

Before You Read

The Voter

Meet **Chinua Achebe**

(born 1930)

Chinua Achebe (chēn'wāā chā'bā) believes that an author's function, particularly an African author's function, is a social one. In his novels, he criticizes both the dehumanizing effects of British imperialism on the Nigerian population and the destructive influences of Nigerian political corruption that plagued his country after achieving independence. Above all, his novels express his desire to destroy the myth of African inferiority and to inspire a more tolerant society.

"The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer's duty is to help them regain it..."

—Chinua Achebe

Christian and Ibo Roots Born in Ogidi, Nigeria, when Nigeria was still a British colony, Achebe was raised in a Christian family that had converted from the traditional religion of their Ibo (also spelled Igbo) kinsfolk. In his autobiography, he describes his parents as strong in their Christian beliefs but not fanatical. "Their lives were ruled," he says, "as much by reason as by faith; as much by common sense and compassion as by doctrine." Achebe's experiences growing up in two different cultures and his observations of Nigeria under colonial rule and after independence instilled in him a strong belief in the values of objectivity, pragmatism, and tolerance.

Nigeria



Things Fall Apart After graduating from college, Achebe accepted a position as a producer for the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. During this period, he published several of the novels that have secured his literary reputation. The first of these, *Things Fall Apart*, is the story of a traditional Ibo community that disintegrates after the arrival of European missionaries. The book earned Achebe international recognition and is regarded by some historians as the most widely read and influential African novel ever written. Achebe's later novels portray Nigerian society during colonial times and following independence.

Award Winner In 2007, Achebe won the prestigious Man Booker International Prize, which is given once every two years to a living author for his or her body of fictional work. One of the judges, South African author Nadine Gordimer, commented that Achebe's "early work made him the father of modern African literature. . . ."



Literature Online

Author Search For more about Chinua Achebe, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GLW6053u1.

Literature and Reading Preview

Connect to the Story

In school elections, how do you decide which candidates to vote for? Freewrite for a few minutes about what qualities you look for in a candidate.

Build Background

Nigeria became an independent nation in 1960, but political corruption and cultural differences among ethnic groups have hampered its efforts to establish a democratic system. Following episodes of violence and a full-scale civil war, Nigeria came under the rule of military regimes at the end of the twentieth century. Achebe's story "The Voter" takes place in an Ibo village shortly after Nigerian independence.

Set Purposes for Reading

Big Idea Living with Independence

As you read, ask yourself, How does this story illustrate the political problems in Nigeria?

Literary Element Motivation

Motivation is the stated or implied reason or cause for a character's actions. As you read "The Voter," think about why the characters behave the way they do toward one another. Ask yourself questions such as, Why does Marcus Ibe host a feast for the villagers in honor of the completion of his new home?

Reading Strategy Activate Prior Knowledge

You can increase your understanding of a work of literature by drawing on knowledge you already have before reading the text. As you read "The Voter," ask yourself, What information do I have that can help me make predictions and better understand the events in this story?"

Tip: Use Personal Experience As you read, record details that remind you of your own experiences as well as details that are illuminated by what you have learned about Nigeria from the author biography on page 92 and the Build Background on this page. Use a chart like the one below.

Details Similar to Personal Experience	Details Illuminated by Background Knowledge
Marcus Ibe's feast reminds me of the time Bernie hosted a picnic to encourage us to vote for him.	Marcus Ibe's wealthy lifestyle illustrates the real political corruption in postcolonial Nigeria.

Learning Objectives

For pages 92–101

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objectives:

Literary Study: Analyzing motivation.

Reading: Activating prior knowledge.

Writing: Applying irony.

Vocabulary

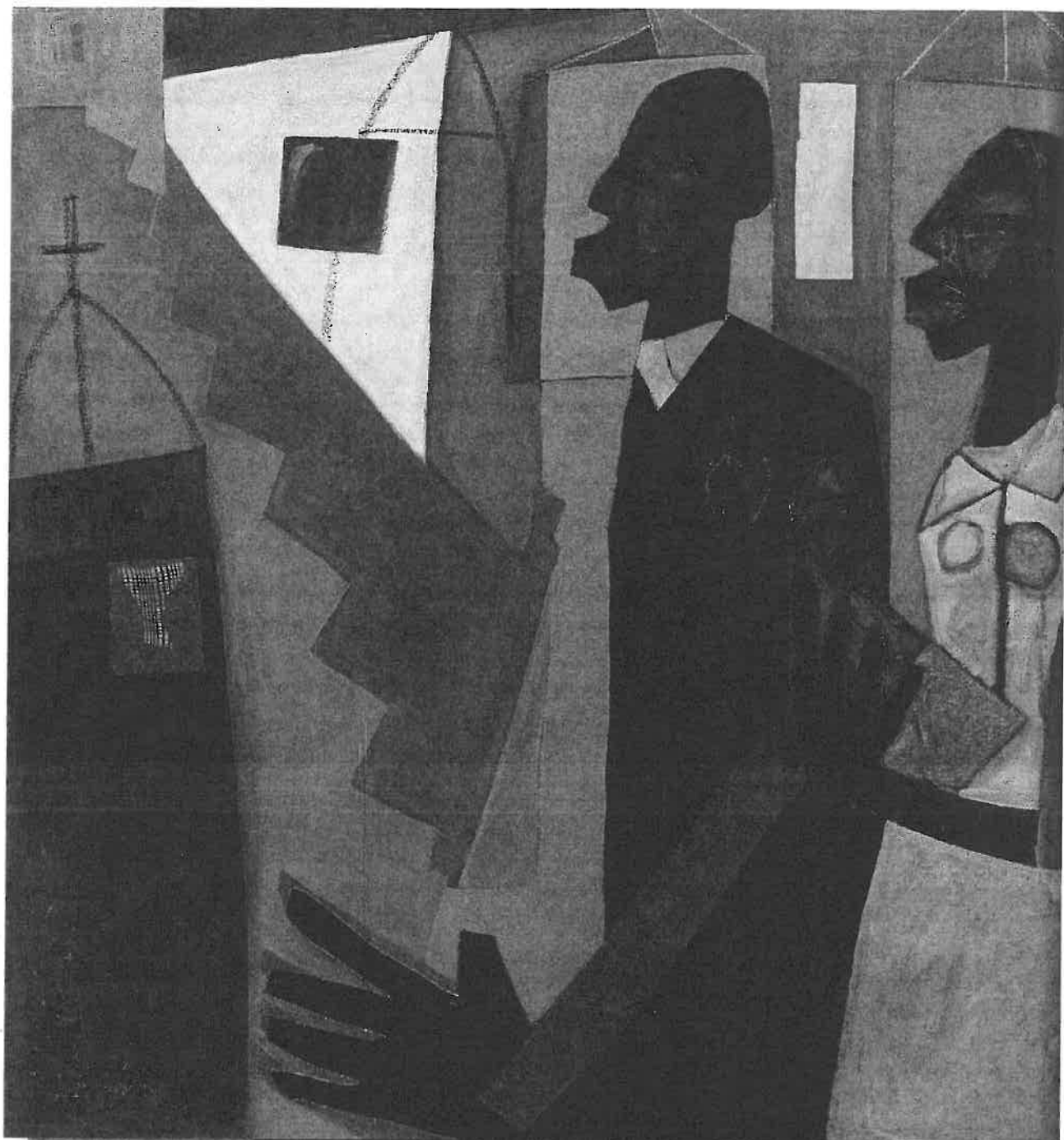
gratitude (grat'ə tōd') n. thankfulness; p. 95 *We expressed heartfelt gratitude for his generosity in our time of need.*

constituency (kən stich'ōō ən sē) n. voters in a district; a group of supporters; p. 95 *The crime novel bombed because its ad campaign did not target its core constituency: mystery fans.*

nonentity (non en'tə tē) n. a person or a thing of little or no importance; p. 95 *Sam's inexperience with computers made him a nonentity in the eyes of the tech job recruiter.*

defiance (di fi'əns) n. a refusal to recognize or obey someone or something; p. 97 *Nadia's refusal to join the conspiracy was apparent by the defiance in her eyes.*

mesmerize (mez'mə rīz') v. to hypnotize; spellbind; p. 97 *The fun-house mirrors started to mesmerize me the more I looked at them.*



Moving on Up, 1999. Francks Deceus. Mixed media on canvas. Private collection.

The Voter

Chinua Achebe

Rufus Okeke—Roof for short—was a very popular man in his village. Although the villagers did not explain it in so many words Roof's popularity was a measure of their **gratitude** to an energetic young man who, unlike most of his fellows nowadays had not abandoned the village in order to seek work, any work, in the towns.

And Roof was not a village lout either. Everyone knew how he had spent two years as a bicycle repairer's apprentice in Port Harcourt, and had given up of his own free will a bright future to return to his people and guide them in these difficult times. Not that Umuofia needed a lot of guidance. The village already belonged *en masse* to the People's Alliance Party, and its most illustrious son, Chief the Honorable Marcus Ibe, was Minister of Culture in the outgoing government (which was pretty certain to be the incoming one as well). Nobody doubted that the Honorable Minister would be elected in his **constituency**. Opposition to him was like the proverbial fly trying to move a dunghill. It would have been ridiculous enough without coming, as it did now, from a complete **nonentity**.

As was to be expected Roof was in the service of the Honorable Minister for the coming elections. He had become a real expert in election campaigning at all levels—village, local government or national. He could tell the mood and temper of the

electorate at any given time. For instance he had warned the Minister months ago about the radical change that had come into the thinking of Umuofia since the last national election.

The villagers had had five years in which to see how quickly and plentifully politics brought wealth, chieftaincy titles, doctorate degrees and other honors some of which, like the last, had still to be explained satisfactorily to them; for in their naïveté they still expected a doctor to be able to heal the sick. Anyhow, these honors and benefits had come so readily to the man to whom they had given their votes free of charge five years ago that they were now ready to try it a different way.

Their point was that only the other day Marcus Ibe was a not too successful mission school teacher. Then politics had come to their village and he had wisely joined up, some said just in time to avoid imminent dismissal arising from a female teacher's pregnancy. Today he was Chief the Honorable; he had two long cars and had just built himself the biggest house anyone had seen in these parts. But let it be said that none of these successes had gone to Marcus's head as well they might. He remained devoted to his people. Whenever he could he left the good things of the capital and returned to his village which had neither running water nor electricity, although he had lately installed a private plant to supply electricity to his new house. He knew the source of his good fortune, unlike the little bird who ate and drank

Motivation According to the villagers, what was Roof's motivation for leaving a promising career?

Vocabulary

gratitude (grat'ə tōd') n. thankfulness

constituency (kən stich'ōō ən sē) n. voters in a district; a group of supporters

nonentity (non en'tə tē) n. a person or a thing of little or no importance

Living with Independence How does the information in this passage mirror what you have learned about Nigeria after it achieved independence?

Motivation Do you think it is devotion to his people or something else that motivates Marcus to visit the village whenever he can? Explain.

and went out to challenge his personal spirit. Marcus had christened his new house “Umuofia Mansions” in honor of his village, and he had slaughtered five bulls and countless goats to entertain the people on the day it was opened by the Archbishop.

Everyone was full of praise for him. One old man said: “Our son is a good man; he is not like the mortar which as soon as food comes its way turns its back on the ground.” But when the feasting was over, the villagers told themselves that they had underrated the power of the ballot paper before and should not do so again. Chief the Honorable Marcus Ibe was not unprepared. He had drawn five months’ salary in advance, changed a few hundred pounds



Visual Vocabulary
Jute (jōt) is a flexible, glossy fiber made from one of two Asian plants.

into shining shillings and armed his campaign boys with eloquent little jute bags. In the day he made his speeches; at night his stalwarts conducted their whispering campaign. Roof was the most trusted of these campaigners.

“We have a Minister from our village, one of our own sons,” he said to a group of elders in the house of Ogbuefi Ezenwa, a man of high traditional title. “What greater honor can a village have? Do you ever stop to ask yourselves why we should be singled out for this honor? I will tell you; it is because we are favored by the leaders of PAP. Whether or not we cast our paper for Marcus, PAP will continue to rule. Think of the pipe-borne water they have promised us . . .”

Activate Prior Knowledge What does the phrase “whispering campaign” imply about the kind of information campaign workers spread at night? Have you ever overheard a whispering campaign? If so, what was your reaction?

Besides Roof and his assistant there were five elders in the room. An old hurricane lamp with a cracked, sooty, glass chimney gave out yellowish light in their midst. The elders sat on very low stools. On the floor, directly in front of each of them, lay two shilling pieces. Outside beyond the fastened door, the moon kept a straight face.

“We believe every word you say to be true,” said Ezenwa. “We shall, every one of us, drop his paper for Marcus. Who would leave an Ozo feast and go to a poor ritual meal? Tell Marcus he has our papers, and our wives’ papers too. But what we do say is that two shillings is shameful.” He brought the lamp close and tilted it at the money before him as if to make sure he had not mistaken its value. “Yes, two shillings is too shameful. If Marcus were a poor man—which our ancestors forbid—I should be the first to give him my paper free, as I did before. But today Marcus is a great man and does his things like a great man. We did not ask him for money yesterday; we shall not ask him tomorrow. But today is our day; we have climbed the iroko tree today and would be foolish not to take down all the firewood we need.”

Roof had to agree. He had lately been taking down a lot of firewood himself. Only yesterday he had asked Marcus for one of his many rich robes—and had got it. Last Sunday Marcus’s wife (the teacher that nearly got him in trouble) had objected (like the woman she was) when Roof pulled out his fifth bottle of beer from the refrigerator; she was roundly and publicly rebuked by her husband. To cap it all Roof had won a land case recently because, among other things, he had been chauffeur-

Motivation Do you think the elders really believe every word is true? Why or why not? What actually motivates their loyalty to Roof?

driven to the disputed site. So he understood the elders about the firewood.

"All right," he said in English and then reverted to Ibo. "Let us not quarrel about small things." He stood up, adjusted his robes and plunged his hand once more into the bag. Then he bent down like a priest distributing the host and gave one shilling more to every man; only he did not put it into their palms but on the floor in front of them. The men, who had so far not deigned to touch the things, looked at the floor and shook their heads. Roof got up again and gave each man another shilling.

"I am through," he said with a **defiance** that was no less effective for being transparently faked. The elders too knew how far to go without losing decorum. So when Roof added: "Go cast your paper for the enemy if you like!" they quickly calmed him down with a suitable speech from each of them. By the time the last man had spoken it was possible, without great loss of dignity, to pick up the things from the floor . . .

The enemy Roof had referred to was the Progressive Organization Party (POP) which had been formed by the tribes down the coast to save themselves, as the founders of the party proclaimed, from "total political, cultural, social and religious annihilation." Although it was clear the party had no chance here it had plunged, with typical foolishness, into a straight fight with PAP, providing cars and loud-speakers to a few local rascals and thugs to go around and make a lot of noise. No one knew for certain how much money POP had let loose in Umuofia but it was said to be very considerable. Their local campaigners would end up very rich, no doubt.

Vocabulary

defiance (di fī'əns) *n.* a refusal to recognize or obey someone or something

Up to last night everything had been "moving according to plan," as Roof would have put it. Then he had received a strange visit from the leader of the POP campaign team. Although he and Roof were well-known to each other, and might even be called friends, his visit was cold and business-like. No words were wasted. He placed five pounds¹ on the floor before Roof and said, "We want your vote." Roof got up from his chair, went to the outside door, closed it carefully and returned to his chair. The brief exercise gave him enough time to weigh the proposition. As he spoke his eyes never left the red notes on the floor. He seemed to be **mesmerized** by the picture of the cocoa farmer harvesting his crops.

"You know I work for Marcus," he said feebly. "It will be very bad . . ."

"Marcus will not be there when you put in your paper. We have plenty of work to do tonight; are you taking this or not?"

"It will not be heard outside this room?" asked Roof.

"We are after votes not gossip."

"All right," said Roof in English.

The man nudged his companion and he brought forward an object covered with a red cloth and proceeded to remove the cover. It was a fearsome little affair contained in a clay pot with feathers stuck into it.

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1. The **pound** is the basic unit of money in the United Kingdom.

Motivation *Considering the holdness of the campaign rival's offer, why does Roof stall for time instead of immediately turning it down?*

Activate Prior Knowledge *What rationalization do the campaign worker's words imply? What everyday examples of rationalizations can you think of for doing or saying something you know is wrong?*

Vocabulary

mesmerize (mez'mə rīz') *v.* to hypnotize; spellbind



A Successful Life, 1995. Cheri Samba. Contemporary African Art Collection Limited.
View the Art Samba is known for his realistic brightly colored paintings. How does the lifestyle of the people in this painting compare with that of Marcus?

"The *iyi*² comes from Mbanta. You know what that means. Swear that you will vote for Maduka. If you fail to do so, this *iyi* take note."

Roof's heart nearly flew out when he saw the *iyi*; indeed he knew the fame of Mbanta in these things. But he was a man of quick decision. What could a single vote cast in secret for Maduka take away from Marcus's certain victory? Nothing.

"I will cast my paper for Maduka; if not this *iyi* take note."

"Das all," said the man as he rose with his companion who had covered up the object again and was taking it back to their car.

"You know he has no chance against Marcus," said Roof at the door.

"It is enough that he gets a few votes now; next time he will get more. People will hear that he gives out pounds, not shillings, and they will listen."

Election morning. The great day every five years when the people exercise power. Weather-beaten posters on walls of houses, tree trunks and telegraph poles. The few that were still whole called out their message to those who could read. Vote for the People's Alliance Party! Vote for the Progressive Organization Party! Vote for PAP! Vote for POP! The posters that were torn called out as much of the message as they could.

As usual Chief the Honorable Marcus Ibe was doing things in grand style. He had hired a highlife band from Umuru and sta-

2. An *iyi* is a tribal god.

tioned it at such a distance from the voting booths as just managed to be lawful. Many villagers danced to the music, their ballot papers held aloft, before proceeding to the booths. Chief the Honorable Marcus Ibe sat in the "owner's corner" of his enormous green car and smiled and nodded. One enlightened villager came up to the car, shook hands with the great man and said in advance, "Congrats!" This immediately set the pattern. Hundreds of admirers shook Marcus's hand and said "Corngrass!"

Roof and the other organizers were prancing up and down, giving last minute advice to the voters and pouring with sweat.

"Do not forget," he said again to a group of illiterate women who seemed ready to burst with enthusiasm and good humor, "our sign is the motor car . . ."

"Like the one Marcus is sitting inside."

"Thank you, mother," said Roof. "It is the same car. The box with the car shown on its body is the box for you. Don't look at the other with the man's head: it is for those whose heads are not correct."

This was greeted with loud laughter. Roof cast a quick and busy-like glance towards the Minister and received a smile of appreciation.

"Vote for the car," he shouted, all the veins in his neck standing out. "Vote for the car and you will ride in it!"

"Or if we don't, our children will," piped the same sharp, old girl.

The band struck up a new number: "Why walk when you can ride . . ."

In spite of his apparent calm and confidence Chief the Honorable Marcus was a relentless stickler for detail. He knew he would win what the newspapers called "a

landslide victory" but he did not wish, even so, to throw away a single vote. So as soon as the first rush of voters was over he promptly asked his campaign boys to go one at a time and put in their ballot papers.

"Roof, you had better go first," he said.

Roof's spirits fell; but he let no one see it. All morning he had masked his deep worry with a surface exertion which was unusual even for him. Now he dashed off in his springy fashion towards the booths. A policeman at the entrance searched him for illegal ballot papers and passed him. Then the electoral officer explained to him about the two boxes. By this time the spring had gone clean out of his walk. He sidled in and was confronted by the car and the head. He brought out his ballot paper from his pocket and looked at it. How could he betray Marcus even in secret? He resolved to go back to the other man and return his five pounds . . . Five pounds! He knew at once it was impossible. He had sworn on that *iyi*. The notes were red; the cocoa farmer busy at work.

At this point he heard the muffled voice of the policeman asking the electoral officer what the man was doing inside. "Abi na pickin im de born?"

Quick as lightning a thought leapt into Roof's mind. He folded the paper, tore it in two along the crease and put one half in each box. He took the precaution of putting the first half into Maduka's box and confirming the action verbally: "I vote for Maduka."

They marked his thumb with indelible purple ink to prevent his return, and he went out of the booth as jauntily as he had gone in. ☺

Living with Independence Why might Achebe have chosen a car to symbolize the PAP and a head to symbolize the POP?

Motivation Why does Roof put the first half of his ballot in Maduka's box and confirm this vote aloud?

After You Read

Respond and Think Critically

Respond and Interpret

1. In this story, Roof has to make a difficult decision about how to cast his vote. Do you agree with the way he resolves this dilemma? Why or why not?
2. (a) Why is Roof popular in his village? (b) What can you infer about the village's economic situation from the narrator's explanation of Roof's popularity?
3. (a) What do the villagers think of Marcus Ibe? (b) Do you think their opinion of him is deserved? Explain.
4. (a) Why does the leader of the opposition's campaign offer Roof a bribe? (b) Do you think Roof believes he is betraying Marcus Ibe by accepting the bribe? Explain.
5. (a) What decision does Roof make in the voting booth? (b) What do you think will be the result of Roof's vote?

Analyze and Evaluate

6. (a) Apart from offering the villagers bribes, what reasons does Roof give to convince the villagers to vote for Marcus Ibe? (b) Are his reasons sincere or mere campaign rhetoric? Support your answer with evidence from the story.
7. A **theme** is a central message or idea about life in a literary work. What is the main theme in "The Voter"?
8. A **symbol** is an object or an action that stands for something else in addition to itself. What might Roof's torn ballot symbolize?

Connect

9. **Big Idea** **Living with Independence** How do Roof's actions in this story parallel the problems Nigeria faced after gaining independence?
10. **Connect to the Author** Achebe is famous for his anti-imperialist views and his appreciation of Ibo culture. Despite this, "The Voter" is a harsh criticism of Nigeria and its politics. Why might Achebe have chosen to criticize his country in this story?

Literary Element: Motivation

ACT Skills Practice

The passage "As he spoke... harvesting his crops" (page 97) suggests that Roof accepts the bribe primarily because

- A. he knows that Marcus will still win the election
- B. he is confident that his vote will be secret
- C. he wants the money
- D. he is scared of the POP leader

Review: Tone

As you learned on page 25, **tone** is an author's attitude toward his or her subject matter. Tone is conveyed through elements such as word choice, punctuation, sentence structure, and figures of speech.

Partner Activity Meet with a partner to analyze the tone of "The Voter" and answer the following questions.

1. How does Achebe's use of sentence fragments throughout the story contribute to the story's tone?
2. Do you think the tone of the "The Voter" is satiric? Explain your answer, using examples from the text to support your point.

Reading Strategy Activate Prior Knowledge

Activating prior knowledge includes drawing upon your personal experiences as well as recalling information learned through reading and listening. Review the chart you made on page 93.

1. What character behaviors in the story remind you of behaviors you have displayed or observed in others?
2. What background information pertaining to Nigeria and its problems helped you appreciate the events in the story? How did it help?

Vocabulary Practice

Practice with Word Parts For each bold-faced vocabulary word in the left column, identify the related word with a shared part in the right column. Write each pair and underline the part they have in common. Use a dictionary to look up the meaning of the related word. Then explain how it is related to the vocabulary word.

- | | |
|------------------------|------------|
| 1. gratitude | nonevent |
| 2. constituency | defile |
| 3. nonentity | mesmeric |
| 4. defiance | gratuitous |
| 5. mesmerize | constitute |

Academic Vocabulary

*In Achebe's story, the POP does not pose a serious threat to the PAP **regime**.*

Regime is an academic word. Nelson Mandela's Government of National Unity, which ruled South Africa in the 1990s, could be called a **regime**, although the word often carries a negative connotation. To further explore the meaning of this word, complete the sentence below.

A political regime that _____ might be characterized as unjust.

For more on academic vocabulary, see pages 36–37 and R83–R85.

Write with Style

Apply Irony

Assignment Although Roof appears devoted to his political ideals, he is truly motivated by greed. This discrepancy between appearance and reality creates **irony** in the story. Write an expository essay about an ironic situation from the real world that details the motivations of a person or a group.

Get Ideas Brainstorm ironic situations from multiple sources, including your personal experience and background knowledge. For example, you might write about a time when a school group alleged that it supported one idea but behaved in a way that showed support for another idea. Create a three-column chart like the one below to clarify the irony in the situation.

Appearance	Reality	Irony
A group held a vigil to protest the development of a local meadow.	The group was so large that it disturbed wildlife and trampled vegetation.	The group harmed the meadow; its motivation seemed to be publicity instead of environmentalism.

Give It Structure Refer to the chart you made while generating ideas to organize your essay in a logical pattern. Be sure that each section of your essay clearly relates to your thesis and supports the points you want to make.

Look at Language Like short stories, expository essays can benefit from the use of figurative language and proverbs. These additions will give your writing personal style and make it more entertaining. It may be helpful to review Achebe's story for models of figurative language and proverbs.



Literature Online

Selection Resources For Selection Quizzes, eFlashcards, and Reading-Writing Connection activities, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GLW6053u1.

Learning Objectives

In this workshop, you will focus on the following objective:

Grammar: Understanding how to use possessive apostrophes.

Possessive Nouns

A **possessive noun** shows possession, ownership, or the relationship between two nouns.

Tip

To decide whether a noun needs an apostrophe only or an apostrophe and an -s, decide what kind of noun it is. Plural nouns ending in -s, such as *countries*, do not take an -s after an apostrophe to make them possessive (*countries'*, not *countries's*).

Language Handbook

For more on apostrophes, see Language Handbook, p. R40.



Literature Online

Grammar For more grammar practice, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GLW6053u1.

Grammar Workshop

Possessive Apostrophes

Literature Connection As the following quote from "The Voter" by Chinua Achebe shows, an important use of the apostrophe is to make nouns and some pronouns possessive.

"Although the villagers did not explain it in so many words Roof's popularity was a measure of their gratitude . . ."

To form the possessive, add either an apostrophe or an apostrophe and an -s, as in *Roof's*.

To make the possessive form of a singular noun ending in -s, add an apostrophe and an -s.

Marcus wife was a teacher.

Marcus's wife was a teacher.

If a plural noun ends in -s, make it possessive by adding only an apostrophe.

The man answered the voters questions.

The man answered the voters' questions.

If a plural noun does not end in -s, add an apostrophe and an -s.

The people votes were important to Roof.

The people's votes were important to Roof.

Form the possessive of an indefinite pronoun (for example, *someone* or *everybody*) by adding an apostrophe and an -s. Apostrophes are not used with possessive pronouns, such as *hers* and *theirs*.

Roof used bribes to secure everyone's votes.

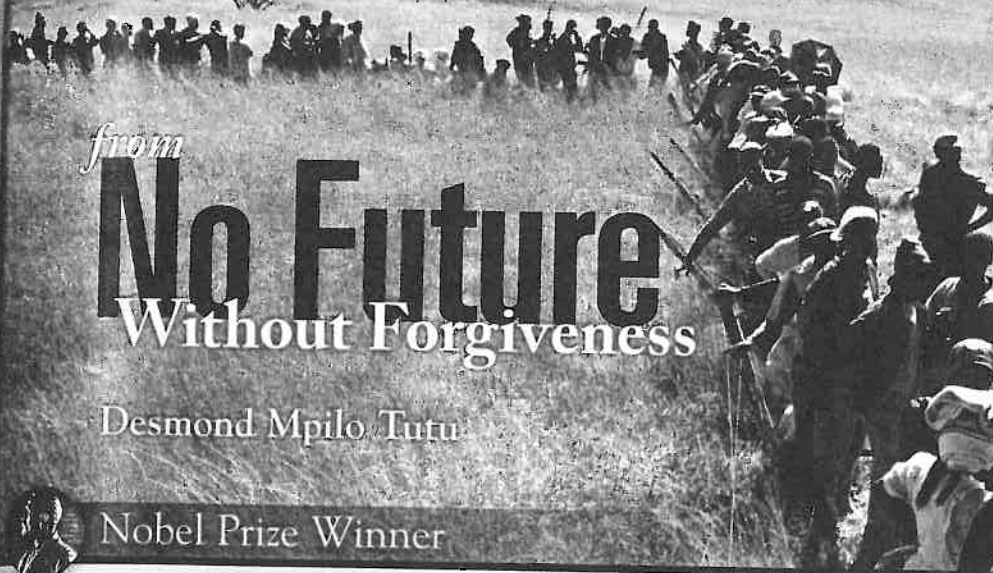
Roof used bribes to secure everyone's votes.

Revise Complete the following items using what you know about possessive apostrophes.

- On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following words as possessive.
a. ballots **b.** witness **c.** someone **d.** pounds
- For each sentence below, if the sentence is correct, write C on a separate sheet of paper. If the sentence is incorrect, rewrite it correctly.
a. The childrens' future was at stake.
b. The village elders knowledge of politics had increased over time.
c. Roof's mission was to win the election for Marcus Ibe.

Political Perspective

on *The Voter*



No Future Without Forgiveness

Desmond Mpilo Tutu

Nobel Prize Winner

On the day of South Africa's first post-apartheid election, voters line up for miles waiting to cast their ballot.

Set a Purpose for Reading

Read to learn more about the political process in a newly democratic African nation.

Build Background

Desmond Tutu, the first black archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his work to end apartheid, a devastating system of racial segregation. In the following excerpt from his memoir, Tutu describes the experience of voting in South Africa's first multiracial elections in 1994. The elections resulted in a victory for Nelson Mandela, who later appointed Tutu as chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a group designed to investigate human rights abuses that occurred during apartheid.

Reading Strategy Compare and Contrast Events

To **compare and contrast events** means to look for similarities and differences between events in two or more literary works. As you read, ask yourself, What events in this memoir can I compare and contrast with events in Chinua Achebe's "The Voter"?

Learning Objectives

For pages 103–106

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objectives:

Literary Study: Making connections across literature.

Reading: Comparing and contrasting events.
Analyzing informational text.

I went to vote in Gugulethu, a black township¹ with its typical matchbox-type houses in row after monotonous row. There was a long queue² already waiting. People were in good spirits; they were going to need dollops of patience and good humor because they were in for a long wait. My first democratic vote was a media event, and many of our friends from overseas were present, acting as monitors to be able to certify whether the elections were fair and free. But they were doing a great deal more than that. They were really like midwives helping to bring to birth this new delicate infant—free, democratic, non-racial, nonsexist South Africa.

The moment for which I had waited so long came and I folded my ballot paper and cast my vote. Wow! I shouted, "Yippee!" It was giddy stuff. It was like falling in love. The sky looked blue and more beautiful. I

1. In South Africa under apartheid, a *township* was a poor urban area reserved for nonwhites.
2. A *queue* is a line.

saw the people in a new light. They were beautiful, they were transfigured.³ I too was transfigured. It was dreamlike. You were scared someone would rouse you and you would awake to the nightmare that was apartheid's harsh reality. Someone referring to that dreamlike quality had said to his wife, "Darling, don't wake me. I like this dream."

After voting, I went outside and the people cheered and sang and danced. It was like a festival. It was a wonderful vindication for all of those who had borne the burden and the heat of repression, the little people whom apartheid had turned into the anonymous ones, faceless, voiceless, counting for nothing in their motherland, whose noses had been rubbed daily in the dust. They had been created in the image of God but their dignity had been callously trodden underfoot daily by apartheid's minions and those who might have said they were opposed to apartheid but had nonetheless gone on enjoying the privileges and huge benefits that apartheid provided them—just because of an accident of birth, a biological irrelevance, the color of their skin.

I decided to drive around a bit to see what was happening. I was appalled by what I saw. The people had come out in droves, standing in those long lines which have now become world famous. They were so vulnerable. The police and the security forces were probably stretched but they were hardly a conspicuous presence. It would have taken just a few crazy extremists with AK-47s to sow the most awful mayhem and havoc. It did not happen. And virtually everywhere there was a hitch of one sort or the other. Here it was insufficient ballot papers, there it was not enough ink pads, elsewhere the officials had not yet turned up hours after the polls

were due to have opened. The people were quite amazing in their patience. It was a comprehensive disaster waiting to happen. And it did not happen.

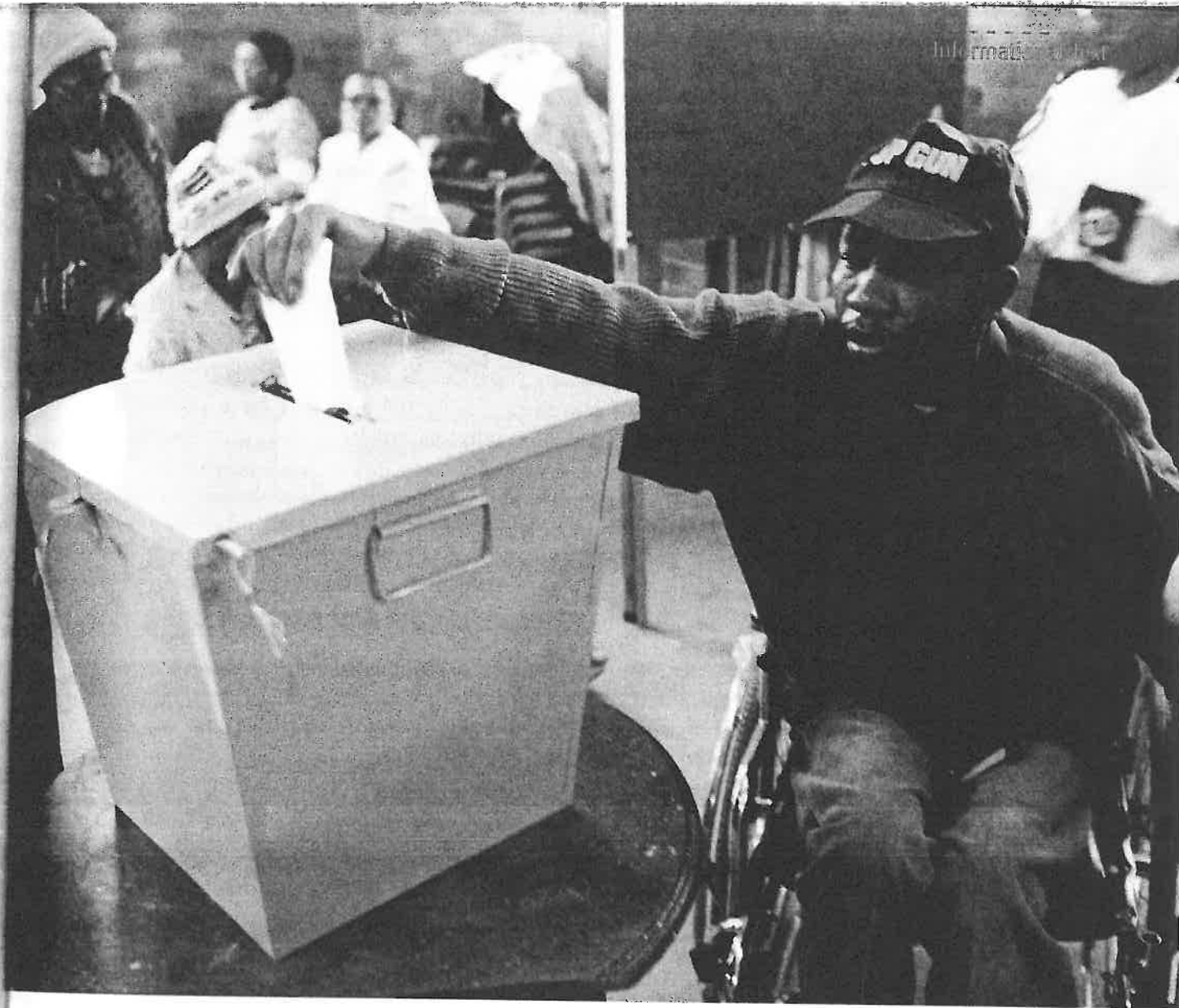
It was an amazing spectacle. People of all races were standing together in the same queues, perhaps for the very first time in their lives. Professionals, domestic workers, cleaners and their madams—all were standing in those lines that were snaking their way slowly to the polling booth. What should have been a disaster turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Those lines produced a new and peculiarly South African status symbol. Afterward people boasted, "I stood for two hours to vote." "I waited for four hours!"

Those long hours helped us South Africans to find one another. People shared newspapers, sandwiches, umbrellas, and the scales began to fall from their eyes. South Africans found fellow South Africans—they realized what we had been at such pains to tell them, that they shared a common humanity, that race, ethnicity, skin color were really irrelevancies. They discovered not a Colored, a black, an Indian, a white. No, they found fellow human beings. What a profound scientific discovery that blacks, Coloreds (usually people of mixed race), and Indians were in fact human beings, who had the same concerns and anxieties and aspirations. They wanted a decent home, a good job, a safe environment for their families, good schools for their children, and almost none wanted to drive the whites into the sea. They just wanted their place in the sun.

Everywhere else elections are secular political events. Ours was more than this, much, much more. It was a veritable⁴ spiritual experience. It was a mountaintop

3. *Transfigured* means "changed" or "transformed."

4. *Veritable* means "true."



Man casting his ballot in first post-apartheid election.

experience. The black person entered the booth one person and emerged on the other side a new, transfigured person. She entered weighed down by the anguish and burden of oppression, with the memory of being treated like rubbish gnawing away at her very vitals like some corrosive acid. She reappeared as someone new, "I am free," as she walked away with head held high, the shoulders set straighter, and an elastic spring in her step. How do you convey that sense of freedom that tasted like sweet nec-

tar for the first time? How do you explain it to someone who was born into freedom? It is impossible to convey.

The white person entered the voting booth burdened by the load of guilt for having enjoyed the fruits of oppression and injustice. He emerged as somebody new. He too cried out, "The burden has been lifted from my shoulders, I am free, transfigured, made into a new person." He walked tall, with head held high and shoulders set square and straight.

White people found that freedom was indeed indivisible.⁵ We had kept saying in the dark days of apartheid's oppression that white South Africans would never be truly free until we blacks were free as well. Many thought it was just another Tutu slogan, irresponsible as all his others had been. Today they were experiencing it as a reality. I used to refer to an intriguing old film *The Defiant Ones*, in which Sidney Poitier was one of the stars. Two convicts escape from a chain gang. They are manacled⁶ together, the one white, the other black. They fall into a ditch with slippery sides. The one convict claws his way nearly to the top and out of the ditch but cannot make it because he is bound to his mate, who has been left at the bottom in the ditch. The only way they can make it is together as they strive

up and up and up together and eventually make their way over the side wall and out.

So too I would say we South Africans will survive and prevail only together, black and white bound together by circumstance and history as we strive to claw our way out of the morass⁷ that was apartheid racism. Up and out together, black and white together. Neither group on its own could or would make it. God had bound us, manacled us, together. In a way it was to live out what Martin Luther King, Jr., had said, "Unless we learn to live together as brothers [and sisters] we will die together as fools." ~

5. *Indivisible* means "unable to be separated."

6. *Manacled* means "shackled together, as with handcuffs."

7. In this context, *morass* means "a difficult or an overwhelming situation."

Respond and Think Critically

Respond and Interpret

1. Write a brief summary of the main ideas in this excerpt before you answer the following questions. For help on writing a summary, see page 1147.
2. Were you surprised by the way Tutu describes the experience of voting? Explain.
3. (a)How do the people behave while waiting in line to vote? (b)According to Tutu, what effect does waiting to vote have on the population?

Analyze and Evaluate

4. (a)At the end of the excerpt, to what does Tutu compare the situation of black and white South

Africans? (b)What is this comparison meant to illustrate? Is it effective? Explain.

5. (a)According to Tutu, voting "transfigures" both black and white voters. What images does Tutu use to describe this change? (b)Given what you know about the history of South Africa, why might voting have this effect?

Connect

6. (a)Contrast Tutu's experience of voting with the experience of voting described in Chinua Achebe's "The Voter." (b)Considering the histories of South Africa and Nigeria, why might these two authors portray voting differently?

Before You Read

The Rain Came

Meet Grace Ogot

(born 1930)

Grace Ogot (ō'gōt) was born in western Kenya's Nyanza district, which lies along the shores of Lake Victoria.

She is a member of the Luo people, an African ethnic group that resides in parts of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Much of Ogot's fiction is set against the background of the Lake Victoria region and is based on the customs, legends, and history of the Luo. Their ancestors were nomadic herders who moved southward hundreds of years ago from Sudan to the areas they occupy today. One of the largest ethnic groups in Kenya, the Luo participated actively in the struggle for Kenyan independence from Great Britain in the 1950s and early 1960s. Ogot came of age as an author during this time, and she has often written about conflicts between the Luo and the British.

A Diverse Career Ogot's fascination with storytelling stems from her childhood, when she would eagerly listen to her grandmother recite folktales. Later, Ogot would loosely base many of her short stories on the Luo tales she heard from her grandmother. As a young woman, Ogot trained as a nurse and a midwife in both Uganda and England. Ogot's work as a nurse later allowed her to write about the conflict between traditional healing methods and modern Western medicine. While training as a midwife, she met and married Professor Bethwell Allan Ogot, a Luo and a prominent African historian. In addition to writing fiction, Grace Ogot has served as a member of Kenya's parliament, held positions in broadcasting and public relations, and represented her country at the United Nations and at UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization).

Kenya



Banana Fields, Kenya, 2001. John Newcomb. Watercolor. Private collection.

"There are more tragic incidents in life than there are comic ones."

—Grace Ogot

Themes of Sacrifice Grace Ogot began publishing her fiction in the late 1960s. When she submitted her first manuscript to a Kenyan publisher, the manager complained that her stories were not very uplifting. Still, Ogot persisted in writing about the subjects that interested her, including sacrifice, one of her major topics. She often portrays characters who are willing to give up personal happiness for the sake of family or community. Ogot has become perhaps the best-known woman writer in Kenya, publishing works in both English and Luo.



Online

Author Search For more about Grace Ogot, go to [www.oup.com](#) and enter QuickPass code GLW6053u1.

Literature and Reading Preview

Connect to the Story

What is the greatest sacrifice you have ever made? List the reasons you made the sacrifice and how this sacrifice benefited others.

Build Background

Ancestor worship is common in traditional African societies. People worship the spirits of the dead through prayer, sacrifice, and celebrations involving storytelling and dance. Usually the worshippers view their ancestors as beneficial spirits who can stop illness or drought, encourage the fertility of crops, help couples have children, and intervene with the gods on behalf of their descendants.

Set Purposes for Reading

Big Idea Tradition and Change

As you read, ask yourself, Why might the village in the story continue to follow traditional Luo values?

Literary Element Setting

Setting is the time and place in which the events of a literary work occur. The elements of setting may include geographical location, historical period, season of the year, time of day, and the beliefs and customs of a society. "The Rain Came" is set in a Luo village in Kenya during a drought. As you read, ask yourself, How are the seasonal circumstances integral to this story's plot?

Reading Strategy Analyze Cultural Context

To **analyze cultural context** means to examine the values, ideas, and traditions that are apparent in a text to better understand the culture in which that text was written. As you read "The Rain Came," ask yourself, What details illustrate the cultural context that shapes this story?

Tip: Take Notes As you read, use a chart like the one below to record details from the story and what they indicate about Luo culture.

Detail	Cultural Context
p. 110, "A young woman whispered to her co-wife . . ."	In Luo society, a man can have more than one wife.

Learning Objectives

For pages 107–119

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objectives:

Literary Study: Analyzing setting.

Reading: Analyzing cultural context.

Vocabulary

consecrate (kon'sə krāt') *v.* to elevate into a sacred position through a religious rite; p. 110 *The bishop came to consecrate several new priests.*

rebuke (ri būk') *v.* to criticize sharply; p. 110 *The librarian rebuked the noisy children.*

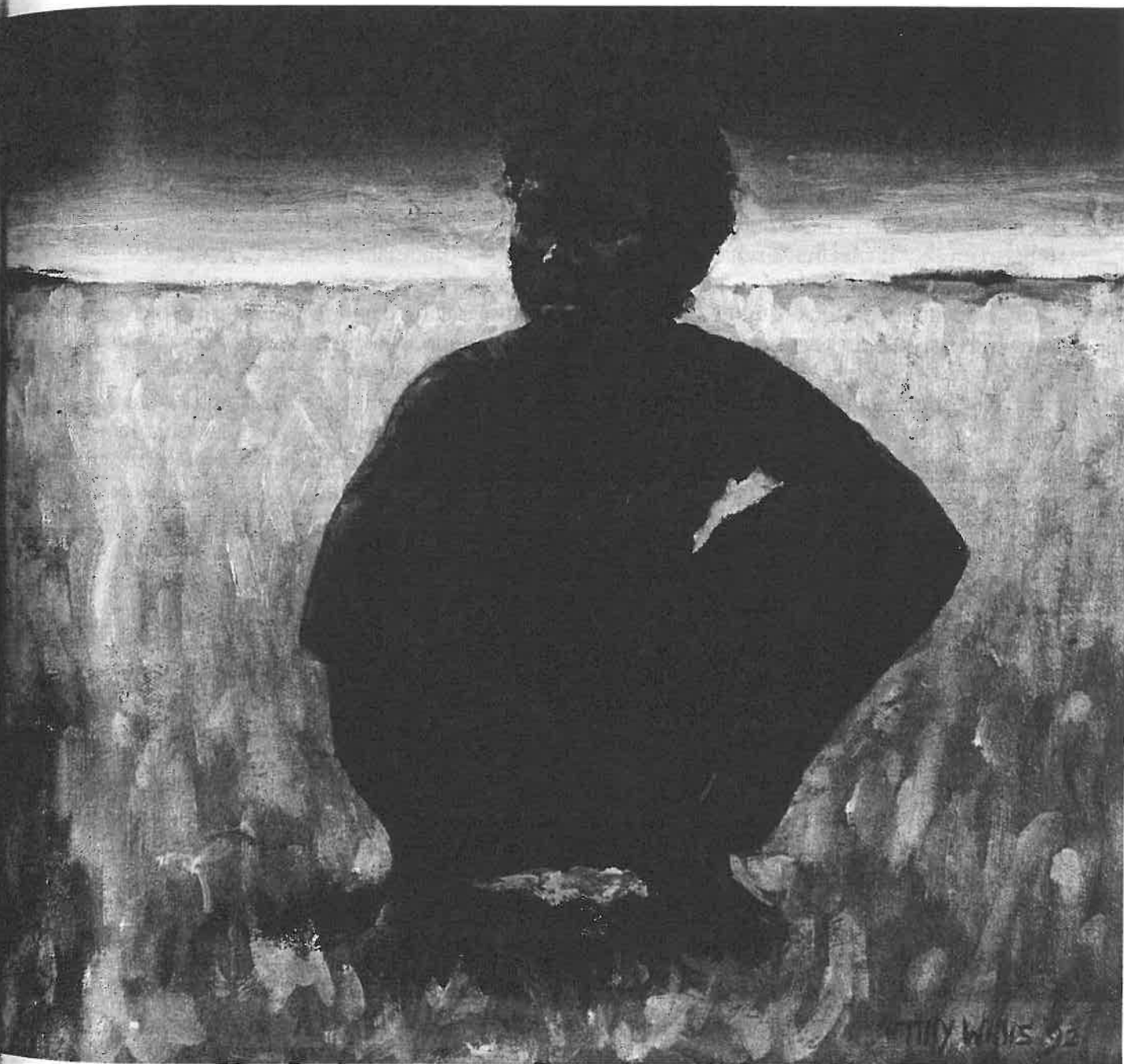
coax (kōks) *v.* to persuade by means of gentle urging or flattery; p. 112 *My sister tried to coax me into attending her rehearsal by telling me she wanted my opinion of her acting.*

denizen (den'ə zən) *n.* an inhabitant; p. 114 *The denizens of the swamp included alligators, opossums, and turtles.*

retaliation (ri tal'ē ā'shən) *n.* revenge; p. 116 *His witty retaliation for his friends' Halloween prank made everyone laugh.*

The *Rain* Came

Grace Ogot



Girl in Red, 1992. Tilly Willis. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

The chief was still far from the gate when his daughter Oganda saw him. She ran to meet him.

Breathlessly she asked her father, "What is the news, great Chief? Everyone in the village is anxiously waiting to hear when it will rain." Labong'o held out his hands for his daughter but he did not say a word. Puzzled by her father's cold attitude Oganda ran back to the village to warn the others that the chief was back.

The atmosphere in the village was tense and confused. Everyone moved aimlessly and fussed in the yard without actually doing any work. A young woman whispered to her co-wife, "If they have not solved this rain business today, the chief will crack." They had watched him getting thinner and thinner as the people kept on pestering him. "Our cattle lie dying in the fields," they reported. "Soon it will be our children and then ourselves. Tell us what to do to save our lives, oh great Chief." So the chief had daily prayed with the Almighty through the ancestors to deliver them from their distress.

Instead of calling the family together and giving them the news immediately, Labong'o went to his own hut, a sign that he was not to be disturbed. Having replaced the shutter, he sat in the dimly lit hut to contemplate.

It was no longer a question of being the chief of hunger-stricken people that weighed Labong'o's heart. It was the life of his only daughter that was at stake. At the time when Oganda came to meet him, he saw the glittering chain shining around her waist. The prophecy was complete. "It is Oganda, Oganda, my only daughter, who must die so young." Labong'o burst into tears before finishing the sentence.

Analyze Cultural Context *What does this passage reveal about the role of ancestors in Luo religion?*

The chief must not weep. Society had declared him the bravest of men. But Labong'o did not care any more. He assumed the position of a simple father and wept bitterly.

He loved his people, the Luo, but what were the Luo for him without Oganda? Her life had brought a new life in Labong'o's world and he ruled better than he could remember. How would the spirit of the village survive his beautiful daughter? "There are so many homes and so many parents who have daughters. Why choose this one? She is all I have." Labong'o spoke as if the ancestors were there in the hut and he could see them face to face. Perhaps they were there, warning him to remember his promise on the day he was enthroned when he said aloud, before the elders, "I will lay down life, if necessary, and the life of my household, to save this tribe from the hands of the enemy." "Deny! Deny!" he could hear the voice of his forefathers mocking him.

When Labong'o was **consecrated** chief he was only a young man. Unlike his father, he ruled for many years with only one wife. But people **rebuked** him because his only wife did not bear him a daughter. He married a second, a third, and a fourth wife, but they all gave birth to male children. When Labong'o married a fifth wife she bore him a daughter. They called her Oganda, meaning "beans," because her skin was very fair. Out of Labong'o's twenty children, Oganda was the only girl. Though she was the chief's favorite, her mother's co-wives swallowed their jealous feelings

Analyze Cultural Context *Based on this passage, what qualities must a chief in Luo society have?*

Vocabulary

consecrate (kon'sə krāt') *v.* to elevate into a sacred position through a religious rite

rebuke (ri būk') *v.* to criticize sharply

and showered her with love. After all, they said, Oganda was a female child whose days in the royal family were numbered. She would soon marry at a tender age and leave the enviable position to someone else.

Never in his life had he been faced with such an impossible decision. Refusing to yield to the rainmaker's request would mean sacrificing the whole tribe, putting the interests of the individual above those of the society. More than that. It would mean disobeying the ancestors, and most probably wiping the Luo people from the surface of the earth. On the other hand, to let Oganda die as a ransom for the people would permanently cripple Labong'o spiritually. He knew he would never be the same chief again.

The words of Ndithi, the medicine man, still echoed in his ears. "Podho, the ancestor of the Luo, appeared to me in a dream last night, and he asked me to speak to the chief and the people," Ndithi had said to the gathering of tribesmen. "A young woman who has not known a man must die so that the country may have rain. While Podho was still talking to me, I saw a young woman standing at the lakeside, her hands raised, above her head. Her skin was as fair as the skin of young deer in the wilderness. Her tall slender figure stood like a lonely reed at the river bank. Her sleepy eyes wore a sad look like that of a bereaved mother. She wore a gold ring on her left ear, and a glittering brass chain around her waist. As I still marveled at the beauty of this young woman, Podho told me, 'Out of all the women in this land, we have chosen this one. Let her offer herself as a sacrifice to the lake monster! And on that day, the rain will come down in torrents. Let everyone stay at home on that day, lest he be carried away by the floods.'"

Tradition and Change How might a decision to ignore the rainmaker's request affect Luo tradition?

Outside there was a strange stillness, except for the thirsty birds that sang lazily on the dying trees. The blinding mid-day heat had forced the people to retire to their huts. Not far away from the chief's hut, two guards were snoring away quietly. Labong'o removed his crown and the large eagle-head that hung loosely on his shoulders. He left the hut, and instead of asking Nyabog'o the messenger to beat the drum, he went straight and beat it himself. In no time the whole household had assembled under the siala tree where he usually addressed them. He told Oganda to wait a while in her grandmother's hut.

When Labong'o stood to address his household, his voice was hoarse and the tears choked him. He started to speak, but words refused to leave his lips. His wives and sons knew there was great danger. Perhaps their enemies had declared war on them. Labong'o's eyes were red, and they could see he had been weeping. At last he told them. "One whom we love and treasure must be taken away from us. Oganda is to die." Labong'o's voice was so faint, that he could not hear it himself. But he continued, "The ancestors have chosen her to be offered as a sacrifice to the lake monster in order that we may have rain."

They were completely stunned. As a confused murmur broke out, Oganda's mother fainted and was carried off to her own hut. But the other people rejoiced. They danced around singing and chanting, "Oganda is the lucky one to die for the people. If it is to save the people, let Oganda go."

In her grandmother's hut Oganda wondered what the whole family were discussing about her that she could not hear. Her grandmother's hut was well away from the

Setting What elements of the setting highlight the problem the Luo face?

chief's court and, much as she strained her ears, she could not hear what was said. "It must be marriage," she concluded. It was an accepted custom for the family to discuss their daughter's future marriage behind her back. A faint smile played on Oganda's lips as she thought of the several young men who swallowed saliva at the mere mention of her name.

There was Kech, the son of a neighboring clan elder. Kech was very handsome. He had sweet, meek eyes and a roaring laughter. He would make a wonderful father, Oganda thought. But they would not be a good match. Kech was a bit too short to be her husband. It would humiliate her to have to look down at Kech each time she spoke to him. Then she thought of Dimo, the tall young man who had already distinguished himself as a brave warrior and an outstanding wrestler. Dimo adored Oganda, but Oganda thought he would make a cruel husband, always quarreling and ready to fight. No, she did not like him. Oganda fingered the glittering chain on her waist as she thought of Osinda. A long time ago when she was quite young Osinda had given her that chain, and instead of wearing it around her neck several times, she wore it round her waist where it could stay permanently. She heard her heart pounding so loudly as she thought of him. She whispered, "Let it be you they are discussing, Osinda, the lovely one. Come now and take me away . . ."

The lean figure in the doorway startled Oganda, who was rapt in thought about the man she loved. "You have frightened me, Grandma," said Oganda laughing. "Tell me, is it my marriage you are discussing? You can take it from me that I won't marry any of

them." A smile played on her lips again. She was coaxing the old lady to tell her quickly, to tell her they were pleased with Osinda.

In the open space outside the excited relatives were dancing and singing. They were coming to the hut now, each carrying a gift to put at Oganda's feet. As their singing got nearer Oganda was able to hear what they were saying: "If it is to save the people, if it is to give us rain, let Oganda go. Let Oganda die for her people, and for her ancestors." Was she mad to think that they were singing about her? How could she die? She found the lean figure of her grandmother barring the door. She could not get out. The look on her grandmother's face warned her that there was danger around the corner. "Mother, it is not marriage then?" Oganda asked urgently. She suddenly felt panicky like a mouse cornered by a hungry cat. Forgetting that there was only one door in the hut Oganda fought desperately to find another exit. She must fight for her life. But there was none.

She closed her eyes, leapt like a wild tiger through the door, knocking her grandmother flat to the ground. There outside in mourning garments Labong'o stood motionless, his hands folded at the back. He held his daughter's hand and led her away from the excited crowd to the little red-painted hut where her mother was resting. Here he broke the news officially to his daughter.

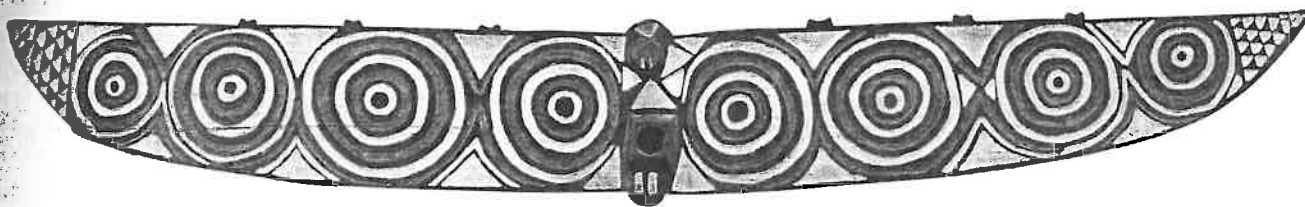
For a long time the three souls who loved one another dearly sat in darkness. It was no good speaking. And even if they tried, the

Setting How might the setting here symbolize Oganda's dilemma?

Vocabulary

coax (kōks) *v.* to persuade by means of gentle urging or flattery

Analyze Cultural Context In the paragraph that follows, what does Oganda's assessment of possible husbands indicate about Luo marriage customs?



Bobo Butterfly Mask, Early 20th century. BWA People, Burkina Faso. Pigment on wood, width: 245.1 cm. Collection of Thomas G. B. Wheelock.

words could not have come out. In the past they had been like three cooking stones, sharing their burdens. Taking Oganda away from them would leave two useless stones which would not hold a cooking-pot.



Visual Vocabulary
Cooking stones are rocks that support a cooking pot.

News that the beautiful daughter of the chief was to be sacrificed to give the people rain spread across the country like wind. At sunset the chief's village was full of relatives and friends who had come to congratulate Oganda. Many more were on their way coming, carrying their gifts. They would dance till morning to keep her company. And in the morning they would prepare her a big farewell feast. All these relatives thought it a great honor to be selected by the spirits to die, in order that the society may live. "Oganda's name will always remain a living name among us," they boasted.

But was it maternal love that prevented Minya from rejoicing with the other women? Was it the memory of the agony and pain of childbirth that made her feel so sorrowful? Or was it the deep warmth and understanding that passes between a suckling babe and her mother that made Oganda part of her life, her flesh? Of course it was an honor, a great honor, for her daughter to be

chosen to die for the country. But what could she gain once her daughter was blown away by the wind? There were so many other women in the land, why choose her daughter, her only child! Had human life any meaning at all—other women had houses full of children while she, Minya, had to lose her only child!

In the cloudless sky the moon shone brightly, and the numerous stars glittered with a bewitching beauty. The dancers of all age-groups assembled to dance before Oganda, who sat close to her mother, sobbing quietly. All these years she had been with her people she thought she understood them. But now she discovered that she was a stranger among them. If they loved her as they had always professed why were they not making any attempt to save her? Did her people really understand what it felt like to die young? Unable to restrain her emotions any longer, she sobbed loudly as her age-group got up to dance. They were young and beautiful and very soon they would marry and have their own children. They would have husbands to love and little huts for themselves. They would have reached maturity. Oganda touched the chain around her waist as she thought of Osinda. She wished Osinda was there too, among her friends. "Perhaps he is ill," she thought gravely. The chain comforted

Analyze Cultural Context How will Oganda's relatives benefit from her death?

Tradition and Change In this passage, how do the traditions of her people affect Oganda's perception of her community?

Oganda—she would die with it around her waist and wear it in the underground world.

In the morning a big feast was prepared for Oganda. The women prepared many different tasty dishes so that she could pick and choose. "People don't eat after death," they said. Delicious though the food looked, Oganda touched none of it. Let the happy people eat. She contented herself with sips of water from a little calabash. The time for her departure was drawing near, and each minute was precious. It was a day's journey to the lake. She was to walk all night, passing through the great forest. But nothing could touch her, not even the **denizens** of the forest. She was already anointed with sacred oil. From the time Oganda received the sad news she had expected Osinda to appear any moment. But he was not there. A relative told her that Osinda was away on a private visit. Oganda realized that she would never see her beloved again.

In the afternoon the whole village stood at the gate to say good-bye and to see her for the last time. Her mother wept on her neck for a long time. The great chief in a mourning skin came to the gate barefooted, and mingled with the people—a simple father in grief. He took off his wrist bracelet and put it on his daughter's wrist saying, "You will always live among us. The spirit of our forefathers is with you."

Tongue-tied and unbelieving Oganda stood there before the people. She had nothing to say. She looked at her home once more. She could hear her heart beating so painfully within her. All her childhood plans were coming to an end. She felt

like a flower nipped in the bud never to enjoy the morning dew again. She looked at her weeping mother, and whispered, "Whenever you want to see me, always look at the sunset. I will be there."

Oganda turned southwards to start her trek to the lake. Her parents, relatives, friends and admirers stood at the gate and watched her go.

Her beautiful slender figure grew smaller and smaller till she mingled with the thin dry trees in the forest. As Oganda walked the lonely path that wound its way in the wilderness, she sang a song, and her own voice kept her company.

*The ancestors have said Oganda must die
The daughter of the chief must be
sacrificed,
When the lake monster feeds on my flesh.
The people will have rain.
Yes, the rain will come down in torrents.
And the floods will wash away the sandy
beaches
When the daughter of the chief dies in
the lake.
My age-group has consented
My parents have consented
So have my friends and relatives.
Let Oganda die to give us rain.
My age-group are young and ripe,
Ripe for womanhood and motherhood
But Oganda must die young,
Oganda must sleep with the ancestors.
Yes, rain will come down in torrents.*

The red rays of the setting sun embraced Oganda, and she looked like a burning candle in the wilderness.

Analyze Cultural Context *What Luo custom is noted in this passage, and what seems to be its significance?*

Vocabulary

denizen (den'ə zən) *n.* an inhabitant

Setting *What characteristics of the setting stand out as Oganda leaves the village?*

Analyze Cultural Context *What role does the "age-group" seem to have in Luo society?*

The people who came to hear her sad song were touched by her beauty. But they all said the same thing: "If it is to save the people, if it is to give us rain, then be not afraid. Your name will forever live among us."

At midnight Oganda was tired and weary. She could walk no more. She sat under a big tree, and having sipped water from her calabash, she rested her head on the tree trunk and slept.

When Oganda woke up in the morning the sun was high in the sky. After walking for many hours, she reached the *tong'*, a strip of land that separated the inhabited part of the country from the sacred place (*kar lamo*). No layman could enter this place and come out alive—only those who had direct contact with the spirits and the Almighty were allowed to enter this holy of holies. But Oganda had to pass through this sacred land on her way to the lake, which she had to reach at sunset.

A large crowd gathered to see her for the last time. Her voice was now hoarse and painful, but there was no need to worry any more. Soon she would not have to sing. The crowd looked at Oganda sympathetically, mumbling words she could not hear. But none of them pleaded for life. As Oganda opened the gate, a child, a young child, broke loose from the crowd, and ran towards her. The child took a small earring from her sweaty hands and gave it to Oganda saying, "When you reach the world of the dead, give this earring to my sister. She died last week. She forgot this ring." Oganda, taken aback by the strange request, took the little ring, and handed her precious water and food to the child. She did not need them now. Oganda did not know whether to laugh or cry. She had heard mourners sending their love to their sweethearts, long dead, but this idea of sending gifts was new to her.



Nighttime Landscape 1. Wendy L. Goldberg-Hammon. Getty collection.

Oganda held her breath as she crossed the barrier to enter the sacred land. She looked appealingly at the crowd, but there was no response. Their minds were too pre-occupied with their own survival. Rain was the precious medicine they were longing for, and the sooner Oganda could get to her destination the better.

A strange feeling possessed Oganda as she picked her way in the sacred land. There were strange noises that often startled her, and her first reaction was to take to her heels. But she remembered that she had to fulfill the wish of her people. She was exhausted, but the path was still winding. Then suddenly the path ended on sandy land. The water had retreated miles away from the shore leaving a wide stretch of sand. Beyond this was the vast expanse of water.

Oganda felt afraid. She wanted to picture the size and shape of the monster, but fear would not let her. The society did not talk about it, nor did the crying children who were silenced by the mention of its name. The sun was still up, but it was no longer hot. For a long time Oganda walked ankle-deep in the sand. She was exhausted and longed desperately for her calabash of water. As she moved on, she had a strange feeling

that something was following her. Was it the monster? Her hair stood erect, and a cold paralyzing feeling ran along her spine. She looked behind, sideways and in front, but there was nothing, except a cloud of dust.

Oganda pulled up and hurried but the feeling did not leave her, and her whole body became saturated with perspiration.

The sun was going down fast and the lake shore seemed to move along with it.

Oganda started to run. She must be at the lake before sunset. As she ran she heard a noise from behind. She looked back sharply, and something resembling a moving bush was frantically running after her. It was about to catch up with her.

Oganda ran with all her strength. She was now determined to throw herself into the water even before sunset. She did not look back, but the creature was upon her. She made an effort to cry out, as in a nightmare, but she could not hear her own voice. The creature caught up with Oganda. In the utter confusion, as Oganda came face to face with the unidentified creature, a strong hand grabbed her. But she fell flat on the sand and fainted.

When the lake breeze brought her back to consciousness, a man was bending over her. ".....!" Oganda opened her mouth to speak, but she had lost her voice. She swallowed a mouthful of water poured into her mouth by the stranger.

"Osinda, Osinda! Please let me die. Let me run, the sun is going down. Let me die, let them have rain." Osinda fondled the glittering chain around Oganda's waist and wiped the tears from her face.

"We must escape quickly to the unknown land," Osinda said urgently. "We

must run away from the wrath of the ancestors and the **retaliation** of the monster."

"But the curse is upon me, Osinda, I am no good to you any more. And moreover the eyes of the ancestors will follow us everywhere and bad luck will befall us. Nor can we escape from the monster."

Oganda broke loose, afraid to escape, but Osinda grabbed her hands again.

"Listen to me, Oganda! Listen! Here are two coats!" He then covered the whole of Oganda's body, except her eyes, with a leafy attire made from the twigs of *Bwombwe*.

"These will protect us from the eyes of the ancestors and the wrath of the monster. Now let us run out of here." He held Oganda's hand and they ran from the sacred land, avoiding the path that Oganda had followed.

The bush was thick, and the long grass entangled their feet as they ran. Halfway through the sacred land they stopped and looked back. The sun was almost touching the surface of the water. They were frightened. They continued to run, now faster, to avoid the sinking sun.

"Have faith, Oganda—that thing will not reach us."

When they reached the barrier and looked behind them trembling, only a tip of the sun could be seen above the water's surface.

"It is gone! It is gone!" Oganda wept, hiding her face in her hands.

"Weep not, daughter of the chief. Let us run, let us escape."

There was a bright lightning. They looked up, frightened. Above them black furious clouds started to gather. They began to run. Then the thunder roared, and the rain came down in torrents. ☁

Tradition and Change How might Oganda's possible death have changed the way Osinda views tradition?

Vocabulary

retaliation (ri tal' ē ā' shən) n. revenge

After You Read

Respond and Think Critically

Respond and Interpret

1. What was your reaction to the outcome of the story?
2. (a) According to the medicine man's prophecy, what is the only way to end the drought in Oganda's village? (b) Why does Labong'o obey the prophecy?
3. (a) How do the villagers react when Labong'o tells them about the prophecy? (b) Why does Oganda feel like a stranger among her people during the feast held in her honor?
4. (a) How does Oganda react when she realizes what is planned for her? (b) Do you think Oganda's feelings about her fate change as the story unfolds? Explain.

Analyze and Evaluate

5. (a) An **internal conflict** is a struggle within a character's mind. Describe one internal conflict in "The Rain Came." (b) Is this conflict resolved convincingly? Explain.
6. (a) A **symbol** is an object or an action that stands for something else in addition to itself. What does the brass chain around Oganda's waist symbolize? (b) Do you think this is an effective symbol? Explain.

Connect

7. **Big Idea Tradition and Change** What view of Luo tradition does "The Rain Came" offer the reader? Explain.
8. **Connect to Today** What kinds of sacrifices do people today make for the good of their communities?

Daily Life & Culture

Proverbs from Kenya

The oral traditions of African peoples are rich in **proverbs**. These short, vivid sayings express a truth about life or contain a bit of popular wisdom. The following proverbs are from the Luo and Kikuyu peoples, two of the largest ethnic groups in Kenya.

Luo Proverbs

A cowardly hyena lives for many years.

An eye that you treat is the one that turns against you.

The fierce white ants cause the death of the kind and harmless ants.

Kikuyu Proverbs

To get the warmth of fire one must stir the embers.

Darkness caused to dance even him who cannot.

Group Activity Discuss the following questions with your classmates. Refer to the proverbs.

1. The Luo proverb about the ants refers to two species that live together: destructive termites and a species the Luo value as food. What do you think the proverb means?
2. What proverbs do you know that are similar to any of the ones here?

Literary Element Setting

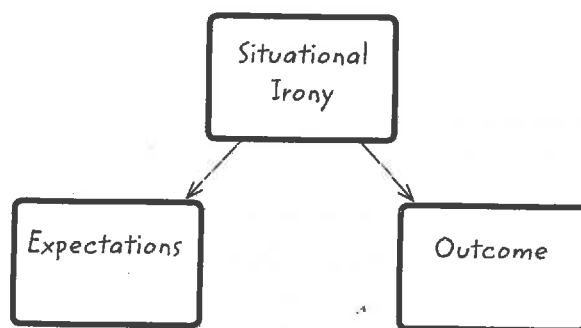
ACT Skills Practice

1. The setting of Ogot's "The Rain Came" evokes a mood of
 - A. boredom and frustration.
 - B. joviality and freedom.
 - C. urgency and conflict.
 - D. exhilaration and chaos.
2. As members of Luo society, the chief and his daughter
 - F. must adhere to its customs.
 - G. find hope in its desolation.
 - H. must convert outsiders to its culture.
 - J. trick people to gain social status.

Review: Situational Irony

As you learned on page 52, **irony** is a discrepancy between reality and appearance or expectations. **Situational irony** occurs when the outcome of a situation is the opposite of what is expected.

Partner Activity With a partner, identify and explain the situational irony in this story. Use a diagram like the one below to record your information.



Literature Online

Selection Resources For Selection Quizzes, eFlashcards, and Reading-Writing Connection activities, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GLW6053u1.

Reading Strategy Analyze Cultural Context

The traditional beliefs and customs of the Luo people shape the narrative of "The Rain Came." Review your chart on cultural context on page 108 and answer the following questions.

1. How would you describe traditional Luo religious beliefs?
2. What is the relationship between the individual and the community in traditional Luo society?

Vocabulary Practice

Practice with Analogies Choose the word that best completes each analogy. Use a dictionary if you need help.

1. consecrate : holy :: sanitize :
 - a. lovely
 - b. clean
 - c. small
2. rebuke : commend :: gratify :
 - a. disappoint
 - b. tease
 - c. warn
3. coax : force :: offer :
 - a. deserve
 - b. metal
 - c. steal
4. denizen : outsider :: enemy :
 - a. war
 - b. innocent
 - c. ally
5. retaliation : revenge :: quarantine :
 - a. isolation
 - b. freedom
 - c. loneliness

Academic Vocabulary

Oganda's people believe that sacrificing her to the monster will **guarantee** the end of the drought.

Guarantee is an academic word. In a commercial setting, a salesperson might say that she will **guarantee** your satisfaction with a product. To further explore the meaning of this word, answer the following question: What are some enterprises in which success is difficult to **guarantee**, and why?

For more on academic vocabulary, see pages 36–37 and R83–R85.