

LIRA TOWN COLLEGE

P.O. BOX 125, LIRA

The Village School

The school was a new school. When the missionaries invited the elders of Ama village and the *villages* around it, including Ohia, to discuss the possibility of *establishing* a school for them they had refused to attend the meeting. They did not want a school. It would only lead to a waste of future *farm-hands*.

‘What use is a man who can read and write on a farm?’ they asked.

Ohia, in particular, had plenty of farm land. But it was land that was not very fertile, so its people had to work extremely hard to get any crops at all. They had no industries, though all the women did a little trading. So land meant everything to them. Their whole life – their religion, their customs, their *livelihood* – was based on it.

But many of their people who had left the village for large towns had seen a different kind of life. Because they could not read and write, they soon found they could not get good jobs. They were only employed as labourers, and load-carriers. It was too late for them to go to school. But was it too late for their children?

They sent letters to the missionaries near Ama, begging them to establish a school for their children. They said they used to think that education was a waste of time, but now they had realized the importance of education and how badly they needed a school for their children at home.

Because of these letters the missionaries built the school at Ama. But the old men still did not like the idea and did all they could to stop members of their families attending the school.

Mr. Okafor, who was appointed the school’s first teacher, was native of Aku, a village fifteen miles from Ama. He was a huge man, thirty years old and a lover of children. Unlike some of the villagers who had several wives, he had only a wife, for he was a strict Christian. He had three young children of his own. Mr. Okafor was not a trained teacher yet his boys always did well in examinations, because his methods *sought* to bring out the bests in his pupils.

Mr. Okafor’s salary was small and although he paid no rent on his house and his wife did all the washing, he found it difficult to *maintain* a family of five. But he had a large farm in which he planted yams and vegetables, and in which the school children sometimes helped him.

Questions

1. What meeting did the villagers refuse to attend?
2. Why did they refuse?
3. *Their whole life was based on it.* On what?
4. Why did the farmers of Ohia find their work difficult?
5. How did the Ohia sons who lived away from Ohia come to see the usefulness of education?
6. They asked the missionaries to establish a school so that.....
7. What reason is suggested for the fact that Mr. Okafor had only one wife?
8. Mr. Okafor was a good teacher because:
 - (a) he was not trained
 - (b) his boys always did well in examinations
 - (c) his methods tried to bring out the best in his pupils
 - (d) he had three young children of his own (Choose one.)
9. In what way did the school children help Mr. Okafor to maintain his family?