt).
- ✓ Incident in the park
- ✓ Ninema – vrenika Pather
- ✓ A silence Song – Leonard Kibera
- ✓ Ivory Bangles
- ✓ The sins of the Fathers
- ✓ The truly married woman
- ✓ Talking money
- ✓ The Ghost
- ✓ God sees the truth, But waits
- ✓ The Neighbourhoods watch
- ✓ December
- ✓ Boyi
- ✓ Cheque mate

A MAN OF AWESOME POWERS

A man of awesome power is an intriguing story about Tayyib al – Mahdi, how he acquired and uses power and how the power changes Tayiid’s life. The guide will also reveal what causes Tayyid to lose his incredible power and also the role of the media.

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ A Man of **Awesome Power** is an intriguing story about **Tayyib al-Mahdi**, who lives a comfortable life after retiring from many years of service abroad. His current life is peaceful and uneventful. He spends time watching television, reading newspapers or listening to the radio in the comfort of his apartment that he shares with his wife since his daughters are already married. The story captures how an individual who is empowered when least expected utilises the power given to him. His illusions of desire for a better country lead to his dream of power acquisition.
- ❖ One night, Tayyib dreams of a visitation by a man of radiant appearance who speaks to him in a kind tone, informing him that God had willed him the power to order things to be and they would be. Although he dismisses the dream like any other dream, its frequent recurrence makes him give it more thought. **Tayyib** confirms its reality when he orders his television to switch channels, and it happens. Endowed with the newly acquired power, he sets out to reform his country and the entire planet as he had often wished.
- ❖ He utilizes his power both for good and bad intentions. He starts by hitting back a taxi driver who ignores him by wishing him an accident. He also causes a man who had physically attacked a woman in a bus to suffer stomach cramps. We see him engaging in meritorious deeds such as filing a gaping pothole, locking an electric box and removing a pile of rubbish that he trips on.
- ❖ The media does not escape his wrath as he causes one radio announcer to suffer massive sneezes after making an announcement that gave false hopes. As the story progresses, **Sulayman Bey al-Hamalawi**, a political leader who had evaded tax, is ordered by **Tayyib** to go and pay the tax that he had been avoiding for a long time.
- ❖ An unfortunate incident occurs when Tayyib is busy planning to effectively utilise his power for the good of all sectors in the country. He notices a beautiful woman at the entrance of the tea garden

and uses his ability to satisfy his desires for her. Their intimacy costs him his incredible power. He pays this price for misusing the power that God had freely given him. The story ends with his sad realisation that he no longer has power. His attempts to order the television channels to change do not bear fruits. He experiences a tremendous sadness that will haunt him for the rest of his life.

CHARACTERS

A.TAYYIB AL-MAHDI

- ❖ He is the main character in the story, and the story revolves around the awesome power that he miraculously acquires sometime after his retirement.
- ❖ He does not reveal to his wife that he had been bestowed with such power. His initial intention is to use the ability to change his country and the entire planet like he had always wished.
- ❖ He is portrayed as religious, ambitious yet emotional and vengeful.

EPISODIC ANALYSIS OF KEY ISSUES

Man of Awesome Power' is founded on several pillars determined by the various episodes:

Tayyib's dream — pg 1-2

Utilising the awesome power -pg 2-4

Losing the awesome power- pg 5 Nide to a silent son and other stories

KEY ISSUES ARISE FROM THE EPISODES:

Acquisition of power

- ❖ How Tayyib acquires his power teaches several things:
- ❖ One can gain power at any stage of life.
- ❖ Tayyib believed that he had completed his mission in the world. Before acquiring power, he lives a peaceful life as he enjoys the fruits of retirement. The writer notes that 'He had generous insurance and more than adequate pension' pg 1 which do not prevent him from being given power by God.
- ❖ Power is God-given.

- ❖ Tayyib's power is bestowed on him by God. As seen from his words, "All praise to God, Lord of the Worlds", and listening to radio channels devoted to the Quran (pg1), his religious nature is one reason God willed to grant him power. The man who visits him in the dream tells him that starting that moment and as long as God willed, he had been bestowed with the power to order things to be and they would-be. (pg 1)

Utilization of Power

- ❖ Tayyib utilizes the power given to him in different incidents:
- ❖ Encounter with the taxi driver (pg 2)
- ❖ In the bus, to deal with the conflict between a man and a woman (pg 3).
- ❖ Performing memorable services along his way to the cafe (pg 3).
- ❖ The radio announcer (pg 3).
- ❖ Tayyib's wrath on Sulayman Bey al-Hamalawi (pg 3-4).
- ❖ The beautiful woman in the Tea Garden (pg 4).

Good utilization of power

- ❖ The episode shows how a person bestowed with power should utilise it. Tayyib's soliloquy during his encounter with the taxi driver captures the need to use power for the well-being of others and to make things better. 'Whoever is granted with power like mine must utilize it only for good.' (pg 2)
- ❖ He uses the power to do several good deeds. Some of the outstanding services that Tayyib performs include filling a gaping pothole, locking an electric box that was open and hanging dangerously, removing a pile of trash and draining sewer water that was flooding an alley. Many people in the neighbourhood appreciate these services. (p 3).
- ❖ He also does a good deed of making Sulayman, who has been evading tax, go to the taxi authorities and pay them millions of pounds he owed them. (pg3).

Misuse of power

- ❖ Tayyib utilises the power given to him for vengeance- The act of causing the tire burst of the taxi since the driver had ignored him is vengeful. Tayyib ignores the noble voice that reminds him not to use power for wrong purposes and lets his anger get the best of him. (pg 2)

- ❖ Tayyib causes harm/pain and suffering to the man who had slapped a woman on a public bus. Severe cramps strike the man, following Tayyib's anger focused on the man's stomach. (pg3)
- ❖ He uses power to satisfy his lustful desires when he sees a beautiful woman and makes her notice him making them surrender to fate. (pg 4)

Role of the Media

Mwalimu Consultancy Ltd analyses **that** The media is seen to fail in its role. It dwells more on giving false promises/hope instead of telling what had already been achieved. When Tayyib gets into the café, he listens to a radio announcer expounding on promising developments expected in the future (pg 3). Tayyib's fury is directed at the announcer, causing him to suffer massive sneezing, forcing him to end the announcement and play a song. The song-'Walk Around and See' is ironically used to satirise the media for highlighting and emphasising what is yet to be seen (prophesies) instead of dwelling on the reality that can be seen.

Immorality

- ❖ Sexual immorality is seen when Tayyib utilises his power to make the beautiful woman he notices in the Tea Garden fall for his advances. The woman barely notices Tayyib when she gets to the garden, but Tayyib shifts her attention to himself through the power he has. He forgets his faith and his life (*Lack of self- control*) and surrenders to fate.
- ❖ Tax evasion is another immorality that is seen in the story. Many leaders use their powerful positions to evade paying their taxes, such as Sulayman Bey al- Hamalawi. When Tayyib notices him, he commands, "Sulayman Bey, go straight to the tax prosecutor's office to repent and say you are sorry up the millions of pounds you owe." (pg 3)

Loss of Power

If power is not utilised for 'good', it will be lost. Tayyib loses his awesome power when he comes back to his senses and realises that he had made some mistake. Although he had been secretive about his power, his wife Haniya keenly observes that he was not in his usual mood that evening. Tayyib's deceitful/ dishonest nature is depicted when he easily lies to his wife that he had a cold. Unfortunately, for Tayyib, he loses his power due to his mistakes. 'The miracle was gone — like a dream.' (pg 5)

CHANGE

Tayyib confirms that he has been bestowed with power by ordering television channels to change. Changing the television channel from a religious one to a foreign one foreshadows the changes that happen to Tayyib once he acquires power.

He is initially described as 'A good man; his sins were forgivable he was a lover of virtue. ones changes him. He becomes vengeful, lustful,

However, power

deceitful and inhumane. He forgets his faith and life and lets passion and lust control him, which had never happened since he married Haniya. (pg 4)

Power also helps change the risky living condition of the people gaping potholes dangerously hanging an open electric box, Sewer flooding on alleys and piles of rubbish on the way. All these are rectified through Tayyib power (pg 3)

INCIDENT IN THE PARK: Meja Mwangi

Episodes / sub-episodes

1. The description of the city park in August afternoon. (p6 - 7).

Two idlers' dialogue at the pond. - 10).

An ambush by two city constables in the park ending in violence.

The fruit merchant condemned unheard. (p 12).

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ **Mwalimu Consultancy Ltd** analyses **that** the incident in the park, by Meja Mwangi, is a contemporary episode set in the city park and its environs where most citizens, hustlers and workers, spend most of their time as an Outdoor recreation centre. We know it is the popular **Uhuru Park** in Nairobi through its vivid description.
- ❖ Metaphorically described, the park is seriously affected by the drought in August. there is a dirty lake at its base, and to the west, up the hill, a cathedral, modern fortresses and ministerial Offices overlooking the park below, and across it is the city itself. A highway, Uhuru highway, separates the park from the city, and on it, there is heavy traffic. In the east, parliament and two city clocks are seen.

- ❖ Therefore, the park provides a relaxing haven (chilling point) and a source of solace for the misplaced, lost Or frustrated masses flocking the city daily. This has attracted many people. including peddlers trying to make ends meet and idlers killing time here. The city hungry office workers also buy cheap snacks during the lunch hour and return to their stations. Others rush down to River Road to buy chips and roast meat as the loiterers watch the Spectre in a jiffy.
- ❖ Soon, the park is left with a few idlers and peddlers. Under the slightest shade lie men sheltering from the scorching sun. Watchers watch rowers paddling, reacting to the maxim that spectating is the next best thing to participating. A loafer keeps dropping debris to the fish pond despite the warning inscription on a board. Another man joins him, and a dialogue ensues, and they share a cigarette.
- ❖ An incident erupts when two city constables demand to see the licence Of the ice cream man and a fruit seller. The Old man helplessly searches and realizes he doesn't have it. Worse. he has no identity card, so he offers the five shillings he has, for he fears the judge and going to jail. He begs for forgiveness, offering all the fruits in vain. On seeing they are unimpressed, he flees to find refuge in the crowded city, and the cops chase him. He is nabbed by a man on the highway and eventually falls into a ditch. There, the poor man is condemned unheard of for being a 'thief'.

Title of the story

What is the significance Of the title Incident in the park?

What is ironic about the two constables' behaviour at the park? How else do the people spend time at the park?

Thematic concerns

- ❖ With evidence from the text, discuss the urban problem that leads to the destitution of the masses. How does the city's jobless population escape their wretchedness? Compare and contrast the city
- ❖ workers and the jobless masses.
- ❖ What are the harsh realities of city life and the illusion of a better, promising life?
- ❖ How does the rural-urban influx affect people's lives?
- ❖ What does the presence of butts, used matches and stubs at the park tell you? How does the lack of identity cards and license affect peddlers?

- ❖ Juxtapose the kind of identification the police demand from the fruit vendor and one that awaits him at the mortuary.
- ❖ Referring closely to the fruit-seller show how the mob and the legal system administer justice.
- ❖ Why does the merchant resort to flight and fight for his life instead of overcoming his fright for the justice system?
- ❖ Who is to blame for the death of the fruit-seller, the constables, the public, or the vendor himself?
- ❖ What lessons can be taken from the incident at the city park?
- ❖ What does the fruit seller's mention of the 'tyrant judge' tell us about the justice system?

Problems of urbanization

- ❖ Urban population growth, driven by migration and searching for jobs, has become a significant issue in cities like Nairobi.
- ❖ However, the masses end up frustrated due to a skills mismatch in the labour market, dwindling economy and poor governance. But every now and then, a misplaced person rose with a start... (p7).
- ❖ In a few seconds, the thousand or so strong swarm had been swallowed up by the yawning concrete jungle... (p7).
- ❖ Urban poverty is also witnessed as many remain loitering and idling reminding the park loungers just how many hours they had wasted lying idle.' (p7). 'A shaggy thin man sat under a shrub...' (p7). ' hairy loafer' (p8). ' The idler seated on the bank...' (p8) torn trouser legs.' (p8) 'horny toes. (p9)
- ❖ There is also evidence of poor hygiene. The park is littered with debris, cigarette ends and butts. (p8,9). The two gentlemen share puffs on the cigarette. One offers a full cigarette, and smoking in this zone could be a form of escapism from their poverty. (p10).
- ❖ The fruit seller has only ten shillings which he offers to the constables to spare him. He cannot afford to pay for the licence, or even the fine has on another case.(pl 1).

Conflicts between city authority and street hawkers

When the two constables accost and demand licences from the ice cream man and the fruit peddler, they tell the merchant that he will only explain to the judge.

The fruit seller already has a case and is trying to sell to afford a fine. (pl 1). The fruit seller pleads with the constables, who say nothing. The fruit seller cursed them and their wives and children..(PI 1).

Mob justice / Social injustice

- ❖ The fruit seller is lynched unknowingly by the park people. By the time the constable ran up, the fruit-peddler lay like a broken and twisted ragdoll at the bottom of the ditch. (p12)
- ❖ He cries and pleads for mercy in vain. . had drawn thick red blood over the sparsely bearded face. Dead' was his verdict (p12)
- ❖ The word 'thief' hovered over the assembled crowd. mob universally condemns him, and it is impossible to tell from which mouth the condemnation is issued. (p12)
- ❖ Ironically the mob had had what was right. Justice fairly quickly and completely administered ...(PI 2).

CHARACTERS

The fruit seller

He is a poor old man who sells fruits at the park. He has no licence or identity card. (pl 1)

He is a responsible man as he remembers he has a family which depends on him when accosted. I have a wife and children and... (PI 1).

He is hardworking because he sells fruits (two baskets) to earn his living despite being unable to afford a license. (PI 1)

He is afraid and fearful that he will be fined or be castrated by the tyrant judge. (pl1)

Style and language use

What figures of speech does the writer use to describe the park and events in the park?

Why is it ironic for the fruit peddler to flee from the constables and lose his life?A comprehensive and detailed guide to a silent song and other stories

Explore the use of dialogue in Meja Mwangi's Incident in the Park.

Urban centres are riddled with frequent conflicts with innocent Citizens. Discuss the truth of this assertion based on Meja Mwangi's Incident in the Park. (20 marks).

NINEMA -VRENIKA PATHER- SOUTH AFRICAABOUT THE AUTHOR

VRENIKA PATHER

Vrenika Pather is mainly known for her acting prowess since she started her career as an actress at the age of eighteen. The Indian lady of South African origin has also written a few short stories, one of them being Ninema. Her stories mainly tell the life that many Indian ladies live and their every day's encounters.

- ✓ Points to guide interpretation
- ✓ Tough life of a market vendor:
- ✓ Rising early
- ✓ Poor meals
- ✓ Poor/lack of proper grooming
- ✓ Dealing with different customers
- ✓ Caste and relationships.
- ✓ Sexual harassment/immorality.
- ✓ Need to remain principled and focused.

CHARACTERS

Ninema

- ❖ She is one of the market gardeners who serves as the main character in the story.
- ❖ She is focused, ambitious, organised and strong-willed. Her admirable trait is seen in how fond the other ladies are of her
- ❖ A comprehensive and detailed guide to a silent song and other stories and how many of her customers remain loyal.

MR CHINRAN

- ❖ He is a white man who is a loyal customer of Ninema.
- ❖ He admires Ninema, but both know that their relationship is prohibited since they are from different castes. While Mr Chinran is a wealthy lawyer from a Brahmin caste, Ninema is a poor girl from a low caste.

- ❖ He supports Ninema's business by buying more than enough herbs from her.

MRS SINGH

- ❖ She is a wealthy older woman who is a loyal customer.
- ❖ She is known for haggling over prices, thus being difficult and troublesome. She spends time negotiating with Ninema as a way of passing the time.
- ❖ The strange man
- ❖ He is the man who accosts Ninema on her way from the market. He is immoral, vulgar and lascivious.

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ Vrenika Pather's story 'Ninema', is about the harsh life of market gardeners as represented by Ninema and the other ladies. The story explores the hustles that Ninema goes through on a typical market day, starting from rising at the wee hours of the morning to closure time which is late in the evening. Her home life is simple, suggesting the poor living conditions of such vendors. She has to prepare before going to the Indian market where she makes her sales.
- ❖ She only washes her face and feet with cold water from an outside tap since she cannot afford running hot water. This affects her grooming as she takes a bath once a week. She puts on her Chumpal, symbolising the poor condition and the only source of protection for her feet while on the way to and from the market.
- ❖ Ninema remains focused and does not let her beauty and attention from both men and women control her. Once in the market, Ninema organises her herbs appetisingly to attract customers.
- ❖ The market condition is challenging as the weather is not favourable. It is hot, and Ninema sweats until her Sari clings to her firm skin.
- ❖ She handles different customers who buy her herbs with wisdom and respect. Her focus in business enables her not to get carried away by Mr Chinran's attraction towards her. She does not encourage his infatuation with her but treats him like any other customer. with respect and appreciation.
- ❖ She firmly handles the troublesome and difficult Mrs Singh. Many customers who visit her stall are served well and are satisfied as she takes a personal interest in them. Her doctor, Dr Seedat, visits too, and she takes time talking to him about her mother's ailment.
- ❖ Having served her last customer, Ninema closes her stall after taking stock of the unsold herbs and

her profit for the day. The rot in society is seen when a strange man sexually assaults Ninema on her way home. He pinches her erect nipple and laughs loudly before extending some invitation for Ninema to follow him. Ninema does not take this abuse lying down.

- ❖ She utilises the only weapon she has — her chumpal, that protect the soles of her feet and her whole self. She hits the man repeatedly with her sandals as the other women cheer her on. The man is too shocked to react and thus ends up being beaten by Ninema until he whimpers.
- ❖ Feeling satisfied, Ninema continues with her journey home. She goes back to the poor condition she left in the morning. She safely keeps her sandals under the kitchen table before washing her face and feet with cold water, just like she had done in the morning. She takes a rest that leads her to a dream of a better tomorrow.
- ❖ The story ends with hopeful/optimistic Ninema, who dreams of having a home for herself, hot water and a kitchen inside the house.

QUESTIONS

Compare and contrast Ninema and other lady marketers

What is ironic about Mrs Singh's behaviour?

Ninema is a likeable and admirable character. Do you agree? Give evidence from the story.

How effectively has Vrenika Pather used description in the story?

EPISODIC ANALYSIS OF KEY ISSUES

- ❖ Living conditions of Ninema - Pg13 and 16 Il. Ninema's skill of trade - Pg 14-15
- ❖ Ill. Journey home - Pg 16
- ❖ Several issues are addressed in these episodes: She only wears her sandals when going to the market. The kind of meals she takes points to the poor life she takes a few sips of tea she brought with her Page 14 (breakfast)
- ❖ Some sandwiches that she packed from home are her only meal for lunch Page 15.
- ❖ Time is limited for her — she only affords a weekly shower on Saturday after boiling water on the open fire Page
- ❖ Dealing with different kinds of customers
- ❖ Mr Chinran admires her and can almost be said to be in love with her. 'The ladies teased her, saying he was in love with her. The writer also tells us that Ninema made Mr Chinran's day. He is almost always the first customer. Ninema handles him wisely and does not let this attraction control her. She does not encourage his infatuation but treats him with respect and appreciation like she does all her loyal customers. (pg14)
- ❖ She also has to handle demanding customers such as Mrs Singh, who though rich, will always bargain to lower the prices. Ninema shows her masterful skills by firmly and respectfully handling her. (pg14)
- ❖ She serves many affluent customers at lunch hour who steadily flow in to get herbs for their evening meals. She pays personal interest to each as she has an ambition of living a better life just like most of these customers. (pg15)
- ❖ Time limitation allows her to consult with her doctor - Dr Seedat, only when he comes to buy herbs from her. The two talk about Ninema's mother's illness showing that Ninema is equally concerned about her mother.
- ❖ She can entice a new customer by offering an extra bunch of mint for free. (pg15)
- ❖ This generosity makes the customer happy, thus promising to always shop with her.

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Class discrimination

The Indian society that Ninema hails from has a strong belief in the caste where those from the high caste — Brahmin Caste, are not allowed to inter-marry with those from the lower caste. This is seen in her association with Mr Chinran. 'As much as Ninema dismisses the teasing of the ladies that Mr Chinran is in love with her, she is also aware that a rich lawyer from a Brahmin caste cannot be interested in someone like her — a poor girl from a low caste (pg14). Mr Chinran himself knows it too, and thus their relation can never go beyond early morning herb buys. He further understands that his mother will soon arrange a marriage for him, most probably to a person from his caste.

Hard work/focus/determination

- ❖ The writer emphasises the importance of hard work, focus and determination in an individual's life. Through the main character Ninema, the benefits of the three traits are depicted.
- ❖ Ninema's hard work is seen in how she rises early — four o'clock Monday morning, and goes to her garden to reap herbs. Her hard work in the garden has borne fruits since her crops are described as being healthy (pg13).
- ❖ Her hardworking nature is also seen in how she ably attends to the many wealthy customers who flock to her stall, especially during lunchtime. Even though the stall is busy and Ninema is quite busy, she ably attends to all customers and takes a personal interest (pg15).
- ❖ Ninema's hard work does not go unrewarded. She has several loyal customers who visit her stall daily. She has a steady flow of customers and feels she will need to sow more seeds to keep up with the rising demand (pg15).
- ❖ She does not let anything distract her from her business. She remains focused, which essentially aids to success in her business. The writer points out Ninema's beauty that makes heads turn when she walks through vivid description. 'She is a beautiful woman... her hips sway from side to side as she moves Her thin, chiffon sari drapes effortlessly around her perfect body as if kept in place by her high, firm breasts. Long, toned arms and a cinched waist cause men to stop and stare' (pg13).
- ❖ Despite receiving this attention, Ninema keeps calm and focuses on her business. Ninema does not take the attention she gets to the heart. Her concern is with earning a living' (Pg14).
- ❖ Her focus is further seen where while other lady hawkers chat amiably with each other as they work, Ninema rarely talks back since she has no time to waste (pg14).

Sexual assault/harassment

The writer points out the sexual harassment faced by many women in society. The encounter between Ninema and the stranger on her way home shows how women suffer sexual abuse even in public places. The man approaching Ninema grins lasciviously at her before extending his arm to pinch her erect nipple. As if this is not enough, he extends an invitation to Ninema — "If you liked that follow me." (Pg16). episode satirises men who assume women are sex objects to be mishandled.

Ninema's reaction to the abuse is unexpected. The man is shocked when Ninema follows him and hits him repeatedly with her Chumpal. She gives him 'a few extra hits on behalf of all the women.' (Pg 6) This shows that many women have been victims of sexual abuse but end up not fighting back. Ninema thus portrays a courageous personality as she fights for herself and even for the helpless women who had been or would-be victims of such abuse.

NB The story 'Ninema' is a story of hope. Ninema has hope that her life will change at some point. As the story ends, Ninema dreams of the home that will be hers someday soon: The house will have hot water too, and the kitchen will be on the inside. She will also have her large garden to grow herbs and some fruits for herself(pg16).

QUESTIONS

To succeed in business, one must have the necessary skills to handle customers. Using Ninema in Vrenikas Pather's 'Ninema' support this.

"Hard work and determination pays", Using illustrations from Ninema show the validity of this statement.

Women traders experience challenges in their lives. Show how Ninema deals with these challenges. Ninema is an admirable character. Support from the story Ninema.

SILENT SONG -LEONARD KIBERA - KENYAABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leonard Kibera is a Kenyan novelist and short story writer. Kibera was born in Kabete, Kenya, attended high school at Embu and studied at the University of California and Stanford University. He taught at the University of Zambia and at Kenyatta University, Kenya, from 1976 until his death. His first publication was a book of short stories, Potent Ash (1968), which he wrote with his brother, Samuel Kahiga. The book explores the guilt, betrayal, and failure of the Mau Mau. Several of the stories have been anthologized, especially The Spider's Web, which points an accusing finger at Kenya's elite for the state of Kenya since independence. His only novel, Voices in the Dark (1970), uses dark humour to question why most Mau Mau soldiers who fought for independence were forgotten and left to beg and die along the roadside. Kibera has also written several articles of literary criticism.

EPISODES

Mbane's life of misery in the streets as a lame, blind beggar. (p17 - 19).

Mbane's lonely self-versus the bubbly world around him. (p18 - 19).

Mbane's nostalgia. (p18).

Mbane's brother, Ezekiel, rescues him. (p19 20).

SYNOPSIS

A Silent Song by Leonard Kibera is a story about Mbane, a young, paralyzed, blind city street beggar. He lives in destitution, begging from the passers-by while seething with pain and discomfort. His brother, a wealthy preacher, 'rescues' him from the barbaric city unto the 'light of God' after neglecting him for a long time.

Mbane painfully reminisces his street life with nostalgia at his brother's lonely hut. He is not as happy though he is now in a more serene environment. He remembers the bright weather, lovely morning and beautiful sunset as the city dwellers, pedestrians, dull and gay people during the day talk. At night, the good men and women turned drunk, pimps and whore galore have their turn to smile. He begs day and night for a living.

He is nursed by Sarah, his brother's wife, who administers bitter fluid down his throat. He swallows it painfully, and she assures him of being well. His religious brother, Ezekiel, preaches to him about Christ, the saved ones and sinners. He asks him whether he knows where sinners go when they die and whether he accepts Jesus, and Mbane says he doesn't know. Before he saves him, Mbane's strength wanes, the pain goes, his head jerks down to the bed, and he is gone.

Title of the story

- ✓ Discuss the relevance of the title of the story, A Silent Song.
- ✓ Brainstorm about the paradox in the title, A Silent Song. THEMATIC CONCERNS
- ✓ Explore the following themes as brought out in the story, A Silent Song.
- ✓ Pain and misery of physical handicap
- ✓ Religious hypocrisy
- ✓ Prostitution and sexual slavery
- ✓ Alcoholism and escapism

Pain and misery of Physical handicap

- ❖ In a sense, A Silent Song, an oxymoron, paradoxically echoes the moments of soul searching and reflections that Mbane has had over the period he stays on the street. This creates a more vivid picture of his life and a cathartic emotional impact.
- ❖ The miserable life on the street as a crippled, blind beggar seems less painful than in his brother's desolate hut, where he is lonely and suffering. (p18).
- ❖ He has been speaking to himself in his thoughts and for a long time on the street except for his mechanical plea of 'Yes?', he has no one else to address but himself. (p19).
- ❖ Mbanes undergoes much pain, agony, and suffering on the streets because of his life circumstances. Being blind and lame has impaired his ability to live everyday life. 'Sharp pangs', 'savage fury', pain tore his stomach'. (PI 7 - 19).
- ❖ He crawled on his knees and elbows... suddenly sharp pangs from his navel tore... He was paralyzed. Then the pain disappeared... but he knew it had only recoiled for another attack. (PI 7).

-
- ❖ He has heard noises, songs, and sounds of different people, but he retires to solitude, and thoughts start going through his mind at the end of the day. It is like a dream, a song of hope, and he sings his happy song silently to himself, secretly. (p20).
 - ❖ Mbane ponders the meaning of light to him... light mean to a blind man...(p19).
 - ❖ At the point of death, as his brother urges him to get saved, with reticence, he ponders on God's place and meaning in his life.
 - ❖ People despise him on the streets. Good Christian men and women would once again curse and call him able-bodied, only crippled more every day by the idleness of leisurely begging. (p19).
 - ❖ He sits there (street back lane) and waits for his journey's end. His body smells of sweat, unwashed except in the rain, which he could but feel. (p20).
 - ❖ There is a wide gap between his beliefs and his brother's. His tortured body is already separated from his free soul when he dies. (p20).
 - ❖ The soul has already communicated in his silent song, smiling, at peace with his hosts, himself and everyone. (p20).

Religious hypocrisy/Pretentious piety

- ❖ Mbane's brother, Ezekiel, is so devoted to God a preacher but neglects him for a long time till he realizes Mbane is nearing his death.
- ❖ He picks him up and brings him to his hut, claiming it is rescuing only for Mbane to feel lonelier and more miserable. "I rescued you from that barbaric city so that you can see the light of God. (p18).
- ❖ The desolate hut is not a habitable place for him. It has a flea-ridden floor. (PI7).
- ❖ He could tell that there was meaning in his brother's silence of late... (p18).
- ❖ Asked whether he knows a man called Jesus, he says "Yes", but whether he believes and accepts him, Mbane says, "I don't know," and his brother says Mbane is worse than a Judas. This portrays hypocrisy, and Christians would not talk like this.
- ❖ It is ironical and hypocritical for Ezekiel to tell Mbane, "Mbane — I want Christ to save you..." (p20) as though he has already judged him as a sinner and that "Christ" will come down from heaven to do the good to him while his brother watches.
- ❖ There is a pretence in the way good Christian men and women curse and call him names

instead of bringing the excellent knowledge of Christ to him. '... able-bodied, only crippled more every day by the idleness of leisurely begging'. (p19).

- ❖ He could only yearn impotently beyond the reach of darkness and lameness. At times, self-pity overcame him. (p18 - 19).
- ❖ The God of the Gospel and religion are comforts beyond the reach of a wretched cripple. His God is his only hope of deliverance from pain, destitution and despair. (p18 - 20).

Prostitution and sexual slavery

There is evidence of such sexual evils as commercial sex and promiscuity.(p18).

The blind man knows, sees, and recalls City Street with nostalgia. The noises, drum beating and rhythms which

Mbane calls the voices of good men and women turned drunk in the refuge of the night brothels, pimps and whores galore. (p18).

Alcoholism and escapism

The street, especially the back lane, had taught Mbane a lot good men and women turned drunk in the refuge of the night brothels, pimps and whores galore. (PI 8).

CHARACTERS

1. Cite evidence from the text on the existence of the following character traits as portrayed in A Silent Song.

Mbane: observant, patient sceptical Enduring...

Ezekiel: Selfish Cruel hypocritical.

Sarah: reserved,

How can you tell that Mbane 'sees' and knows a lot in the city street despite being blind?

STYLE AND LANGUAGE USE

- ❖ Why is it ironic for Ezekiel to claim to rescue his brother Mbane from the barbaric city?
- ❖ Why is Mbane reluctant to accept Christ?

IVORY BANGLES BY ERIC NG'MARYO - TANZANIA

About the Author- Ng'maryo.

Eric Ng'maryo is a published poet who has written poems such as Escape and The Journey of Us. Although he is a practicing advocate in Tanzania, he is also respected for his creative writings which include the short story 'Ivory Bangles'

Points to guide interpretation of the story

The pebbles message to the old man.

The tradition that demands wife battering. What happens to the old man when he fails to carry out the ritual beating?

Polygamy and its value — The view of the old man regarding polygamy.

The relationship between the old man and his wife

The conflict that exists between humans and wildlife.

Effects of failing to heed the advice given to an individual.

THE TITLE

'IVORY BANGLES'

- ❖ The title captures the bangles that the wife wears- Twenty-four ivory bangles that were gifted to her by the old man on the day their firstborn and now only son was named.
- ❖ The Ivory bangles thus are a symbol of love that the wife enjoys from the old man.
- ❖ The title also signifies the human-wildlife conflict that exists. For the old man to carve the bangles for his wife, he had to shoot an elephant with a poisoned arrow to get the ivory he used.

CHARACTERS

a. The old man

He is the chief's councillor, a respected elder who is also a woodcarver and a brave warrior.

He is married to only one wife. This causes some concern since it is unheard of for a chief to be monogamous. It portrays him as an alienated person who fails to follow the ways of his people.

He is expected to beat his wife to avert her death, as the seer's pebbles dictate but is hesitant to do so

THE WIFE

She is an attractive woman who the old man much loves.

She treats him with affection making him return the favour by not molesting her until old age.

Her cunning attempt to evade catastrophe as prophesied by the seer leads to her death.

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ 'Ivory bangles' by Eric Ng'maryo portrays a society rooted in some traditional practices that whoever departs from them ends up suffering some calamity. The story begins with a troubled old man moving towards his house. Although his body moves, his thoughts are disturbed by the seer's words.
- ❖ The old man had consulted the seer after noticing traces of blood in the goat's liver that he had slaughtered. The people believed that such an occurrence was a bad omen, so the old man consulted the tribal seer.
- ❖ The seer discloses that pebbles demand that he has to give his wife the ritual beating. However, the old man is hesitant to beat his wife, whom he much loves, as is seen from the fact that he had gifted her with twenty-four Ivory bangles that she adorns throughout.
- ❖ We learn of the old man's life with his wife in the past through several flashbacks. We learn of his refusal to marry another wife even after he is made the chief's councillor, and the chief advises him to do so. The chief appreciates her attractiveness in another flashback as she is adorned in twenty-four ivory bangles.
- ❖ The title also signifies the human-wildlife conflict that exists. For the old man to carve the bangles for his wife, he had to shoot an elephant with a poisoned arrow to get the ivory he used.

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- ❖ She is an attractive woman who the old man much loves.
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- ❖ The old man tells the chief that he carved the ivory bangles for herself using the ivory he shot from the elephant using a poisoned arrow.
- ❖ When he gets home, his wife warmly receives him and his attempts to disclose the seer's message do not succeed until much later in the night. The wife asks him to have his meal first, and after the two enjoy an intimate moment. When he later discloses the pebbles' message to his wife, she comes up with a scheme on how to cheat the pebbles.
- ❖ The following day, the old man goes to work while the wife goes to the market, where she hears people talking about a herd of elephants approaching the plains. She strategizes on the things she would do before faking her beating and going back to her brother's home. On her way home, she hears cries from scouts who warn people to beware of the approaching herd of six elephants led by a giant bull.
- ❖ After getting home, the wife prepares a meal for her husband and decides to go tilla piece of the grove that the husband had said was weedy. Unfortunately, she is killed by the bull elephant that catches her unaware. The people find her in a shallow grave after being crushed by the elephant. Her ivory bangles are also shattered. Her foreshadowed death is a lesson that failing to heed wise advice

can lead to a disastrous outcome.

EPISODIC ANALYSIS OF KEY ISSUES

Episodes

- ✓ A visit to the seer and pebbles demand - **pg21-22**
- ✓ Shared moments between the old man and his wife —**pg 22- 23.**
- ✓ The naming ceremony of the old man's son -**pg 23**
- ✓ The scheme —**pg 24**
- ✓ A visit to the marketplace -**pg 24-25**
- ✓ The wife's death- **pg 25**
- ✓ The following are some issues that arise from the episodes:

TRADITIONS

- ❖ Believe in the seer
- ❖ The old man visits the seer, considered a priest of the people (Pg. 21).
- ❖ He goes to the seer because of his superstitious nature. He had to consult the seer since he had noted blood specks on the liver of a goat that he had slaughtered (pg. 21).
- ❖ Ritual beating/molesting of wife
- ❖ When the old man visits the seer, the pebbles disclose that the spirits were jealous of a happy wife, a woman unmolested by the husband until old age (pg. 21). It is not acceptable for a wife to enjoy a comfortable life with her husband in this community.
- ❖ The husband is thus expected to molest his wife to ensure that she does not enjoy happiness. Failure to do so would lead to a disastrous outcome as the pebbles foretell the wife's death.
- ❖ The pebbles demand that the old man give his wife a thorough beating (ritual beating) and then send her back to her parents (pg. 22). Although the man tries to seek an alternative way to appease the spirits, like offering several goats, the pebbles insist that he must give a wife thorough beating and send her to her parents after the beating.
- ❖ The tradition of wife-beating/molestation is further seen through the old man's son. Unlike his father, the son had embraced the culture of wife battering, something that bothers his mother moments before her death. She is weeding the weed- infested grove when she remembers they had weeded the same patch only three weeks before, together with her daughter-in- law Leveru. She reminisces how her son had beaten Leveru to 'a fingernail's distance to her grave' (pg. 25). This

shows the violent nature of her son and how traditional he was since he embraced wife-beating.

Naming of children

The naming of children is seen as an essential practice. We learn that the twenty- four ivory bangles that the wife wears were gifted to her when their only son was given a name (pg. 23).

The value of child naming is also seen because the old man's grandson is named after him. The writer refers to the young boy as her 'husband' (pg. 23).

Polygamy and its effects

- ❖ The tradition of polygamy and its value comes out during the moments shared by the old man and his wife. After serving him his evening meal, the wife patronises the old man by calling him the son of a chief. The writer explains the position held by the old man — the chief's councillor (pg. 22). This position makes him a respected man. It, however, raises some debate as people talk much about him since he is monogamous. This is seen where the writer says, 'He still was the chief's councillor, much respected, but also much talked about because he had only one wife..... ' (Pg.22).
- ❖ His monogamous status was a concern for the ageing chief, who told him to get another wife (pg.23). This shows that the old man's society values the tradition of polygamy, and one who does not engage in it is considered a failure.
- ❖ The old man, however, holds a differing opinion about polygamy. His response to the chief via a riddle shows his view of polygamy:
- ❖ A woman went to the riverside Tie woman wanted to fetch water. The woman had one water pot
- ❖ The woman arrived at the water point. The woman found another water pot .The woman came back with a pot
- ❖ The woman brought a water pot with potsherds, not water (Pg. 23The chief's interpretation of the riddle:
- ❖ "A wife, a co-wife, witchcraft and death" (Pg.23) explains that the old man considers having more than one wife as witchcraft

LOVE

- ❖ The moments shared between the old man and his wife (pg. 22-23) point to their love. The kind of reception the old man receives when he gets home shows how much the wife loves and cares for him. 'His wife come unstrapped his leather sandals and led him behind the house to the lean-to,

bathed him and rubbed him with sharp smelling unguent' (pg. 22). Her loving care is further seen when she asks him to have his meal first before they can talk about what the husband had heard that day (pg. 22).

- ❖ How the husband addresses the wife also shows that he loves her. Despite her old age, the husband calls her "girl" (pg. 22), a form of endearment. He also appreciates the meal she has cooked for him. "You cook, woman," he thanked, stretching himself and yawning (pg. 22).
- ❖ Their love is also seen from the intimacy they share once the wife joins the old man where he lay. The old man tries to talk her about the demands of the seer, but she ignites his pas leading to an intimate moment. 'He unsprang slowly, when it came, it was like an intricate tattoo on a drum, coming unexpectedly and stopping suddenly, leaving the air quiet and pure.'(Pg. 23).
- ❖ Tie twenty-four ivory bangles that the old man gifted his wife on the day of naming their son also show how much he loved her. Specifically, the eight bangles she wore on either hand were etched with mnemonic marks for a long love poem (pg. 23).

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

- ❖ The flashback of the naming ceremony of the old man's wife 'As she moved the twenty-four ivory bangles she wore clanked like many castanets' (pg. 23). Elephants had to be killed to obtain the ivory used to make the bangles.
- ❖ The truthfulness of this observation is seen when the chief also noted how attractive the old man's wife looked in the many ivory bangles she wore. The old man proudly explains to the chief that he made the bangles himself from the ivory he got when he shot an elephant using a poisoned arrow (pg. 23).
- ❖ Towards the end of the story, people in the marketplace talk about the herd of elephants approaching the plains. They fear the destruction that the herd will cause. They hope that those who know how to use poisoned arrows will save the situation (pg. 24).
- ❖ The ultimate sign of the conflict is the death of the old man's wife, who a wounded bull elephant kills. In an ironic turn of events, the old man's wife, whose husband had killed an elephant and used its ivory to make bangles for the wife as a sign of love, ends up killed by a wounded elephant. 'After bashing her on trees and banana plants, the wounded bull elephant put her on the ground and repeatedly stamped on her. They found her thus in a shallow grave: a mass of flesh and blood and shattered ivory bangles.'(pg. 25). The love is shattered by the same creatures whose ivory was used to

make symbols of love.

FAILURE TO HEED ADVICE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- ❖ The seer's advice to the old man who consulted him is that the pebbles demanded a ritual beating of his wife to avert the death of wife. The old man is hesitant and offers to give some goats, but the pebbles insist on the beating and send her off to her parents after beating. Instead of heeding the seer's advice, the old man and his wife develop a scheme on how to cheat the pebbles. The wife proposes putting up a show by pretending to have been beaten.
- ❖ Their failure to follow the demands of the pebbles results in what the seer had foretold-The death of the wife who the wounded bull elephant kills as she is weeding.
- ❖ Although the wife's death is closely linked to the seer's warning, it can also be seen to be due to the wife's recklessness and failure to heed the warnings of the scouts. The wife heard the scouts warning when they noted the elephants were approaching. 'As she slowly made her way home, she heard the cries. They came from scouts who were perched on trees, observing elephants and warning people of the beasts' movement... 'Beware! People Of Mtorobo's homestead! The five she elephants are now in your banana grove! The bull is on the path coming from the stream' (pg. 24-25).
- ❖ The wife chooses to weed at the grove instead of heeding the warning and staying home. NB: The writer has extensively used flashbacks to help us understand the past life of the old man and his wife.

QUESTIONS ON STYLES

What is the effectiveness of flashbacks in this story?

What is ironic about the following?

The wife being called "girl" by the husband?

How the wife dies?

What has the writer achieved by extensive use of dialogue?

Using an oral literature device in the story communicates

THE SINS OF THE FATHERS CHARLES MUNGOSHI -S ZIMBABWE

About the author:

Mwalimu Consultancy Ltd analyses **that** Charles Mungoshi was born in 1947 and raised in a farming family in the Chivhu area of Zimbabwe. After leaving school, he worked with the Forestry Commission before joining Textbook Sales. From 1975 to 1981, he worked at the Literature Bureau as an editor and at Zimbabwe Publishing House for the next five years. In 1985-87 he was Writer in Residence at the University of Zimbabwe, and since then, he has worked as a freelance writer, scriptwriter and editor. Charles Mungoshi has written novels and short stories in both Shona and English and two collections of children's stories, *Stories from a Shona Childhood* and *One Day Long Ago* (Baobab Books, 1989 and 1991); the former won him the Noma Award.

He has also continued to write poetry and has one published collection: *The Milkman doesn't only deliver Milk* (Baobab Books, 1998). He has won the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Africa region) twice, in 1988 and 1998, for two collections of short stories: *The Setting Sun* and *The Rolling World* (Heinemann, 1987) and *Walking Still* (Baobab Books, 1997). Two of his novels: *Waiting for the Rain* (Heinemann 1975) and *Ndiko kupindana Kwa mazuva* (Mambo Press, 1975), received International PEN awards.

Episodes / sub-episodes

Rondo's family in bereavement. (p26 - 31).

Rondo's confusion about his personality and purpose. (p28 34).

Political tension/rivalry between Rwafa and Mzamane. (p31 - 36).

The story of the white farmer. (p38).

Rwafa's harangue and end. (p39 — 41).

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ The Sins of the Fathers, by Charles Mungoshi, is a post-colonial story set in rural Zimbabwe. It takes place between Borrowdale and Bulawayo.
- ❖ Rondo is the antagonistic character whose revenge world opens at the story's very beginning. Rondo's father, Rwafa, is an ex- minister but still influential in the political world of Zimbabwe.

This is evident from how a fraction of mourners just come to take pictures with him, for such photos would soon 'open doors' for them.

- ❖ Rondo has a wife, Selina, daughter of Basil Mzamane, who is also into politics as an M.P. and a businessman. In fact, he's a political rival of Rondo's father, Rwafa. Rondo's two children, both daughters (Yuna and Rhoda), are in an accident as they are driving home from a birthday party with their grandfather, Basil Mzamane, where, Rwafa takes to the podium to condemn his son for marrying from his enemy Basil. This has all along created bad blood between him and his son that this accident makes Rondo believe that his father has a hand in it. In their many stories, a revelation of what his friend, Gaston, alludes to: "Have you ever wondered about the Second Street accidents?"
- ❖ On their way to the birthday party, the trio - Rondo, Rwafa and Basil Mzamane - meets a group of youths (Chimurenga) chanting political songs. At a point, they meet a white woman whose car has broken down, and they charge to attack before Basil intervenes. Rwafa disappears, and Rondo remains confused about what is actually going on.
- ❖ Rwafa's speech leaves people surprised and shocked. They start going one after the other. This is where Rondo decides to send the children back with their grandfather as he remains with Selina. The two children and Basil, their grandfather, finally die in a crash. People are here to mourn. Then with utter suspense, Rondo and Selina come to finish Rwafa, who directs them out of the room, then a soft muffled plop is heard from Rwafa's room.

Questions for reflection on "Title of the story" and themes

Discuss the role and significance of the title *The Sins of the Fathers*.

Which sins do you think the father commits in the story?

2) "Because I'd like you to watch some 'duck-shooting today'." What does this statement from Rwafa refer to?

Make inferences from the following:

"Do you know what your father does?" (p33)

"Rondo had not been used to living his life from deductive or logical thinking but now, the accumulation of events and the history behind them had made him so numb, he was almost a zombie." (p33).

Brainstorm about 'Second Street accidents'.

What is the role of the family unit during bereavement and children's growth?

How are youths used to execute the selfish desires of the political elite?

Why are power and prejudice significant in the ex-minister's life ?

How does greed for material power affect the human character?

THEMATIC CONCERNS

The points of discussion and analysis include:

Identity Crisis

Rondo suffers low self-esteem through the way his father treats him. Rwafaloathes and persistently frustrates his son. His first disappointment is when his father breaks his guitar and throws it into the fire when he is only four. (p30- 31).

Rwafa does not approve of or even attend his son's wedding. He purportedly leaves town on state business for two weeks. (p34).

Through flashbacks, Rwafa thrashes his son, Rondo, when he is only eight, for 'stealing a neighbour's mangoes'. This memory gives him an uncomfortable feeling and affects his self-esteem. He must have understood what powerlessness meant (p40).

This grows into his adulthood when his father refers to him as an effeminates on who wants to demean his family by marrying into an ignominious muDzviti family. (p31

While Rondo admires and thinks his father is the greatest, his father, Rwafa, writes him off. Rwafa always gives Rondo "a little sad laugh" and labels him "Slob". (p28, 31, 32).

His colleagues laugh at him at work, and Rondo doubts his mother and wife. He feels defenceless and resigns to accept being a fool. "Well, if you see me as a fool, I'll be one." (p28).

Rondo has developed a stammer that makes him barely answer any of his father's questions. (p32).

His wife Selina tells him she could do better in his pants, and his friend and colleague, Gaston, scolds him,

"You can't be a child forever, Rondo". (p33).

Later, Rondo's father disparages him. With contempt, he enquires whether one of Rondo's more intelligent friends has written for him the piece of paper he hands him. (p41).

Both Rondo and Rwafa have psychological problem that needs psychosocial support. (p26 — 41).

VENGEANCE

The author expresses the theme of vengeance in the story's beginning through the flash-forward as Rondo comes to his father with a gun. (p26, 41). From the death of his two children and how his father has been treating him, he believes that he has a hand in the deaths, and therefore, he's here to revenge. (p29,33,34, 41).

Rwafa causes the accident as a form of revenge against the "traitors" or enemies. Furthermore, Rondo is not happy with what his father says about his marrying Basil - his enemy. (p31, 39). In his speech, Rwafa calls his son a 'traitor'. This is another reason for revenge. (p38)

Political Bigotry and machinations

Politics run the story from the beginning to the end of this story. Basil Mzamane -Rondo's father-in-law-a businessman and an M.P. and Rwafa - Rondo's father, are great political rivals that don't see eye to eye. There is always tension between the two. (p34)

This is the greatest reason behind the crash that kills Basil and the two children of Rondo to settle political scores.

This is what he tells his son that he will thank him for happening now and not later. (p28).

Rwafa loves himself so much that he prepared to destroy his son in his endeavour to have an heir. (p32).

The existence of Chimurenga and the Second street accidents are evidence Of machinations. (p34, 36, 38,39).

Rwafa calls his enemies, looters and cattle thieves personal enemies and swears that .. no son of the Rwafa family would ever play second fiddle to anyone's lead..."(p39).

Racism/ colonial hatred

On their way to the birthday party, the trio meets a white woman who needs help. The political youths want to descend on her because she's white. (p36).

On the other hand, the white woman is already armed with a gun to shoot the blacks. (p36).

Again, from Mzamane's story about the white who lives in the Manhize mountains, we find out that he sends away the blacks who live there and takes their ancestral land because they are helpless. (p38).

Having alienated the lands from the blacks, the whites are the source of the hatred and envy that fills the Rwafa clan, and Rwafa has his eyes on the white farm in the Ruwa area. (p34).

Consequently, his youth obey him and have an unashamed raw lust for blood. (p36).

Parental resentment /child discontentment

Mwalimu Consultancy Ltd analyses that Rondo has never been close to his father as his memories of his past him make him cry. (p31, 40).

At four, his father destroys his guitar, and at eight, he thrashes him without finding out what he has done. Rondo always feels more space with his father-in-law and would choose him as his father. (p34).

He carries many scars that thinking of his father as none other than a shadow he has to live in becomes impossible. Rondo cannot think independently, and this reduces him to an object of laughter and ridicule among his friends. (p28).

Rwafa has no sympathy for his son as he despises him vehemently. He does not bother to answer when asked a question by his son. (p36).

His mother describes her husband as 'one bombed-out battlefield of scars' whose deepest scar is that he can't forgive not only his enemies but anyone. This clearly shows a rift in the family. (p30, 31).

At the party, Rondo and Selina feel relaxed with their parents. (p39).

Rondo could not look at his father. (p40).

Love and Friendship

She takes her head during the mourning night and puts it on her lap. She calls her a great woman. (p29).

Friendship is also evident between the two women, Selina and her mother-in-law (Rondo's wife and his mother). (p29,30)

Selina, the daughter of Mzamane, stays with Rondo even though Rwafa disapproves of their marriage. He says that his son became a 'traitor' by marrying Selina, from Basil Mzamane's clan - his sworn political enemies. (p29,30)

However, Selina sticks with her husband, Rondo, until the end of the story. She also has a gun from the mother- in-law. (p41).

He lets his head rest against her belly, his skull nudging the underside of her breast. She makes him

breakfast. She accompanies her husband to serve revenge. This is love. (P41)

Ethnic tension / negative ethnicity

- ❖ Rwafa believes in maintaining rigid boundaries in establishing social and political relations. (p34).
- ❖ In his tirade, he laments that he is hurt by the effeminate spineless sons of the family who marry into families of their enemies, poisoning the pure blood of the Rwafa clan. 9p34 - 39).
- ❖ There has always been tension between Rwafa and Mzamane, a quarrel, a misunderstanding, but the episode at the party renders it dramatic. Their speeches turn sour. The two old men are crystal clearly, political nemeses.(p34).
- ❖ Rwafa cannot forgive and forget the effects of the war, once the Ndebele attacked them, and the pain of the scars remained in him more than the relief of healing. (p30 - 32).
- ❖ These adversaries contrast each other in character and demeanour. The former is the villain in his very nature, and the latter is a gentleman.
- ❖ He belongs to the political elite who must fan clannism and ensure they remain at the top. (p39, 40).
- ❖ Primitive accumulation There is evident greed in the arch-nemesis, Rwafa, for he strives to maintain the status quo by acquiring material power through underhand deals. He leaves in the morning and returns in the evenings. (p33).
- ❖ He is disappointed and bitter when Mzamane rescues the white woman from irate Chimurenga warriors. He disappears and reappears from a bush two minutes after the white woman has driven off. (p34 - 37).
- ❖ This shows that he plans to have her lynched so he can proceed to acquire the property. (p36)
- ❖ Rwafa is preoccupied with the sudden beauty of the land they are driving through. The land provides a breath-taking view of its immensity. (p36)
- ❖ Affluence, material power and lavish extravagance are explicit in the family as they flock around him. He gains recognition from his generosity by squandering the accumulated wealth in the form of favours, money, advances. (p31, 32)
- ❖ Many use his name to get something from legal firms, financial houses, or credit stores at month-ends. (p32). Rwafa desperately needs a grandson from Rondo to whom he can leave all his cars, houses and money. (p31).

DEATH

The fear of death also hangs/lingers in Selina's mind. She fears losing Rondo as well. (p30)

Mysterious deaths rock the family, and according to Gaston, Rondo's colleague, we know that a political hand is involved. (p33).

He asks Rondo, "Do you know what your father does?" (p33).

Selina's mother had died, and Mzamane marries again, but to the detriment of his daughter, she alludes to the invitation to her father. (p34).

Assassinations could be the ex-minister's trade as he happens to control the political group dubbed Chimurenga, which also narrowly spares the life of Mrs

The old man had rambles (flashback) (p40). smoked out, flushed out, blasted out.. ."

CHARACTERS

- ❖ Rwafa, Rondo, Selina, Mzamane, Gaston and Mrs Quayle Mzamane Selina's father and Rondo's father-in-law. A peace- maker and crusader of tolerance. He takes a low profile, although he has the opportunity and ability to show off. This shows he is peaceful and humble.
- ❖ According to Rondo, nothing in his demeanour shows he is a man of opulence as a successful businessman and the M.P. of a constituency in northern Matebele land.
- ❖ He is so liberal that even with his differences with Rwafa, he declares he is free to think as he likes. (p38).
- ❖ His friendly and affable nature makes Rondo feel free around him. He is a helpful man as he gives a hand to the white woman whose car is stuck. (p37).
- ❖ He is tolerant, for he rescues her from being lynched by the angry youth. He tells them, .. Today is cancelled. Go home.. ." he tells Rondo to grow up and see people as individuals. (p37).
- ❖ Being rational makes him an embodiment of the voice of reason.

Rwafa

The ostentatious antagonist, so to speak. He is the arch- nemesis of Basil Mzamane and his son, Rondo. The villain in the story is a ruthless, intolerant influential former minister who cannot forgive anybody. (p31, 34, 35, 39, 40).

He is contemptuous as he vilifies his son vehemently, affecting his self-esteem.(p28).

The snobbish father is so selfish for none of the words he uses to address Rondo have any respect, and he loves himself so much (selfish) that he is prepared to destroy his son. (p32).

He is proud, assertive and aggressive as he talks of his prowess and declares, "Noson of the Rwafa family would ever play second fiddle to anyone's lead." (p39). Rwafa is bitter and vengeful, for his son terribly hurts him for poisoning the pure blood of the Rwafa clan. (p39).

As they drive to Quayle's farm, Rwafa remains sullen and sucking as he can't laugh while having a robust dialogue. "He is a man who laughs little." This shows that he is sadistic in nature. (p35).

RONDO

A calm and modest son of Rwafa and husband to Selina. He is loving and caring for loves his mother, his wife and his father-in-law. (p29 — 32).

He is also apologetic for his father's wrong doings which he perceives partly responsible. (p30).

He is respectful as he reveres and honours his father.

He is a gentle and friendly chap who has good relations with his colleagues artwork. Helpful for he could be called to help colleagues. (p33).

Questions for reflection on characters

Compare and contrast Rwafa and Mzamane as antagonistic characters in the story, The Sins of the Fathers.

How does Rondos mother manage the psychological problems of both her husband and her son at home?

What do you think could have happened if Rwafa had told his only son, "You are an intelligent son".

Suppose Rwafa had had another son; could his attitude be different?

THE TRULY MARRIED WOMAN ABIOSEH NICAL-SIERRA LEONE

The Truly Married Woman by Abioseh Nicol- Sierra Leone Abioseh Nicol was a Sierra Leone writer, poet and diplomat with a specialty in medicine as a physician. He died in the year 1994 having made great contribution to Sierra Leone literature. He was a writer of short stories, poems, academic literature as well as music. His works include Two African Tales (his first published

work) and Creative Women (his last published work).

Points to guide interpretation of the story

- ❖ The difference between being together and being married.
- ❖ Some factors that hinder people from getting married.
- ❖ What parents want for their children compared to what they want.
- ❖ Parenting styles and conflicts that can arise from them.
- ❖ Missionary work — Is it a good thing or a bad thing?
- ❖ Religious hypocrisy. Why Ayo takes time to put up a show by reorganising their house and even borrowing a wedding ring when the missionaries visit.
- ❖ Ajayi's change regarding marriage.
- ❖ How marriage changes Ayo. (What is the value of a marriage ceremony?)
- ❖ Traditional practices before marriage, negotiation, giving of gifts to the bride.

TITLE

The truly Married Woman'

What is the meaning of the title?

A woman can live for long with a man (cohabit) and never be considered married —Ayo is not married, yet she has lived with Ajayi for twelve years. There must be a marriage ceremony (Church marriage) to be genuinely married.

A truly married woman changes in behaviour. She ceases to be dutiful and demands more respect. Ayo refuses to prepare her husband's morning tea after she is married.

CHARACTERS

Ajayi

He is a government clerk who has lived with Ayo for over twelve years.

He meant to marry her in church, but he procrastinated until Ayo gave up on the dream of getting appropriately married.

He is cautious about his health and takes various precautions to ensure he remains healthy.

He is too strict and brutal as he beats his elder son Oju too much as a father.

Ayo

- ❖ She is a woman in her mid-thirties who has lived with her husband Ajayi for twelve years, yet she is not married to him.
- ❖ She is thus considered a mistress to Ajayi. She loves him and even moves in with him against her parents' wishes. She has hope of getting married, but the husband's attack of the spending involved during marriage discourages her.
- ❖ She is seen as a good mistress who is dutiful, loving and kind to Ajayi. Her entrepreneur skills are noted because she does little buying and selling when she has free time. She is seen to live an ordinary life.
- ❖ She is modernised. She attends women's meetings and also speaks to the missionaries in English.
- ❖ Ayo is seen to be calculative/ cunning, where she visits the soothsayer before her husband and the sister did to try and fix things.

Oju

He is the eldest son of Ajayi and Ayo. He is ten years old and is frequently beaten by his father for wetting his sleeping mat. The beating does not help but instead worsens the situation.

Ayo's father

He is seen as a father who wanted the best for his daughter, Ayo since he had hoped that she would marry a high school teacher.

He is authoritative as he made Ayo move everything she owned to his house once he learned the planned marriage.

He cautiously follows the traditional marriage preparations rites to ensure that his daughter is safe in her new home.

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ Abioseh Nical's story, 'The Truly Married Woman,' is a contemporary story that merges both traditional aspects of marriage and modern marriage practices. story emphasises the importance of valid marriage as compared to cohabiting.
- ❖ Through this emphasis, the writer, however, satirises marriage as it is not only economically

draining but fails to provide happiness that should come with it.

- ❖ In the beginning, Ajayi and Ayo live together even though Ayo had always wanted to be married properly. While Ayo tries to coarsen Ajayi to marry her indeed, Ajayi is hesitant as he feels that marriage involves some wild spending and the ceremony is unnecessarily costly. This view frustrates Ayo until she admits that it would never happen; thus, she stops talking him into it.
- ❖ Their time together appears relatively amicable as Ayo performs her wifely duties faithfully. They enjoy an everyday family life punctuated with minor conflicts such as the one that arises over Ajayi's beating of their son Oju. This conflict surprises
- ❖ Ajayi as Ayo rarely ever disagreed with him. At this point, Ayo's modernised trait is revealed as she discloses that she has been attending women's meetings where they learn modern ideas of overseas doctors.
- ❖ Ajayi spends his day in the office thinking about this revelation which makes him admire Ayo the more. As the closing hours approach, Ajayi receives an unexpected guest — missionaries from World Gospel Crusading Alliance (WGCA).
- ❖ He remembers that he had contacted them with the hope of getting free bibles, religious pictures and maybe some magazines. However, the missionaries are set on enrolling him as one of them, but the chief clerk saves him by explaining that it was prohibited for government workers.
- ❖ He invites the team with the chief to his home, where the wife reorganises the house after learning that guests are on their way. She even borrows a wedding ring from a neighbour. After the missionaries' visit, Ajayi tells Ayo that he plans to marry her.
- ❖ Although she is shocked, Ayo welcomes the marriage and thus starts preparing for it. Ironically, she turns down his sexual advances that evening, arguing that it would be incorrect. She moves back to her parental home, where the traditional marriage preparation practices are carried out. Soon, the church wedding ceremony takes place. Ayo chooses to dress in a grey dress instead of the traditional white one as Ajayi had wished. The grey dress is symbolic of her impurity since she is already a mother of three. She also wanted a corset to ensure she did not look too massive. After the church wedding, a European ceremony is also conducted where a wedding cake is cut.
- ❖ Ajayi notices that Ayo had been transformed after the wedding. He saw her proud head for the first time, and true to his observation, the following day, Ayo does not wake up early to prepare his morning tea like she always did. The story ends with Ayo's declaration to Ajayi that she was now a genuinely married woman who needed a little more respect and thus would not arise to prepare a

cup of tea for the husband.

Plot related Questions

- ❖ Describe early morning activities of Ajayi before he goes to work
- ❖ Compare and contrast Ayo's behaviour before marriage and after marriage.
- ❖ What does Ajayi's beating of Oju for wetting his sleeping mat reveals about Ajayi?
- ❖ What preparations does Ayo make as she waits for the guests? What does this reveal about her?
- ❖ Explain Ayo's reaction when Ajayi tells her that he plans to marry her?
- ❖ What does Omo's reaction to Ayo's disclosure about the planned marriage reveal about her?
- ❖ Briefly describe the traditional marriage practices that take place before Ayo's marriage.
- ❖ What is Ayo's old aunts' advice to the newly married?

EPISODIC ANALYSIS OF KEY ISSUES

Episodes

Life before marriage — pg. 42-45

Preparations for marriage — pg. 46-47 The marriage ceremony — pg. 48

Life after marriage — pg. 48

Several issues arise from these episodes:

Cohabiting vs marriage

- ❖ Despite living together for twelve years and having three children already, Ayo and Ajayi are not considered married. The writer tells us that 'Ajayi and Ayo have been together for twelve years. They are not married. Ajayi had meant to marry Ayo, but the right moment never came. (pg.42).
- ❖ It is no wonder that while explaining to his friends who Ayo is, Ajayi refers to her as not a wife but a mistress (pg. 43). Ayo is seen to have hoped that Ajayi would indeed marry her. During their first year of marriage, she kept telling Ajayi
- ❖ about their friends' weddings, hoping that he would get interested and marry her. She, however, ends up frustrated when instead of showing an interest, he criticises the friends' spending due to the considerable cost of the ceremony (pg. 43).
- ❖ The priest emphasises the importance of people getting married through his sermon. The writer observes that the priest would speak out violently against unmarried couples who lived together about two or three times in a year (pg. 43). These sermons would make friends of Ajayi and Ayo

look at them sympathetically, leading to Ajayi keeping off from the church for a few weeks.

- ❖ Despite not being married, Ajayi and Ayo enjoy some peaceful ambience in their marriage. Ayo performs her wifely roles dutifully. She would wake up at five to prepare his breakfast (pg. 48).
- ❖ Ajayi would wake at six-fifteen and find his cup of tea ready just as he liked it — 'weak and sugary, without milk' (pg. 42). Ironically, after Ayo is married, things seem to change. Instead of continuing with her wifely duty or making them better, Ayo is reluctant to serve her husband as she used it. The morning after the wedding finds Ayo comfortably beside her husband when his alarm goes off. Unlike other previous mornings, there is no tea ready for Ajayi. He is initially alarmed as he thinks she is ill. Still, her shocking reply confirms her deliberately intention not to do it — "Ajayi, my husband,.. .for twelve years I have got up every morning at five to make tea for you and breakfast. Now I am a truly married woman; you must behave towards me with some respect. You are now my husband and not a lover. Get up and make yourself a cup of tea" (pg. 48).
- ❖ This strange turn of events raises concern over whether valid marriage helps improve the home environment or destroys the home.

Conflict due to parenting styles

- ❖ Different parents adopt different parenting styles. Some parents are very strict with their children to the extent that they use excessive force to ensure their children behave as they wish. A good example is Ajayi, who beats his eldest son Oju for having wet his sleeping mat (pg.43).
- ❖ On her part, Ayo feels that this is not right, and in one of the rare occurrences, she disagrees with Ajayi about it. She tells him, "Ajayi, you beat Oju too much. ..he has not stopped wetting although you beat him every time he does. Infact, he is doing it more and more now. Perhaps if you stopped beating him, he would get better." (pg.43).
- ❖ Through their disagreement, we learn of Ayo's modernised and informed traits as she discloses that she has been attending women's meetings where they are taught modern ideas (pg.44).

QUESTIONS

1. What is the importance of the traditional marriage preparation practices that recurred out before Ayo's marriage?

The institution of marriage should be treated with respect as it is of great value. Show how Ayo fails to do so after she is truly married.

Marriage is satirised in the story The Truly Married Woman,, Support this assertion.

TALKING MONEY STANLEY GAZEMBA – KENYA

About the author:

Stanley Gazemba was born in 1974 in Vihiga, Kenya. Stanley Gazemba has published three novels: The Stone Hills of Maragoli (Kwani?, winner of the 2003 Jomo Kenyatta Prize for fiction, published in the U.S. as Forbidden Fruit), Khama (Digital Back Books), and Callused Hands (Nsemia). He has also published eight children's books, of which A Scare in the Village (Oxford Univ. Press) won the 2015 Jomo Kenyatta Prize for children's fiction. Gazemba's fiction has appeared in 'A' is for Ancestors, a collection of short stories from the Caine Prize (Jacana); Africa39: New Writing From Africa South of the Sahara (Bloomsbury); The Literary Review (Fairleigh Dickinson Univ.); Man of the House and Other New Short Stories from Kenya (CCC Press); Crossing Borders online magazine; among other publications.

As a journalist, Gazemba has written for The New York Times, The East African, Msanii magazine, Sunday Nation, and Saturday Nation. Gazemba was the International Fellow at the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference in 2007. Gazemba lives in Nairobi, where he is the editor of Ketebul Music.

EPISODES

- Mukidanyi dismisses his elder brothers. (p49 - 50).
- A comprehensive and detailed guide to a silent son and other stories
- The arrival of Galo and his lawyer for negotiation. (p50 52).
- The disturbing night of evil spirits. (p53 56).

SYNOPSIS

Talking money is a story about Mukidanyi, a furious young man and a cattle trader who ignores his elder brothers' warning against selling his land. The story is set in the vast rural expanse of Kakamega, Kenya. Mukidanyi's brothers Ngoseywe and These traits are one of the triggers that make Ajayi marry Ayo after realising that she is a woman to be proud of.

We also see some conflict over what parents want for their children in relation to what the children want for themselves. Ayo's living with Ajayi had not been accepted by her parents — 'When she first came to him-against her parents' wishes.. .' (pg. 43).

The writer further tells us what Ayo's father had hoped that she would marry a high school teacher. However, Ayo fell in love with Ajayi, a government clerk, and moved in with him (pg. 43).

Hypocrisy

- ❖ There is a lot of pretence among people in society to portray a particular image. Ajayi wrote to World Gospel Crusading Alliance, pretending to be interested in some information from them after a friend gave him a magazine that contained an invitation to join the missionary Alliance. However, his true intention was not to work with them, but he hoped to get free items such as bibles and large religious pictures that he would sell, give away, or use as wall pictures (pg.44).
- ❖ The depth of his hypocrisy is seen when he appears relieved that the chief clerk saved him from a life as a missionary when he told the visitors that the government prohibited his workers from working as missionaries. So appreciative is Ajayi of the chief clerk that he presents a carefully wrapped bottle of beer to the chief clerk as a present for having saved him (pg.45).
- ❖ He hypocritically extends an invitation of the missionaries to his home. He lies to them that the roads are not suitable to prevent them from using a taxi. He intends to give time to his wife to reorganise their home into an appropriate environment to host the missionaries. Ayo also portrays high levels of hypocrisy. She changes the appearance of their home when she receives a message from Ajayi that he will be bringing white men to their home in half an hour. Ayo took down the calendars with pictures of lightly clothed women and replaced them with family photographs. She also replaced the magazines with religious books and hid the wine glasses under the sofa. In efforts to portray an actual spiritual image, she goes ahead to borrow a wedding ring from her neighbour before putting on her Sunday dress (pg. 45).
- ❖ The missionaries are impressed by the show that she put up. The writer uses this act to symbolise Ayo's hypocrisy even in her marriage. Ayo has been pretending to be a dutiful wife for the twelve years before her marriage as she shows her true colours after the wedding. She refuses to prepare morning tea and breakfast for Ajayi (pg 48).
- ❖ Her hypocrisy is further seen when she turns down Ajayi's advances on the evening he disclosed to her that he intended to marry her. She shyly says 'No' (pg. 45) and pushes him away, asking him to wait until after marriage. She argues that it would not be correct. This is ironic since the two have lived together for twelve years, and their intimacy has borne three children.
- ❖ Ayo give up on him and leave. Obsessed with money in his mind, he refuses to heed his wife's counsel and instead flogs her.
- ❖ When his clients arrive, he receives them warmly, showing them the fertile land and offers to help where necessary. They then negotiate without a tussle, for they accept his first offer without

haggling. He takes the huge amount of money without counting it and signs the papers with his thumbprint, for he had played truant and naughty when his father, Kizungu, tried to take him to school.

- ❖ Enthusiastic and excited about the money, he cannot sleep until he is attacked by voices at night, which his wife tells him are evil spirits. He almost runs mad as his wife laughs at him. Overwhelmed by nervousness and fear of the demons, he returns all the money to the Galos and flees back to his house.

Questions for reflection on 'Title' of the story and themes.

How relevant is the title of the story, Talking money m

Why do you think the money given to Mukidanyi 'talks' only at night while in his custody?

Do you think the Galos are responsible for the talking of the money?

Explore and discuss the existence of the following themes in Talking Money.

Ethnocentric beliefs in spirits.

Primitive superstition on sources of wealth.

Obsession with money and the power of guilt.

Importance of consultation on family property.

THEMATIC CONCERNS

Ethnocentric beliefs in spirits.

- ❖ The concept of social superstition rooted in people's culture is linked with belief in good and bad luck as a context-derived concept affects the people of that culture in various aspects.
- ❖ Although the concept of superstition is common, many of its features and aspects are still unclear. Some questions about these beliefs remain baffling and unanswered. Engulfed with immense doubt, Mukidanyi decides to obey his wife's words and beliefs about the Galos. (p50).
- ❖ At night, the hour of witches, viganda haunt Mukidanyi. He hears voices speaking, and he believes they are not dreaming voices. (p54).
- ❖ Then his wife Ronika scoldingly tells him those are certainly viganda spirits speaking. (p54).
- ❖ Ronika takes advantage of her husband's extreme fear and makes more fun of him. She reassures him that the Galos' money is speaking in the briefcase under the bed. (p54)

- ❖ Confident and sure that he is terrified, she shouts and scoffs at him to take the money out. "Go with your devil money this very minute and find somewhere else to keep it but not in this house, you hear?" (p55).
- ❖ Obsession with money and the power of guilt
- ❖ The tough speaking and abusive man is now humbled and reduced to a whispering weakling.
- ❖ Definitely, the warnings are ricocheting in his mind because of his guilt and failure to consult before beginning the process of selling his land.
- ❖ Scared by the unseen demons, Mukidanyi flees back to the Galos, returning all the money. (p55, 56).
- ❖ He changes his mind. He is only left with his wife to trust, and his house is the only refuge at this 'hour of witches'.

CHARACTERS

1. Using evidence from the text, describe the character traits of the following characters.

Mukidanyi

Ronika

Ngoseywe

Galo

Style and Language use

How is sarcasm employed in Stanley Gazemba's Talking Money?

Examine the use of dialogue and native dialect in Talking Money.

GHOSTS CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE-NIGERIA

About the Author- Chimamanda Adichie.

Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi is an established Nigerian writer. She has written several novels, short stories and nonfictional works. Her major works include Purple Hibiscus, Americanah, The Thing Around Your Neck and Half of a Yellow Sun among others. Her story 'Ghost' was published in The Thing Around Your Neck a collection of her short stories that was published in 2009.

Points to guide interpretation

- ✓ Suffering of retirees as they follow up on their pension.
- ✓ Corruption in government institutions.
- ✓ The University.
- ✓ How people deal with ghosts of the past to survive at present.
- ✓ War and its effects.
- ✓ Counterfeit, drugs and their effects.

Title 'Ghosts'

The topic is metaphorically used to represent several things: The terrible memories that most people are living with or haunted by. Most people have memories of horrible previous experiences that disturb them. For instance, Ikenna struggles with the loss of his family and his failure to succeed in the Biafran Civil War. Prof James struggles with the loss of his daughter, the destruction of property, the loss of the University's glory, and the loss of his wife.

Some people were thought dead but turned up alive such as Ikenna. The truly dead but whose spirits visit their loved ones — Ebere -they offer consolation to the bereaved.

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CHARACTERS

a. Pro James Nwoye

- ❖ He is a seventy-one-year-old retired professor of Mathematics.
- ❖ He is the protagonist in the story, and the story is told through his voice. He is the narrator of the story.
- ❖ He escaped Nsukka when the civil war broke in 1967 and fled to America.
- ❖ He loses his daughter Zik in the war but gets another daughter (Nkiru) while still in America when he was a lecturer at Berkeley.
- ❖ He is currently following up on his pension, which is not forthcoming due to the corruption in the University.
- ❖ He is constantly visited by the ghost of his late wife and has not disclosed this to his daughter Nkiru.

Ikenna Okoro

- ❖ He is a man who was thought to have died in the 1967 Biafran war. During his university lecturing days in the sociology department, he was a renowned activist.
- ❖ He escaped the Biafran civil war on a Red Cross plane and went to Sweden, where he has lived since 1967. He lost all his family in the war and never remarried. He returns to Nsukka years later to see how things are.
- ❖ Vincent
- ❖ He is the former driver of Prof James.
- ❖ He served Prof. James in the eighties when he was the faculty dean.
- ❖ He is now retired and is following up on his pension, just like Prof and other retirees.
- ❖ He currently works as a cobbler near the university hostels. Although he is younger than Prof (In his late sixties), he looks much older.
- ❖ He is seen as a concerned and caring person who always minded about the welfare of Prof. James' daughter.

EBERE

She is the dead wife of Prof. James Nwoye, who appears to him as a ghost. During her time, she portrays some generosity as she would give her daughters old clothes to Vincent for his children. (Satire - giving old clothes)

She has been a caring wife who encouraged James to care for his lovely skin. Her death is said to have been caused by counterfeit drugs.

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ Like the title suggests, Chimamanda's story "Ghost" mainly dwells on how people face and deal with past ghosts, thus informing their present and future. Professor James Nwoye currently lives in a corrupt part of Nigeria where the medical field provides people with counterfeit drugs.
- ❖ When the story opens, the seventy-one-year-old Professor of mathematics is walking the grounds of the University Bursary, where he is following up on his pension, which he does not get.
- ❖ The many other retirees that he meets are equally frustrated.
- ❖ They associate the failure to get their retirement benefits to the corruption of the education minister or the University's vice- chancellor.
- ❖ Prof James chats for a while with his former driver Vincent who is to survive the harsh times serving as a cobbler around the university hostel. Vincent inquires about Nkiru (Prof. James' daughter who lives in America), and James informs him that she is well. The suffering of the people is highlighted in their appearance and hunger. One of the men gathered under a tree requests Prof to buy them bananas as hunger was killing them. Even as he buys them bananas, Prof ironically observes that what they needed was some moisturiser to soften their skin. After leaving the group, Prof. James meets with Ikenna Okoro; a man thought to be long dead. The encounter shocked Prof as he believed that Ikenna, a former colleague and a renowned activist, had died in the Biafran civil war on July 6 1967. When he initially saw him, he thought of throwing sand at him, which was what people do to ghosts. However, his education and the fact that he was walking on concrete grounds prevent him from doing it. The encounter between the two drives Prof down memory lane. He remembers their days at the University where Ikenna rebelled when asked to put on ties.
- ❖ He further remembers how Ikenna acted as an activist fighting for non-academic staff to have better conditions. a flashback, Prof recalls their evacuation from Nsukka on July 6, 1967, when the civil war began. On that day, Ikenna, who stubbornly insisted on going back to the University to get his

manuscript, was said to have died.

- ❖ Ikenna discloses that he escaped Biafra that day on a Red Cross plane that took him to Sweden. He painfully explains that he saw no need to return after the war since all his family was killed when Orlu was bombed.
- ❖ On his part, Prof James went to America with his wife Eberé but came back in 1970 when the civil war ended. However, they were devastated to find everything in their home destroyed, and their piano was missing. They thus returned to America and only returned to Nsukka in 1976. When Ikenna inquires about their daughter Zik, Prof painfully answers in Igbo that the war took her. He, however, tells him that they got another daughter after the war—the two talk about life during and after the war, with each mentioning their worst moments.
- ❖ Ikenna asks Prof James about his wife Eberé, and James replies that she died three years ago. He tells him that she visits him. Ikenna appears surprised at the disclosure, so James corrects himself and says that Eberé visited America quite often since their daughter works there as a doctor. Knowing that Ikenna is educated just like him, James knows that Ikenna does not believe in ghosts. He, too, never believed in them until his wife visited him three weeks after the burial.
- ❖ The two talk about the situation ever since the war ended and how things have significantly changed. They point out at the rot in the University — where instead of teaching, people are playing politics and instead of reading and working hard; students are buying grades either with money or their bodies.
- ❖ The corruption in the university offices does not escape them. James reports how one Josephat Udeana, a vice chancellor for six years, ran the University like his father's chicken coop leading to the disappearance of money and favouritism in promoting workers. James notes that the current vice-chancellor is not any different, thus why he is yet to get his retirement benefits.
- ❖ He further explains how people are bribing to have their years before retirement added since nobody wants to retire. Ikenna raises the sensitive topic about fake drugs. It triggers painful memories in James since his wife Eberé is thought to have died because of counterfeit drugs. James dismissively says that counterfeit drugs are horrible in efforts to avoid this topic.
- ❖ He parts ways with Ikenna after telling him how he has been 'resting' ever since he retired. He extends an invitation to Ikenna to join him in his home, but Ikenna turn sit down.
- ❖ Once in his home, Prof. James turns on the TV and remembers how a man accused of importing fake drugs had justified this act through a TV interview on NTA. The man had explained that his

drugs do not kill people but only fail to cure their illness. He wonders why news about Ikenna being alive never came up, yet there were various other stories of the 'living ghosts'- people thought to be dead but turned up alive. The tale ends with Prof. James in his study hoping that his daughter Nkiru will call to tell him about their grandson, and if she does not, he will go to bed and await the visit of Ebere.

EPISODIC ANALYSIS OF ISSUES

Episodes

- ✓ Prof James Nwoye's visit to the University Bursary -pg. 57-59
- ✓ Encounter with Ikenna Okoro- pg. 59-65
- ✓ Talk about the civil war on July 6 1967- pg. 60
- ✓ Talk about fake drugs -pg. 65
- ✓ Prof James back home-pg 66-67

Various issues arise from these episodes:

- ❖ The retirees suffer frustration due to being denied their retirement benefits. When the story opens, Prof James is at the University Bursary to ask about his pension, which he has been following up for some time. -"I was there to ask about my pension, yet again." (pg.57) He is, however, frustrated when the clerk tells him the money has not yet come.
- ❖ Prof is not alone. Several other retirees are clustered under the flame tree, filled with similar frustration. Out of frustration, they curse the vice-chancellor who is said to have stolen the money meant for their pension: "His Children will not have children He will die of diarrhoea." (pg.58).
- ❖ We also see that these people suffer from poverty. The encounter between Prof and his former driver, Vincent, points to the poor living condition of the people. Vincent has been forced to work as a cobbler to earn a living. He complains about the failure of the students in the hostels to pay him on time for mending their shoes (pg.58).
- ❖ The description of Vincent's current physical appearance also shows that he has lived through tough times. Although he was younger than Prof, he looked older with only a little hair left pg 58.
- ❖ The plea of one of the men to Prof to buy them bananas shows the suffering that the people have gone through. The man tells Prof, "Hunger is killing us" (pg.58).
- ❖ These people cannot afford decent meals for themselves. Ironically, Prof observes that they need more moisturiser since their faces and arms look like ash (pg. 58).

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- ❖ The civil war also causes the suffering of many. Many people suffer trauma (ghosts of the past) due to the war. Prof James lost his daughter Zik to the war (pg. 61).
 - ❖ The people's suffering is further captured when Prof James wonders why he had not heard about Ikenna not having died. He notes that people evaded the topic of war and memories of what they had gone through during the war. "But we hardly talked about the war When we did, it was with an implacable vagueness, as if what mattered were not that we had crouched in muddy bunkers during air raids after which we buried corpses with bits of pink on their charred skin, not that we had eaten cassava peels and watched our children's bellies swell from malnutrition, but we had survived" pg. 66
 - ❖ Corruption
 - ❖ The explanation why Prof James and other retirees have not received their pension is due to corruption. The men clustered under the flame tree say, "The Education Minister has stolen the pension money... it was the vice-chancellor who had deposited the money in high interest personal accounts." (pg.58).
 - ❖ In the University, corruption is further seen where James tells Ikenna about Josephat Udeana, the great dancer, who, once chosen as vice-chancellor, perpetuated corruption at the University's high office. "Josephat was vice chancellor for six years and ran this University like his father's chicken Money disappeared, and then we would see new cars coop stamped with the names of foreign foundations that did not exist." (pg.64)
 - ❖ He also dictated who would be promoted and who would not. The situation did not change after Josephat left since even the current vice-chancellor is also said to follow the corrupt route faithfully.
 - ❖ corruption is also reported in the Personnel Services Department, where lecturers who do not want to retire bribe, someone, to have some years added to them (pg.64).
 - ❖ Further, corruption is seen among university students. Prof tells Ikenna that instead of reading and working hard to earn fair grades, the university students have bought grades with money or their bodies (pg. 64).
 - ❖ War and its effects
 - ❖ The Biafran Civil war that the story highly relies on has significant negative implications on the people:

Loss of loved ones

- ❖ Pro James Nwoye lost his daughter Zik to the war (pg. 61). Ikenna lost the whole of his family to the war, thus the reason he has lived in Sweden ever since. He tells Prof, "My whole family was in Orlu when they bombed it. Nobody left, so there was no reason for me to come back." (pg. 61)
- ❖ A great genius - Chris Okigbo, also died in the war Nsukka lost a great mind - a star whose poetry moved everybody. His prowess is compared to that of a colossus; thus, a significant loss for the people page 62.
- ❖ Displacement of people and separation of loved ones When the civil war started on July 6, 1967, the people had to evacuate Nsukka in a hurry Prof James and his wife Ebere moved to America while Ikenna moved to Sweden using Red Cross planes (pg. 61).
- ❖ Prof James and his daughter live separately due to the war. His American born daughter Nkiru is a doctor in America while James lives in Nsukka. He feels that the war has denied him an opportunity to teach his grandson the Igbo language and the culture (pg. 67).

Destruction/Loss of property

- ❖ After the civil war ended in 1970, Prof James and Ebere returned to Nsukka from America. They were, however, disappointed to find some of their properties having been destroyed and others missing. "Our books were in a charred pile in the front garden. the lumps of calcified faeces in the bathtub were strewn with pages of my mathematical annals, used as toilet paper, crusted smears blurring the formulas I had studied and taught Our piano -Ebere's piano was gone. our photographs were ripped, their frames broken." (pg. 61)
- ❖ On their way home that day, Prof James and Ebere saw a landscape of ruins, blown-out roofs and houses riddled with holes, injuries, and physical pain (pg. 62).
- ❖ The day Prof James and Ebere drove back to Nsukka, Biafran soldiers stopped them and shoved a wounded soldier into their car, and his blood dripped onto the backseat of their vehicle (pg. 62).

Counterfeit/fake drugs

- ❖ The selling of expired medicine is the current plague in the country Ikenna tells James that he has been reading about fake drugs in the papers (pg. 65).
- ❖ The effect of fake drugs has been felt by James, whose wife Ebere's death is linked to the

counterfeit drug deal. Prof James thinks that Ikenna must have heard of 'How Ebere had lain in the hospital getting weaker and weaker, how her doctor had been puzzled that she was not recovering after her medication how none of us knew until it was too late that the drugs were useless' (pg. 65).

- ❖ In addition, Prof James bitterly remembers how he had watched some broadcast of an interview on NTA. Through the interview, a man accused of importing fake drugs typhoid fever drugs, had defended himself by claiming that his drugs do not kill people but only fail to cure illness (pg. 66).

Dealing with past ghosts

- ❖ **Mwalimu Consultancy Ltd** analyses that Prof James is presented as an individual struggling with ghosts from his past. The illusion of his wife's return like a ghost is one of the mechanisms he adopts to deal with his terrible past. It is an attempt to deal with the absence of Ebere and the devastating effects of war. The freshness of the memories of war is brought out through the many flashbacks used by the writer. One of the flashbacks captures the day the civil war arose (pg. 60). Another shows the return to Prof and Ebere to Nsukka in 1970 (pg. 61-62). By remembering these events, Prof James shows that the memories of the war are still deeply etched in his thoughts.

Essay Questions

- ❖ Society today is filled with many evils that cause suffering to others. Support this from Chimamanda Adichie's 'Ghost'
- ❖ War has devastating effects and thus should be avoided at all cost Using illustrations from 'Ghosts' by Chimamanda Adichie
- ❖ Many individuals struggle with ghosts from their past Show how true this assertion is based on 'Ghosts' by Chimamanda Adichie.

QUESTIONS ON STYLES

- ❖ How effectively has the writer used flashbacks in the story 'Ghosts,
- ❖ The dialogue between Prof James and Ikenna carries the critical messages in the story. Is it true? The higher learning education sector is satirised in the story. Show how this is achieved.

GOD SEES THE TRUTH, BUT WAITS LEO TOLSTOY RUSSIA

About the author:

- ❖ Leo Tolstoy was born in 1928 in Tula Province, Russian. A master of realistic fiction and one of the world's greatest novelists, Tolstoy is best known for his finest novels: *War and Peace* (1865-69) and *Anna Karenina* (1875-77). His shorter works include *Ellie*, *Death of Ivan Ilyich*, *The Living Corpse* and *The Kingdom of God is within You*, in his last three decades, Tolstoy worked as a moral and religious teacher, an embodiment of nature and pure vitality. Though dead now, his soul lives as a living symbol of the search for life's meaning.

Episodes / sub-episodes

- ❖ Aksionov's excursion for a Trade Fair at Nizhny. (p68 - 69).
- ❖ Aksionov's arrest and 26-year imprisonment. (p69-71).
- ❖ The coincidental encounter with the real killer. (p71 - 72).
- ❖ Makar's confession. (p73-74).

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ *God Sees the Truth but Waits* is a parabolic story about Ivan Dmitritch Aksionov, a meek young merchant with two shops in Vladimir, Russia.
- ❖ Ivan bids his family and sets out on a Trade Fair in Nizhny despite his wife's premonition through a dream. Midway through the journey, he meets another merchant, and they put up at the same inn for the night. A rogue thug kills the merchant at night and flees, leaving his blood-stained knife in Aksionov's bag. Aksionov is arrested on suspicion and is sent to 'Siberia' for twenty-six years. On enquiry about his character, Vladimir people say that Ivan is now good after he stopped drinking.
- ❖ However, even his wife now doubts him! Coincidentally, the rogue murderer, Makar Semyonich, is brought to prison for a minor offence, and Aksionov is severely disturbed by his presence that he feels like killing himself.
- ❖ Makar commits another offence in prison, and Aksionov finds him, but the man begs him to keep quiet and not betray him, or he will kill him. Aksionov tells him he had killed him long ago, and he will do as God shall direct.

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- ❖ When the Governor implores Aksionov to tell him the truth about the prison offence, for he trusts only him, Aksionov refuses and tells him he can do what he likes with him as he is in his hands. At night the killer, Makar, confesses and begs Aksionov to forgive him.
 - ❖ As Makar sobs, Aksionov weeps, for he has no desire to leave the prison. When the order for his release comes, Aksionov is already dead.

TITLE OF THE STORY

- ❖ How relevant is the title of the story, God Sees the Truth, but Waits?
- ❖ Why do you think Aksionov refuses to tell the truth about the prison incident?
- ❖ Do you think the Governor is to blame for Aksionov's prolonged imprisonment? Explain.
- ❖ What is the impact of Ivan Aksionov's faith in God on his life?
- ❖ Why is Ivan reticent to go back home?
- ❖ Explore and analyse the existence of the following themes in God Sees the Truth, but Waits.

Mistaken identity.

Crime and Confession

Wrongful conviction and imprisonment.

The concept and context of truth.

Justice delayed is justice denied.

Betrayal and Tolerance

Coincidence

THEMATIC CONCERNS

Wrongful conviction and imprisonment.

- ❖ The values of honesty, truth and justice are tested through this story.
- ❖ Aksionov comes out to question the essence of these values if he suffers in the prison caves of Siberia under wrongful conviction and subsequent incarceration for twenty-six years. (p71).
- ❖ Mistaken identity runs through this story. Ivan Dmitritch is arrested for spending a night with an acquaintance a fellow merchant at the inn who leaves before dawn.
- ❖ This is because the merchant is killed during the night by a thug who hides the knife in Ivan's bags. This is what makes the police officer arrest him on suspicion.(p69, 70).
- ❖ At the story's beginning, Aksionov is characterized by dynamic character and setting. He is lost in liquor but later starts a business and owns two shops. (p68).

- ❖ He leaves and loses his home, family and his freedom. This story sends the message that none of these things matters in the long run. The concept and context of truth.
- ❖ Aksionov learns the hard way that when the chips are down, nothing remains except God at his side, who knows the truth. (p73).
- ❖ Truth depends on context. It is true that the bloody knife is found in his bags and that he had slept close to a fellow merchant, but then it is not true that he kills him.(p69).
- ❖ By the end of the story, Aksionov has an opportunity to be free and return home, but he no longer desires to leave the prison but only hopes for his last hour to come. Ivan is a man who seems to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. He is unlucky, mentally strong, and religious. He is unfortunate because he is sentenced to prison for 26 years for a murder that he did not commit.
- ❖ He is also mentally strong because he can endure many tragic events, such as losing his home and business.

Faith and devotion

- ❖ Finally, he displays a strong religious devotion by growing closer to God during difficult times.
- ❖ However, at the story's end, he only seems to care about his faith and being close to God.
- ❖ Ivan relies on God as he is the only constant in his life. At the end of the story, he has no desire to return home. His only wish is to be with God.
- ❖ At the story's beginning, Ivan and his wife don't have the best relationship as he leaves for Nizhny Fair even after his wife asks him to stay. Later, she doubts his innocence after he is convicted of murder.
- ❖ Faith keeps Ivan going after losing everything, being charged with murder and sent to prison in Siberia. He could have completely given up, but he instead leans on his faith in God.

CHARACTERS

1. Describe the character traits of the following characters.

- ❖ Aksionov
- ❖ Makar
- ❖ The Governor
- ❖ Focusing on their prominent character traits, compare and contrast the protagonist, Ivan Aksionov, and the Makar.

Citing evidence from the text, describe the character traits of the following characters.

- ❖ Aksionov's wife

Style and Language use

- ❖ How is symbolism employed in Leo Tolstoy's God Sees the Truth, but Waits?
- ❖ Examine the use of irony and paradox God Sees the Truth, but Waits.
- ❖ What does Siberia represent in this story?

Essay question

- ❖ The average human attribute is evil Discuss this assertion using illustrations from Leo Tolstoy's God Sees the Truth, but Waits, (20 marks),

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH RERN'YNGAMIJE RWANDA AND NAMIBIA

About the Author Rem'y Ngarnije.

- ❖ Reni'y Ngamiye is a writer and a photographer who is of Namibian origin but was born in Rwanda. He founded an organization that supports literary works and is also a chief editor of the first Namibian literary magazine- 'Doek'. His story 'Neighbourhood Watch' is a contemporary story that was recently published in the Johannesburg Review of Books. Street life — Crime and violence in the streets
- ❖ The secret struggles/suffering Harsh living conditions.
- ❖ Inequalities / Class difference —
- ❖ The rich vs poor
- ❖ Desperation — suffered by those living in the streets.
- ❖ Waste disposal — what is the ideal way to dispose of waste?

TITLE

'The Neighbourhood watch'

- ❖ The title is a phrase used to refer to an organised group that engages in crime and vandalism prevention in a particular neighbourhood. While deviating from the ideal image of a neighbourhood watch that aims at reducing crime, Rem'y Ngamiye ironically creates a haphazard group of five homeless people who scavenge and roam around different neighbourhoods/suburbs in Windhoek. The crew engages in minor criminal activities instead of working to curb crime in the neighbourhoods.

CHARACTERS

Elias

- ❖ He is the oldest member of the Neighbourhood watch group and thus their leader. He mainly helps get food for the group by working with Lazarus and Omagana.
- ❖ Elias has had a tough past as he experienced the South African insurgency; thus is strong and had

suffered some loneliness in his first years in the streets.

- ❖ Memories of the war still haunt him, as often in his slumber.

LAZARUS

- ❖ He is Elias's Lieutenant.
- ❖ He is the eyes of the group and the source of protection, as his presence in any fight is believed to change the bookies' odds drastically.
- ❖ He is an ex-convict though he does not like disclosing this information.

OMAGANO

- ❖ She is the only female member of the group.
- ❖ She works as a member of the food crew (Elias, Lazarus, omagana) that goes out looking for food for the group.

SILAS

- ❖ He is a member of the group who likes risks. He steals from people.
- ❖ Although Elias constantly warns him, he does not stop the stealing habit.

MARTIN

- ❖ He is the newest and youngest member of the group.
- ❖ He mainly works with Silas to look for essentials such as discarded blankets, mattresses, useable shoes, broken crates, trolleys and toothpaste tubes.
- ❖ He faithfully follows Silas around, trying to learn a few tricks from him.

OLD MRS BEZUIDENHOUT

- ❖ She is an old generous and kind lady who lives in the wealthy neighbourhood of Eros.
- ❖ She is considered as one of the pillars of the Neighbourhood Watch as she gives different gifts such as canned food, old clothes or blankets, old books and rosaries that they use to pray at night.

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ Set in the suburbs of Windhoek, Namibia, 'The Neighbourhood Watch' is a modern story of a street group made up of
- ❖ Elias Lazarus, Silas, Omagano and Martin. The story explores the daily life of this group, their struggles, crimes and desperation to survive in the harsh conditions that street life presents.
- ❖ The story opens in the morning, where Elias wakes up the family members to prepare for the day's activity. The harsh living conditions in the streets are evident from the lack of breakfast and the single can of water that the group shares to clean their faces. Their "home" - below the bridge- which the author sarcastically calls precious real estate is their territory that is marked and safely guarded.
- ❖ The group sets out early to the CBD, where the food crew (Elias, Lazarus and Omagano) go looking for food while the valuable crew (Silas and Martin) look for other essentials. They reunite later, and the food crew produces half a loaf of brown bread, some salt mashed potatoes, soft grapes and some water which the group shares for lunch. The valuable crew has brought a stack of newspapers, plastic piping and two battered, floppy poor boy caps, which Elias and Lazarus pick.
- ❖ Elias orders the group to rest as they would be heading to Auasblick that night. Ausiblick is one of the nice suburbs as the bins there provide some bounty harvest as the people there still know how to throw things away. This is unlike Olympia and Suiderh of, which are already crowded.
- ❖ The writer compares these neighbourhoods to old neighbourhoods that the crew used to scavenge. Through a flashback, the past life of Elias and Lazarus is brought out. In their earlier days, the two were not choosy on areas to frequent. They visited the poor neighbourhoods such as Katutura, Hakahana, Goreangab, Wanaheda and Okuryangava on Tuesdays and Fridays. While scavenging these neighbourhoods, the two found a baby, thus deciding to prepare a timetable and stop going to poor people's places.
- ❖ Another flashback takes us to the way the crew used to visit Khomasdal on Wednesdays. On one Friday's visit to Khomasdal, Amos, a former crew member with Elias and Lazarus, gets killed. He fails to control his tongue and guts after getting drunk thus is stabbed by someone he insults.
- ❖ Elias and Lazarus escape the scene of death just like everybody else for fear of being questioned and harassed by police. However, they are caught and are badly beaten and injured before they are

set free. They thus decide never to return to Khomasdal.

- ❖ The crew spends their Friday and Saturday at the Headquarters. They consider it safe since those are the days that police patrols drive around looking for mischief. Silas, however, chooses to roam around, thus leaving the other four crew members talking about people who idle around waiting to get some specific jobs that are rarely forthcoming. Martin talks of the hope of getting a job for these people in the future. This raises the debate that leads to the crew's slogan that there is only today and that every day is today.
- ❖ Sunday is the best day for the crew since they visit the affluent suburbs such as Avis, Klein, Windhoek and Eros. These suburbs are associated with the rich and are close to the crew's home — Headquarters. One of the good things about Eros is the generous old Mrs Bezuidenhout who waits for the crew and gives them gifts such as canned food, books and old clothes.
- ❖ The story comes to an end with the crew worried of the day that Mrs Bezuidenhout will no longer be around to give those gifts, yet they will still want to take and have something to help them survive the harsh street life.

EPISODIC ANALYSIS OF ISSUES

Episodes

- ❖ At the headquarters- pg 75-78
- ❖ The past; poor suburbs -pg 78-80
- ❖ Death of Amos-pg. 80-81
- ❖ The wealthy suburbs —pg. 82-83

Various issues arise from these episodes:

- ❖ Street life And Its Challenges
- ❖ Living in the streets is shown to have several challenges:

Crime and violence

- ❖ The neighbourhood watch must safely hide their valuable items at the headquarters to prevent theft. hidden stash is considered safe since they are a feared group — they have a fierce reputation (pg. 76).
- ❖ Lazarus is considered the Lieutenant of the group and one of its pillars due to his violence (pg. 83) shows that life in the streets involves some violent acts. Violence is seen to be a necessary survival skill in the street.
- ❖ The death of Amos after knife stabs also shows the level of violence faced in the streets 'The knife flashed quickly In, out, in, out and then slashed across..... Amos fell.' (pg. 80-81).
- ❖ Silas, one of the crew members, engages in some crime. He is said to have had a habit of discovering things that have had previous owners. 'Silas steals' (pg. 77). If he gets caught while stealing, he might be beaten or arrested.

SECRET STRUGGLES

- ❖ The Neighbourhood Watch has to struggle to ensure that the valuables are safely hidden to prevent theft. After splashing water on their faces, the empty can is stashed away with other valuables in a hook under the concrete abutment of the bridge (pg. 75-76).
- ❖ They also have to protect their territory — The bridge underside precious real estate. To achieve this, the abbreviations NW are sprayed onto the bridge's columns which communicate that it is marked territory (pg. 76).
- ❖ The group must struggle to camouflage and appear like any ordinary person while roaming the streets to evade police. They have to look presentable, thus why Omagano struggles to straighten her kinky hair using her fingers. They also have to wear their best clothes. One of their greatest challenges is how to disguise their foul smell. The writer notes, "But smelling bad is something they try to avoid as much as possible since a smelly man is despised everywhere." (Pg. 76).

Struggle to get food

- ❖ The crew relies on waste food and leftovers to survive. It is said that 'Elias knows most city hotel's kitchen staff who leave the group some decaying produce or some leftovers when they feel kind from the previous night' (pg 76).

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- ❖ The struggle to get food forces them to use dubious means such as having Omagano satisfy the sexual needs of guards who deny them access to bins that might contain high yields (pg. 77).
 - ❖ The lunch that the group shares show that getting enough food for a meal is a real struggle for them 'The food crew shares the lunch: Half a loaf of brown bread, some salty mashed potatoes, soft grapes and some water' (pg.78).
 - ❖ The group heavily relies on Mrs Bezuidenhout's generosity as she gives them canned food such as beans and peas, fruits and other valuable items (pg. 83).

Struggle with poor health conditions

- ❖ Elias has a racking cough that worsens each day. It is so severe that, 'Sometimes there is blood in the gunk from his chest, but he waves everyone's concerns away'(pg. 76).

Inequalities/Class Difference

- ❖ By splitting the city of Windhoek geographically into different neighbourhoods, Ngamiye is able to use place as a marker of inequalities and class differences that exist among the people.
- ❖ The content of rubbish bins in the different neighbourhoods shows the differences between the rich and the poor. The first suburb to be visited by the crew is Auasblick. It is described as a nice place since the people there still know how to throw away things The Neighbourhood Watch is assured Of scoring good things such as 'broken toasters, blenders, kettles water bottles, Teflon pots or pans scrubbed raw screen television cardboard boxes, and maybe some food' (pg.78) This shows that the people who live here are well up and live comfortable lives.
- ❖ The suburbs of the poor such as Katutura, Hakahana, Goreangab, Wanaheda and Okuryangava, are also described.
- ❖ Using the flashback of the crew's Tuesday and 'Thursday visits to these poor suburbs, Ngaminje brings out the living conditions of the poor based on the content of their bins. One day, Elias and Lazarus found a baby wrapped in some newspapers thrown into a big bin. This encounter made them smart and move away from poor people. They decided that on Tuesday and Thursday nights, they would stop going to poor people's places because poor people had nothing left to throw away but themselves (pg. 80)
- ❖ Khomasdal is closely related to the poor people's suburbs. It is, however, a drinking den. The neighbourhood watch never enters Khomasdal since it is crowded with other starving, roving

cliques (pg. 80). It is also in the same neighbourhood where Amos was killed.

- ❖ These lowly suburbs are contrasted to the suburbs of the wealthy such as Avis, Klein, Windhoek and Eros. Avis has complex apartments that bring a fresh crop of bins to the interlocked pavements. although made up of rich people,
- ❖ Klein Windhoek portrays some meanness as they only put up their bins at the crack of dawn to dissuade the dustbin divers from perambulating through their streets (pg. 83). Eros is the best suburb for The Neighbourhood Watch due to the presence of Mrs Bezuidenhout, who waits for the crew and gives them some gifts. This shows the wealthy nature of the old lady, the people living in this neighbourhood, and Mrs Bezuidenhout's generosity.

Desperation

- ❖ Life in the streets is filled with moments of desperation. When Elias and Lazarus met, they would desperately flick through every bin they could find in every suburb they could reach. As the writer tells us, they had no room to be choosy as the writer tells us, 'They were indiscriminate and desperate and always hungry.' (pg.78)
- ❖ Elias shares these experiences with the other crew members and tells them, "When we started when you have to we weren't picky. We had to survive, you don't get to choose what you have to do." (pg.79).
- ❖ We further see that the crew's desperation to get food and survive makes them use any possible means. Omagano is a precious survival tool for the group in such desperate times. This especially happens where the bins in some areas are fenced off and guarded by guards who threaten to beat the crew if they trespass. The guards have to be bribed to let the crew scavenge in these bins. When the crew has money, Elias pays the guards.
- ❖ However, when the crew has no money and needs to get food, Omagano is their only way out. She goes behind a dumpster with a guard and does what needs to be done (pg. 77).

Waste disposal

- ❖ Ngamije shows the actual situation around waste disposal in many urban neighbourhoods. The Neighbourhood Watch crew solely depends on the disposed waste for their survival. By describing the kind of waste found in different neighbourhoods, the writer communicates the need to ensure that waste is appropriately disposed off. The crew's appreciation of high-end suburbs such as Eros,

Windhoek, and Eros emphasises the need to recycle and separate different waste products. These suburbs have people who recycle. Different bins containing different wastes are also seen- 'The paper cardboard, plastic bottles, tins, cans and aluminium foil are sorted in separate plastic bags. Some people even wash the trash before they throw it away. Everything else that is of no use goes in the big green bins' (pg. 82).

- ❖ This serves as an advantage to the crew as it saves time and prevents disappointment. The writer subtly advocates for waste separation and recycling to ensure proper waste management. Other lowly suburbs such as Katutura, Hakakana, Goreangab, Wanaheda and Okuryangava display poor waste disposal where all sorts of waste are put in the same bin. The writer communicates the inappropriateness of this waste disposal approach through the grave voice adopted by Elias as he shares their past experiences with the crew.
- ❖ "Usually in a bin you have to be ready to find shit Old food, used condoms, women things with blood on them, broken things." (pg.79)
- ❖ This waste disposal method is not just disgusting, but it makes proper waste management difficult and ultimately impossible. Similar waste disposal methods are seen in Ausblick, where everything — including electronic gadgets such as broken toasters, blenders and kettles- is disposed of together with water bottles, cardboard boxes, and even food wastes.

QUESTIONS

- ❖ Proper waste disposal makes it easy for waste to be appropriately managed. Using illustrations from Rem'y Ngamije's "The Neighbourhood Watch" show how this message is communicated.
- ❖ Street life is not for the faint-hearted Show the truthfulness of this statement based on the story "The Neighbourhood Watch." In every society, some inequalities exist that affect people's way of life. Using illustrations from Rem'y Ngamije's "The Neighbourhood Watch" support this assertion.

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DECEMBER FILEMON LIYAMBO - NAMIBIA

About the author:

- ❖ Filemon Liyambo is a Namibian writer and former newspaper columnist for the Namibian Sun Newspaper. He has also contributed social commentary articles for the New Era Newspaper. A qualified geologist, he is now an educator. His work was included in Erotic Africa, an anthology of short stories published by Brittle Paper in December 2018. He is currently working on a novel.

Episodes / sub-episodes

- ❖ September's arrival from the U.K. (p84 — 86).
- ❖ December's psychiatric condition. (p86 - 88).
- ❖ Ezekiel Shikongo's dreams and taboos. (p85 - 90).

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ December is a story about a girl named December, unconventionally, by her father, Silas Shikongo. The story is set in a town in Namibia.
- ❖ December has a younger brother named September. According to their grandfather, Ezekiel, there are traces of idiotism in September, his grandson, for he takes after his youngest brother, Josef.
- ❖ December nurses September when he is young, but there is a mishap in which she injures the boy accidentally with hoe, and the boy bleeds. The old man then forbids her to eat chicken, saying that is how things are. September suspects that his grandfather is hiding something because he cannot explain the reason clearly. However, the two siblings are academic geniuses.
- ❖ Suddenly, just before joining a Teachers Training College, December develops a psychiatric condition and her grandfather, Ezekiel, insists that she is bewitched and there are dark forces behind it. He takes her to the hospital and dumps her there.
- ❖ September, who now studies in the U.K., visits his sister at the hospital, but the nurse intercepts him for being late. However, Tshuveni, a supervisor, and a familiar face appears and begins talking with him. This light chat makes the nurse calm, and the guards are sent away to allow him some time. The nurse softens when she learns that September is December's brother who studies abroad.
- ❖ September finds his sister in a horrible condition, but they have a warm moment, and he hands her the gifts: a jersey, a pen and a book full of puzzles, a t-shirt, and yummy chips from KFC.

-
- ❖ Meanwhile, Tatekulu, their grandfather Ezekiel, has dreamed of a pond where leopards drink and Josef is seated on the edge, eating. A search party is sent, and Josef is found at the exact place in Ezekiel's dream.
 - ❖ The next day, September buries his grandfather, with his secret, next to his father in the village graveyard.

Questions for reflection on 'Title' of the story and themes

- ❖ How relevant is the title of the story, December?
- ❖ Does the Naming convention of Silas Shikongo affect his children?
- ❖ Why do you think Ezekiel refuses to tell why he forbids his granddaughter to eat chicken?
- ❖ Do you think Josef gets lost? Explain.
- ❖ What does the Union jack symbolize in the story, December?
- ❖ Explore and analyze the following themes in December.

Mental illness and child neglect

Superstitious beliefs and taboos

Healthy living, eating

Hope/optimism

THEMATIC CONCERNS

Consequences of superstition on mental illness

- ❖ December, the story's title, is also the central character's name. The name is given to her by her father against his own father's wishes, who calls it idiotism. Conventional or not, this naming creates confusion and distortion of facts simultaneously. (p85- 86).
- ❖ The story itself is mixed with a patched-up plot which renders the storyline unclear. The plot is not linear. Like in most Namibian, there was indifference towards those who didn't reside there. Sticking out was a serious crime: (p84-90).
- ❖ When Ezekiel Shikongo faces death and illness, anxiety, fear, and despair creep in, engendering adherence to delusions that have no logical or scientific explanation and lead to superstitious behaviours caused by a false notion of the causes. (p84 - 90).
- ❖ It is rooted in human ignorance and significantly affects people's culture and health, prevents them from beginning restoration, and harms individuals and society. The mundane illogical beliefs derived from ignorance cannot be proven objectively and scientifically. Ezekiel forbids December

to eat chicken due to the mishap. (p85 89).

- ❖ The extended family of Ezekiel grapples with hereditary ill patients (Josef and December), and the old man blames their mental illness on superstitious thoughts such as "evil eye" or "dark forces."
- ❖ This pandemonium is created by Silas, December's father, to show his divergent opinion and disbelief in his father's taboos. (p85).
- ❖ Their disagreement, therefore, gets complicated when December is born in September and September in July. Then when September returns from abroad, his grandfather dies in October.
- ❖ Ezekiel refers to the naming as 'idiotism', and indeed his younger brother Josef exhibits traces of the problem when he starts to lose track of time in his teens; days of the week are a blur to him. The fact that Ezekiel's superstitious belief could be premised on an archaic generational and cultural illusion that other forces cause problems. (p86).
- ❖ Josef eventually loses himself. He is lost for a month. In his dreams, Ezekiel tells where exactly to find him but does not say what he is eating until he exits the life stage. Ezekiel's death signifies the end of the old traditions and the beginning of civilization. (p89).
- ❖ When September breaks the news to his grandfather that he will study abroad two and a half years earlier, Ezekiel is happy. September had cried. "My sister..." (p88).
- ❖ The old man reassured him. "I will take care of her." "She's been at the hospital for six months. (p88).
- ❖ Superstition makes him believe that mental illness is caused by other forces not normal or conventional in nature. He takes her to a traditional healer, and she comes back looking skeletal as if the healer had tried starving out the voices in her head. (p88).
- ❖ Ezekiel represents intensely superstitious African people who turn to indigenous treatments such as charms and witchdoctors to treat their illnesses. Modern technologies have not been able to reduce their superstitious tendencies. (p88)
- ❖ "There is no brother listed in her file," the nurse said. "Only a grandfather. "This is child neglect. (p88).
- ❖ Superstitious thinking becomes harmful when it enters the health domain, affects people's well-being, and becomes part of the family's health beliefs. The values that society believes affect the quality of life and treatment choice during illness. Ezekiel's beliefs affect all family members. (p84 - 90).

Hope/optimism

- ❖ Their life of hope begins when September arrives at the hospital from the U.K. December, who is at the hospital probably being discharged to start her life free of her grandfather's superstitious interference. (p87).
- ❖ Remember when September comes from Europe, he brings December a T-shirt with an imprint of the Union Jack, representing modernity or a form of enlightenment.
- ❖ But still, this is confusion on ideologies: between

colonialism and civilization.

- ❖ The T-shirt is precisely the same as the one December had ripped up all those years before to stem September's bleeding. This implies that her ordinary life is restored by her brother's hope and concern for her well-being. (p89).
- ❖ The two reminisce their puberty days when September got himself a puppy named Kali to keep off boys who pursued December when she was younger. Tshuuveni enquires whether September is bringing home an oshitenya from overseas, but he says he still hasn't found the right girl. (p87).
- ❖ Professional medical practice should be relied on to guarantee the quality of life, control and treatment of diseases, and complications is not a secret to anyone.
- ❖ The medical fraternity should fight these superstitious thoughts to lower their adverse consequences. will bring hope. Hope is also symbolized when it rains after Ezekiel Shikongo's burial. Then Josef is also found. (p89, 90).

CHARACTERS

- ❖ Citing evidence from the text, describe the character traits of the following characters.
- ❖ December
- ❖ September
- ❖ Ezekiel Shikongo
- ❖ Silas Shikongo
- ❖ Style and Language use

What does the coming of September from Europe and the dying of Ezekiel in October symbolize?

How is sarcasm employed in Filemon Liyambo's December?

Examine the use of irony and paradox December.

- ❖ Boyi
- ❖ Gloria Mwaninga- Kenya
- ❖ Gloria Mwaninga is a fictional writer from Kenya. Her story 'Boyi' captures the occurrences of the 2005 land war in Mt. Elgon.

Points to guide interpretation

- ❖ Land war and its effects:
 - ❖ Demand for land protection fee
 - ❖ Recruitment of young men into the militia
 - ❖ Murder/ killing of people- consider how the militia kills people while the government forces the killing of militia members.
 - ❖ People are forced to flee their homes/ Displacement of people
 - ❖ Betrayal
 - ❖ The pain and suffering that the people face due to war and the rise of the militia.
 - ❖ Traditions Title
-
- ❖ The title of the story- 'Boyi' is borrowed from the main character's name, who is the brother to the narrator. Boyi is recruited into a militia group and ends up dead when the Armed Forces troops come to flush out members of the militia.

CHARACTERS

BOYI

- ❖ He is the brother of the narrator- A fifteen-year-old boy recruited into a militia group when his parents are unable to pay the land protection fee and the betray fee that the leader of the militia demands.
- ❖ He grows and rises in rank to become the right-hand man of Matwa Kei, the militia's leader.
- ❖ He is presented as a jovial, sociable, and outgoing person who always engaged in games and
- ❖ He is reportedly killed by Armed Forces troops sent by the government to flush out the militia to end the war.

THE NARRATOR

- ❖ Boyi's sister, through whom the story is told, is keen and observant as she can note the things that happen in her family and even outside the family and report them in the story. She had a close relationship with Boyi thus is greatly affected by his recruitment to the militia and devastated once she learns of his death.
- ❖ She senses Boyi's death when the huge Nandi flame tree at the front of their house falls.

BABA

- ❖ He is the father to Boyi and the narrator. He aided the government representative, who gave land to strangers by giving him a panga and makonge ropes, thus being considered a traitor by the militia.
- ❖ He hands over his fifteen-year-old son- Boyi, to the militia group leader when he is unable to raise the 40,000 fees demanded from him.

Mama

- ❖ she is the mother to Boyi and the narrator, and the wife to Baba. She is deeply affected when Boni is handed over to the militia by Baba.
- ❖ she remains hopeful that Boyi will escape the militia and come back home.

Matwa Kei

- ❖ He is the leader of the militia group. He is presented as a ruthless, vengeful and brutal person who demands that Baba should pay 10,000 land protection tax and 30,000 betrayal tax failure to which the militia would show Baba smoke without fire.

Chesober

- ❖ He is Baba's friend who taught at Chepkurkur Primary School.
- ❖ He delivers news that the militia had a long list of people who had aided the government exercise to divide the people's land to strangers.

Chesaina

- ❖ He is an old friend of Baba who works as a watchman in a grain depot, far away in Chwele market. He brings news to Baba,s family that Boyi was now a marked mansince he was Matwa Kei's, right-hand man.

Simoni

- ❖ He delivers a copy of the Nation newspaper, which contains news about Boyi's death.

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ **Mwalimu Consultancy Ltd** analyses **that** Gloria Mwaninga's story, 'Boyi', is a contemporary story about forming a militia group to revolt against land allocation to strangers. The story heavily alludes to the Mt. Elgon land war in Kenya that began in 2005. The Sabaot Land Defence Force militia group was formed to protect the land of the Sabaots from being invaded by strangers. Still, the militia ended up causing harm and suffering to its people. Real group was led by Wycliffe Matakwei hence the name of the militia leader in the story- Matwa Kei.
- ❖ Told in the first-person narration voice, the story 'Boyi' opens with the narrator remembering how their Baba pushed Boyi to the Matwa Kei when the militia leader came to demand 40,000 land protection tax and betrayal tax which he could not raise.
- ❖ Matwa Kei is the leader of a militia group formed to protect the people's land when the government decides to divide the peoples' land and give some of it to strangers. Baba, the writer's father, is considered a traitor by the militia since he lends the government's surveyor a panga and makonge ropes.
- ❖ News breaks out that the militia has begun attacking government representatives. The narrator's family lives in fear of this attack to the extent that they block the sitting-room door with sacks of maize and beans. The narrator and Boyi laugh about it as they feel that the militia would not harm them. However, the narrator recalls how the militia came to their home and demanded money.

Baba offers to give them everything he owns; his savings, a hunting gun, Sony transistor radio and even promises to sell his bull to save his family. However, the militia group declines, forcing Baba to hand over his son, Boyi, to the militia.

- ❖ After Boyi is taken away, Mama starts behaving like a mad person. She, however, lives in the hope that Boyi would return by escaping from the militia. The narrator recalls how at first, neighbours would visit them often to console them, but later they stopped coming.
- ❖ Later, Saulo visits the family to inform them the government had launched "Operation okoa Maisha" and had dispatched a troop of two hundred armed forces men to flush out the militia. next day, Baba and his cousin Kimutai dig a shallow grave at the back of the house to bury a banana stem wrapped in a green cotton sheet believing that his son is dead. Mama refuses to participate in escorting Boyi's spirit away.
- ❖ Seasons passed as the brutality of the militia rose. They would cut up people and throw the bloodied bodies in the rivers, pit latrines, and public wells. They would forcibly recruit boys as young as ten years and even started taking girls to go and cook for them. Cases of rape also increased. As a result, people lived in fear making many of them run away to Bungoma and Uganda.
- ❖ After the army troops arrive, Chesaina, an old friend of delivers news that Boyi had become a marked man since he was Matwa Kei's, right-hand man. news further devastates Mama and the narrator, who spends the night in Boyi's bed.
- ❖ The following day, Simon visits the narrator's house. He delivers the Nation Newspaper, which bore the news "Ragtag militia leader killed by the Army forces" Itnow dawns on the narrator that her brother is no more.
- ❖ She rushes to the parents' bedroom and hands over the newspaper to Baba to read. Upon reading the news, Baba crumples to the floor while Mama's laughter is heard piercing the morning dawn. Surprisingly, even after Simoni's description of how Boyi was thrown out of an aircraft by Sah-gent, Mama does not weep but speaks Boyi's name softly as she sits on his bed while Boyi's sister lets tear roll down her face. As the story ends, the narrator explains how she sensed Boyi's death when the Nandi flame tree at the front of their house fell.

Styles and Plot related questions

- ❖ How has the narrator used flashbacks in the story?
- ❖ Briefly describe Mama's behaviour after:
- ❖ Boyi is handed over to Matwa Kei
- ❖ Baba and his cousin Kimutai dig a grave to bury a banana stem
- ❖ Chesaina's news that Boyi was a marked man
- ❖ News about Boyi's death.
- ❖ What is the implication of the dream used in the story?
- ❖ The narrator gives a detailed description of what happens when the long rains fall (pg 94).
Explain how symbolic the description is.
- ❖ Explain the use of irony in the story.

EPISODIC ANALYSIS OF ISSUES

Episodes

- ❖ The demand of the Militia- pg 91-92 II. Life after Boyi left- pg 92 93 III. Operation Okoa Maisha pg 93-96
- ❖ IV. Boyi's death pg 96- 97 Thematic Concerns

Traditions

- ❖ Belief in Djinnis- The community in the story believes in the presence of powerful evil spirits known as Djinni. This is seen when Mama talks to the visitors who frequent their home once Boyi is taken away. She tells them, 'How Boyi saved her marriage by confirming that Djinnis did not tie up her womb.' Pg 93.
- ❖ The people also practice the ritual of burying a banana stem to send death away where a person disappears and their bodies are not found. The narrator reports how Baba and his cousin Kimutai dug a shallow grave and buried a banana stem wrapped in a green cotton sheet. The father muttered, "Death, take this body. .. Take it, and do not bother my home with your visits again." Pg. 93 This ritual is performed after Saulo's story that the government has launched Operation Okoa Maisha, where armed Forces troops are sent to flush out militia members. It shows the fear of the people that the operation will lead to more deaths.
- ❖ The people are also seen to hold on to some superstitions. The falling of the huge Nandi flame

signifies something significant was bound to happen. The narrator sees this as a bad omen while the mother thinks it means the end of evils for her family 'I knew it was a bad omen even though Mama came out of her room jubilantly declared that the evil which was to come to our house had been struck down and swallowed by the Nandi flame, pg 96.

Land War And Its Effect

- ❖ The story is rooted in a revolt resulting from the government dividing land and giving it to strangers. The revolt leads to forming a militia group to counter-attack the governments' decision and fight those who collaborate with the government.

The militia has various effects:

- ❖ They demanded the land protection tax. They had chopped off the heads of the families if one did not give them money (pg.92).
- ❖ The recruitment of young men to the militia. Boyi is recruited by force to the militia because Baba has given him out since he cannot afford to pay the money demanded: "Hold on to the boy until I find you forty thousand land protection tax, and then I will have him back" (pg. 91).
- ❖ So many other young men had been recruited into the militia. Mama says, "Had his ears not caught stones of neighbour's son recruited by the militia?" (pg.92). The militia goes from house to house, forcefully recruiting boys as young as ten years page 95.
- ❖ People living in fear- The villages of Kopsiro, Savomet, Chepkyuk all live in fear ..athick yellow fog of fear over them." (pg. 95)

People fail to work

- ❖ Farmers did not clear their shambas for the second planting of the maize crop because the militia stole young crops from the fields and goats from their pens (pg. 95).
- ❖ The narrator's friend, Chemutai, said that the narrator's breast grew too fast because she had spent too much time outside instead of working chap chap
- ❖ like a normal musaa tree girl (pg.95)

Murder/brutal killings

- ❖ The militia cut up people and threw their bloodied bodies in rivers, pits, latrines, and public wells (pg. 92). The people say that they even cut off their necks.
- ❖ The narrator overhears Baba being told that those recruited have to go back home and kill a close relative so that their hearts are strong to kill others (pg. 95) Boyi is killed for being part of the militia (pg. 96-97).
- ❖ Displacement of people from their land and homes
- ❖ "People flee from their homes since there is a mass exodus to Bungoma and Uganda' page 95

Lack of schooling

- ❖ The narrator says nobody went to school anymore because of the war. She spends her days under the Nandi flame tree with half-closed eyes (pg. 95)

Suffering

- ❖ The writer points out clearly how society goes through suffering as a result of the war:
- ❖ Mama experiences emotional suffering when Baba gives out Boyi to the militia to be recruited since the family could not afford the forty thousand land protection fee. The writer says that madness had entered
- ❖ Mama's eyes the day baba pushed Boyi to Mativa Kei. She tore off her kitenge and started shouting at Baba, telling him that he was sick in the head if he thought Boyi would return (pg. 91).
- ❖ Mama did not eat her food and starved in the days that followed, muttering to herself. Her ugali would remain untouched until a gusty brown film formed. The narrator had to throw it away to the chicken coop. She also continued engaging herself in monologues (pg. 94).
- ❖ The narrator also experiences pain and suffering. She felt queasy once Baba informed them that the militia would have killed them for not giving out the forty thousand land protection tax. The narrator felt as if someone had pulled her insides out through her nostrils.' (pg. 92).
- ❖ When they were informed of Boyi's death, she cried bitterly. She let the tears roll down her face and soak her blue silk blouse and purple boob top (pg. 97)
- ❖ Baba suffers when forced to hand over his son Boyi to the militia. He experiences agony when Mama questions him since he knew very well if he didn't, he risked his family being killed by the militia. 'He sat there and held his rage firmly with his hands. He pulled his lips to a narrow thread

like a line drawn on his dark face by a ruler.' (pg. 92)

- ❖ When they are informed that Boyi is a marked man, Baba goes through some emotional torture. For the first time, the narrator saw her father crying "That day I saw Baba's tears..." (pg. 96)
- ❖ The community undergoes suffering because of the war as some of the people are brutally murdered the militia cut the people and threw their bloodied bodies in rivers, pit latrines and public wells' (pg. 96).
- ❖ Some of the militia are said to kill close relatives so that their hearts are strong to kill others. The militia forgets its initial objective of protecting the land. Instead, "Now they even cut off our necks" (pg. 95)
- ❖ The militia also rapes their blood relatives who give birth to babies (pg.95)

Betrayal

- ❖ The writer points out how some people betray others in society. Baba betrays his community by assisting the government representative with a panga and makonge ropes when the government divides the people's land and gives it to some strangers (pg. 92).
- ❖ The militia betrays the community it was meant to fight for by meting out evil on the people whose land they are fighting. The narrator overhears their neighbour Koros telling her father
- ❖ "They forgot that they were to protect our land from being given to those lazy strangers. Now they even cut off our necks" (pg. 95)
- ❖ The government betrays its people by dividing their land and giving it to strangers leading to the formation of the militia.

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Questions

- ❖ War leads to suffering. Using illustrations from the story show the validity of this statement.
- ❖ How effectively is Imagery used in the story?
- ❖ Describe the role of Baba in the Story;

CHEQUE MATE KEVINBALDEOSINGH - TRINIDAD

About the author:

- ❖ Kevin Baldeosingh was born in 1963 in the Caribbean Island of Trinidad. He is a newspaper columnist, author, and Humanist involved in many controversial social issues. He has worked with the Trinidad Express, Newsday and the Trinidad Guardian. He worked for 25 years in the field of journalism.

Episodes /sub-episodes

- ❖ At the bank, with the teller.
- ❖ Back to her apartment.
- ❖ At the company office, with Randall.

SYNOPSIS

- ❖ Cheque Mate is a story about Sukiya (Ms Chansing), a poor damsel from Penal, the Caribbean island of Trinidad, and her boss, Randall A Credo, of the Amerindian tribe. She is on the platinum credit cards queue and intends to deposit thirty million dollars (five million U.S. dollars), but there is a mistake that throws her into panic and dilemma.
- ❖ Sukiya is an executive corporate secretary recently promoted, and her salary raised tenfold. Fifty thousand dollars go into her savings account each month-end, but the money does not show her actual income. She avoids the bank manager, for she has accumulated more and more, and her deposits are pretty frequent and high. Mr Randall makes these five million cheque payments for fear of cleaning by offshore accounts hacker's syndicate. The teller advises her to open a U.S. savings account and return the following day.
- ❖ As she drives her posh car back to her apartment, she is Obsessed with the five million dollars but pleased and relieved that she has successfully handled an awkward situation. She has to check her private records before seeing her boss, Randall. She weighs all possibilities of legal investigations, discovery and embarrassment but finally convinces and assures herself there is no cause for worry. She romanticizes what she could do with such vast sums of money, especially her residential abode.

-
- ❖ Randall has her as a corporate secretary who draws up contracts, studies conveyances and writes legal opinions. However, her critical role, for which she is handsomely paid, is to create loopholes in such documents, including the sale of the methanol company to the Chinese government. Randall is also a major campaign contributor. Thriving in such an environment, the poor girl suddenly turned prosperous, is delighted that she has accumulated a lot.
 - ❖ After confirming that the sums and dates on the cheques are correct, she goes to see Randall for an explanation. Then the truth about the trick unfolds: the money is a fee for keeping her mouth shut on the Chinese methanol deal which Sukiya undervalues the shares by 50 percent. At a time when technology can be used to conceal fraudulent secrets in crypto graphical codes, it now dawns on Randall that it can also be used to reveal them. It is a fraud Sukiya has to deal with herself or together with her cheque mate, Randall, thanks to her cyberspace technology skills.

Title of the story

- ❖ How relevant is the title of the story, Cheque Mate
- ❖ Who are the cheque mates in the story?
- ❖ Why are cheques preferred as their payment modes?
- ❖ How do the cheque mates exploit contracts' complexity and detailed nature to commit fraud?
- ❖ Explore and analyse the existence of the following themes:
 - Corruption / Fraud/ bribery
 - Deceit and Betrayal
 - Loyalty cheques Thematic

Concerns Corruption / Fraud/ bribery

- ❖ The banks and government will surely unravel and nab the cartel's underhand deals in cryptocurrency camouflaged in the cheque deposits and contracts. (p108).
- ❖ The first eyebrows are raised when the bank teller repeats the question, "Ms Chansing,? Do you want the 'thirty million dollars' deposited in your savings account or would you prefer to open a U.S. dollar account?" (p98).
- ❖ The official deductible salary standard for top executives does not show in her actual income through platinum credit cards.
- ❖ Sukiya has accumulated over ten thousand dollars, an amount she deposits five times every month.

(p99). She avoids encounters with bank managers for a bank manager might wonder how a fifty-thousand-a-month salary becomes seven million dollars in savings within six years. He would know enough to make some educated guesses. (p99).

- ❖ The bank teller reminds Ms Chansing that the cheque is for five million dollars, U.S. equivalent to 30,242,000 Trinidad and Tobago dollars. (p99).
- ❖ She is responsible for moving vast sums through various channels when the oil and gas boom starts and money flows into the company. Sukiya will need to provide the source of funds, of course. (p101).
- ❖ Randall had watched too many movies where unrealistically cunning criminals cleaned out businessmen's offshore accounts by hacking into them. (p100).
- ❖ Ironically, when Sukiya, a lawyer, is hired as a corporate secretary to detect and close financial loopholes in documents, she gets paid the largest cheques for creating such loopholes. (p103).
- ❖ The five million cheques she gets she assumes is her fee for having drawn up for the sale of the methanol plant by Randall. It could be a surprise bonus. But now, according to Randall, it is her fee for keeping her mouth shut during that deal. (p101 — 107).
- ❖ Then the truth about the trick unfolds: the money is a fee for keeping her mouth shut on the Chinese methanol deal which Sukiya undervalues the shares by 50 percent. (p107, 109).
- ❖ It is a deal that the Chinese considered protocol even with the bribe. (p103).
- ❖ It is clear that the frauds committed, both inadvertent and deliberate, are rewarding, but eventually, the perpetrators will have to pay dearly.
- ❖ She is almost at the point of betraying herself, insinuating in her mind her readiness to offer herself unto Randall, for he is a man. Sukiya wants every advantage if the meeting turns into a negotiation. (p105).

Deceit and betrayal

- ❖ Eventually, Ms comes to terms with the reality that all this time she has worked for the company under Mr Randall A Credo was a disguised syndicate for which she will face the force of the law.
- ❖ When investigations are done, she will have to defend herself as to how she has accumulated all this wealth over a very short period since she started working as a poor young girl from Penal. Now she swims in opulence, affluence and prosperously apparently does not need money as millions of dollars accumulate in a desk drawer. (p104 - 105).

- ❖ When she examines the cheques, the sums and dates are all right, signed by Randall and countersigned by herself. (p105).
- ❖ She could put various clauses into contracts to achieve certain ends or prevent the other party from attaining certain ends. (p106).
- ❖ However, she has been duped and used as a conduit for Randall's fraudulent deals. Through the valuation report, Sukiya signs the document without reading it properly or because Randall tells her to do so. Further, Randall himself forges his signature using Sukiya's pen. This form of deceit and betrayal sharply undercuts her. (p107 -- 108).
- ❖ Margaret, Randall's executive assistant, is paid more than most managers in the company's subsidiaries. She knows more about Randall's dealings than anyone else in the company, including Sukiya. (p106).

Loyalty cheques

- ❖ It seems everything throughout the story is conducted in terms of cheques. Asked about the cheques' amounts, the figure runs automatically through her head. (p101).
- ❖ Sukiya has to fly from Trinidad to Grand Cayman to deposit cheques to her account every two months. (p 104). She keeps both her Us and T. T. cheques in the same drawer, which is how the mix-up occurs. (p105).

CHARACTERS

- ❖ Citing evidence from the text, describe the character traits of the following characters.

Sukiya

Randall

STYLE AND LANGUAGE USE

- ❖ 1. How is sarcasm employed in Cheque Mate?
- ❖ How symbolic is the title, and how does the duo execute their corrupt syndicate?
- ❖ How is dialogue used to achieve revelation of the rotten ills of the cheque mates?
- ❖ Why should corruption be made unattractive to perpetrators?

THE END

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- ✓ **JOINT PREMOCKS**
- ✓ **KCSE MOCKS**
- ✓ **TOP SCHOOLS MOCKS**
- ✓ **JOINT MOCKS**
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