**Unformatted text preview:**rows Navigate Study Guide Extended Summary Chinua Achebe’s story “Marriage Is a Private Affair” opens with a discussion between a young woman named Nene and a young man named Nnaemeka, who live in Lagos, Nigeria; they are in love and plan to marry. Nene wants Nnaemeka to inform his father of their plans as soon as possible, but the young man is nervous. He anticipates that his father, a member of the Ibo tribe who lives in rural Nigeria, will not approve his son’s marriage to a woman of the son’s own choosing, especially when the father discovers that Nene is not an Ibo. Nene cannot believe that anyone would care so much about tribal background; she urges Nnaemeka to write his father a letter informing him of the couple’s plans. Nnaemeka, however, thinks it would be better to tell his father in person, especially since he has recently received a letter from his father informing him that the father has already chosen a bride for him, a woman in whom Nnaemeka has no interest. In his letter, the father informed Nnaemeka that the girl he had found for his son to marry is a good Christian and has received all the training necessary to make her a good wife. Back home in his native village, Nnaemeka and his father talk. Nnaemeka asks forgiveness and then reveals that he does not love the woman his father has chosen for him—a fact that matters little to his father. Nnaemeka also reveals that he has found a woman (Nene) whom he loves and wants to marry. He explains that Nene is also a good Christian and that she is a schoolteacher. Believing that the Bible prohibits women from being teachers, his father is infuriated. After the father delivers a sermon on this topic, he begins to calm down, but he becomes enraged again when he discovers that Nene is not even an Ibo. The father abruptly leaves his son alone; that evening the father cannot even eat. He considers the intended marriage a plot by the devil. The next day he dismisses his son, although Nnaemeka is hopeful that his father will someday relent. The father, however, says that he intends never even to meet Nene, let alone approve of the marriage. Other people in the village strongly agree that no such marriage has ever been heard of. They support the father’s stance. Some think that the marriage violates Christian rules; others suggest that the son needs medical treatment by a doctor using herbs. The father, however, dismisses the latter idea. When Nnaemeka sends his father a wedding picture, the father is offended, tears the picture in half, and returns only the half featuring his son. He writes that he wishes to have nothing to do with either of them. Nene weeps, but Nnaemeka predicts that one day his father, whom he thinks is basically a good man, will accept her. Nevertheless, years go by with no change in the father’s feelings. He claims to have no interest in his son. Meanwhile, Nene slowly impresses the Ibo people with whom she comes into contact in Lagos, and even in Nnaemeka’s village, word begins to spread that Nnaemeka has a good marriage. His father, however, hears nothing about this, since no one dares to raise the subject with him. Although the effort to reject his son has taken a heavy toll on him, he feels he has succeeded. One day, however, he receives a letter from Nene informing him that he has two grandsons who are now old enough to know that he exists and who are eager to meet him. She cannot bring herself to tell them that their grandfather has no interest in them. She asks if Nnaemeka might bring the boys with him the next time he visits the village. She promises not to come herself. The father suddenly begins to feel his resistance crumbling. He tries to tell himself not to relent, but as he looks out the window, a massive storm approaches. The old man cannot stop thinking about his grandsons. That evening, he can barely sleep because of the guilt he feels and also because of a growing worry that “he might die without making it up to them.” ...