In “The Mountain,” a boy learns that in the dark, ancestral beliefs can conquer his rational, European education; a bitter old man teaches his grandson ancient skills that are fading from the lives of his increasingly Westernized people in “Who Will Stop the Darkness.” His prose captures the inevitable clash between the homogenizing advance of Occidental culture and disappearing traditional life styles.

Charles Mungoshi's collection of short stories, **Coming of the Dry Season**, provides a series of vignettes of life in colonial Rhodesia and postcolonial Zimbabwe. Some [critics](http://www.postcolonialweb.org/zimbabwe/mungoshi/jefferson.html) have argued that the text as a whole functions as one cohesive novel, with characters, issues, and themes remaining consistent throughout the ten chapters. While to this author, the text of **Coming of the Dry Season** seems to defy classification as a novel, it is important to note that [several themes do in fact recur](http://www.postcolonialweb.org/zimbabwe/mungoshi/braman.html) within the stories of the text. As a discussion and often an indictment of the colonial systems of governance and power set up in Zimbabwe, as well as their effects on the colonized subjects' relationships to each other and to their traditional ways of life and belief, the topic of education comes up frequently throughout the different stories and situations in this text. The establishment of education as the way for children to find better lives and opportunities for both themselves and their families, the creation of a social system in which the educated are granted higher status than those without schooling, and a created alienation between those who are educated in the English tradition and their own cultures are each illustrated in several of Mungoshi's tales.

In "The Mountain," the narrator immediately establishes the fact that how far a student progresses in school is a status marker between peers:

We were the same age although I bossed him because I was in Form Two while he had gone only as far as Standard Two. He had to stop because his father, who didn't believe in school anyway, said he could not get the money to send Chemai to a boarding school. We had grown up together and had become great friends but now I tolerated him only for old time's sake and because there was no one within miles who could be friends with me. Someone who had gone to school, I mean. (Mungoshi, 15)

The school to which this character refers is obviously one that comes from an imported, English background. Mungoshi is careful to point out that these boys were friends on an equal level until they entered into this alien school system, and that it was the values and social hierarchies imposed by this institution that created the rift between them. The impetus to socialize with someone becomes not that you share interests or a common background, but rather that you are both involved in this educational apparatus. Here, the effect of removing traditional, indigenous networks of value and social behavior from the colonized subject in favor of those of the colonizing powers is clear. Further evidence of the competing value systems lies in the fact that Chemai's father did not believe in schooling, apparently favoring more traditional Zimbabwean methods of education in the ways of the home and the family. As in several of the other works we have seen, the prohibitive cost of education in this system is also a factor and serves to further stratify social and economic classes on the basis of educational access.

Chemai, too, recognizes the differences that education (or, the lack of it) has created between his friend and himself. He, having left school, speaks with and believes in the stories of his people, justifying his words with such statements as "All the people say so" (15). He knows that his friend feels superior to him in terms of knowledge and the right to speak and be believed, as he exclaims, "You know it's true but just because you have been to school you think you know better" (15). Clear rifts are being illustrated here between the life and beliefs of those who have been educated in the colonial schools, and those who have not. Still, the narrator clings to his notions of superiority and the absolute truth of all that he was taught in school.

The boy begins to waver in his confidence, however, as he goes further up the mountain, closer to the ways and life of his people, and further away from the classrooms and the teachers who would have him disdain his heritage,

There are many things that must be left unsaid at night, but Chemai kept on talking of them. Of course the teachers said that this was all nonsense. I wished it were as easy to say so here as at school or in your heart as in your mouth. (16)

Here, the conflict between the intellectual ideas that the narrator has encountered at school and still hopes to cling to and the realities of his experiences and heart becomes more pronounced. His fears and the words of his friend, as well as what the reader can assume to be past conversations with relatives and traditions that he has encountered in his home, begin to take hold of him, and to suggest that perhaps it is not the mouth by which we are ruled, after all.

As the story concludes, the narrator, in his attempt at defiance of Chemai and the beliefs he represents, is stuck with a mountain goat whose spirit he has offended in his callous laughter. His attempts to shrug off both this goat and the culture that it comes to represent to him do not seem to work. He ends up in the home of his superstitious grandmother, the one who refused to assimilate to new ways and wished to remain in her original, old village, fully trusting in her capabilities to aid him,

Grandmother was eating medicines and Chemai was watching her intently. I felt safe. Somebody who knew was taking care of things at last. It is a comforting feeling to have someone who knows take care of those things you don't know. (21)

The narrator's adventures with Chemai and the goat force him to confront the mismatch of the ideas he has encountered in school with the beliefs and circumstances that he will encounter in the world in which he is living. His education does not serve him at all when he is faced with the goat's spirit, and the superior position that he had formerly taken on for himself as a result of his educated status is given over to his grandmother, who in this situation, is the one with the knowledge and experience to achieve the desired result. Mungoshi, in "The Mountain," paints a picture of the contradictions that the colonialized subject, as he encounters the educational institutions of the powers that seek to keep him in a subordinated position, must navigate.

**Interpretive Questions: Be sure to answer all questions in**[complete](http://schepperssje.weebly.com/the-mountain.html)**sentences using quotes to support.**1.) 1.) Why is Nharo unable to keep himself from being afraid?  
^^^^^^Nharo is unable to keep himself form being himself because he is afraid of the dark, the lady's laughing, drums beating, cows lowing, cattle driving whistles of herd boys, or rice spread out to dry on rocks because he knows that thjey are possible. " ' Sometimes you can hear drums beating up there and cows lowing and teh cattle-driving whistles of the herd boys. Somethimes early in the morning sun you see rice spread out to dry on the rocks. And you vcan hear wonen laughing at a washing place on a river but you can not see them.' " (page 146)  
  
2.) Why does Nharo say that he could not be CHemai’s friend “without catching his fever”? (p. 144)  
^^^^^^Nharo says that he could not be Chemai's friend "without catching his fever"? (page 144) because since Chamai is tell all these creepy stories about the Spirit of the Mountain.  
  
3.) Why does Nharo say, “But it would not help us to show Chemai that I was frightened too”? (p. 146)  
^^^^^^Nharo says, “But it would not help us to show Chemai that I was frightened too”? (p. 146) because he wants to show he is not weak, doesn't want to worry Chamai even more, or even scare Chami even more.  
  
4.) Why does Nharo ask Chemai why the road couldn’t be constructed across the mountain if Nharo has already heard the reason?  
^^^^^^Nharo ask Chami why the road couldn't be constructed across teh mountain if Nharo has already heard the reason because he wants do do something to waste him tim eto be a little less afraid than he already is. " ' But i  heard that the mou tains was too steep and there were too many, short turns.' " (page 147)  
  
  
5.) After Chemai accuses Nharo of insulting the goat, why does Nharo think, “It was no use pretending I didn’t know what I was doing.  I knew these goats.  Lost spirits”? (p. 149)  
^^^^^^After Chemai accuses Nharo of insulting the goat, Nharo think “It was no use pretending I didn’t know what I was doing.  I knew these goats.  Lost spirits”? (p. 149) because he already knwos ever since he was a kid that a goat follows you everywhere.  
  
  
6.) Over the course of the story, does Narho’s attitude about the mountain change?  
^^^^^^Nharo's attitude changes about the mountain because before he thinks he is smarter because he goes to a school and Chamai doesn't and in the end Nharo believes since the goat started following him. " ' Oh, what's wrong with you? You know it's true but jsut because you have been to school you think you know better.' " (page 145)  
  
7.) At the beginning of the story, why does Nharo say he likes to think of their path “as a question, marked by the mountain”? (p. 143)  
^^^^^^At the beginning of the story Nharo says he like sto think their path "as a question, marked by the mountain"? (page 143) because they don't know where they are going, or because the mountain has a bunch of beliefs so they don't know what is gonna happen  
  
8.) Why does Nharo think that only “someone who had gone to school” could be friend with him? (p. 144)  
^^^^^^Nharo thinks that only "someone who had gone to school" could be friends with him"? (page 144) because his only friend is Chamai and everyone else lives farther away from him.  
  
9.) Why does Nharo feel “safe and warm” in his grandmother’s hut if his grandmother reminds him of his childhood nightmares? (p. 151)  
^^^^^^Nharo feels " safe and warm" (page 151) in his grandmothers hut because his grandmother is making medicine, his friend is watching his grandmother, and he has a feeling that the goat is harmless.  
  
10.) At the end of the story, what does Nharo mean when he says that “somebody who knew” was taking care of things? (p. 151)  
^^^^^^At the end of the story Nharo says that "somebody who knew" (page 151) was taking care of things since his grandmother was making medicines for him to get the goat to stop following him.   
  
**Vocabulary:**  
1.) **Tolerated (p. 143)**  
Quote: "We had grown up together and become great friends but now I tolerated him only for old time's sake and because there was know one within miles who could be friends with me." (page 143)  
Definition (based on context/in your own words): Put up with  
Synonym: Allow  
Sentence (underline the vocabulary word): I could not **tolerate** her wierd behavior.  
  
2.) **Irritating (p. 144)**  
Quote: "It can be irritating when someone you are waling with goes on talking when you dont wnat to - especially at night." (page 144)  
Definition (based on context/in your own words):annoying   
Synonym: exasperating  
Sentence (underline the vocabulary word): Mt brother was really **irritating**when he was possessive over his drink.  
  
3.) **Appease (p. 149)**  
Quote: "And when this happened it needed the elders and much medicine brewing to appease them, tpo make them go away." (page 149)  
Definition (based on context/in your own words): please them   
Synonym: satisfy  
Sentence (underline the vocabulary word): She **appeased**them with her routine.  
  
4.) **Vigorously (p. 149)**  
Quote: " I saw his head shake vigorously in the dark. " (page 149)  
Definition (based on context/in your own words): quickly  
Synonym: aggresivly  
Sentence (underline the vocabulary word): She **vigoriuosly** kicked her way to the front of the line