**Summary**

The night [Effia](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/effia) is born, a [fire](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/symbols/fire) is raging through the woods in Fanteland. It moves through the forest for days, wrecking everything in its path. Effia’s father, [Cobbe Otcher](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/cobbe-otcher), leaves Effia with his first wife, [Baaba](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/baaba), to survey his yams, which have been damaged. He is haunted by the sight of the fire, and tells Baaba never to speak of what happened that day.

**Analysis**

The beginning of the novel introduces the recurring motif of fire. Here and throughout the book, fire represents destruction and the pain of slavery that Effia and her descendants ultimately support at the expense of Effia’s half-sister, Esi.

**Summary**

The villagers say that [Effia](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/effia) had been born of that [fire](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/symbols/fire), and that was why [Baaba](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/baaba) had no milk. Effia is nursed by another of [Cobbe](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/cobbe-otcher)’s wives, but she bites the woman until the woman is too afraid to feed her. Effia then grows thin and screams all day. Baaba dreams of leaving the baby in the dark forest, but Cobbe commands Baaba to love the girl.

Effia is said to be born of that fire because, as is ultimately revealed, she is actually the daughter of Cobbe’s servant Maame, whom he had raped. Thus, even before Effia and her son become officially involved in the slave trade, she is already a product of a society that allows and perpetuates slavery.

**Active Themes**

**Analysis**

[Effia](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/effia) grows older. When Effia is three, [Baaba](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/baaba) has a son named [Fiifi](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters). The first day that Effia holds Fiifi, she accidentally drops him. Fiifi is undisturbed by this, but Baaba beats Effia with her stirring stick, leaving hot stew burning into her flesh. When Baaba finishes, Effia is covered with sores, screaming and crying.

Family is vital to the characters in *Homegoing*. Baaba’s bad treatment of Effia, in contrast to the tender way she treats Fiifi, highlights the importance of being related by blood, as Effia is not Baaba’s biological daughter.

**Active Themes**

Family and Progress Theme Icon

**Summary**

When [Cobbe](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/cobbe-otcher) comes home and discovers what happened, he and [Baaba](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/baaba) fight into the night, and he beats her for the cruel way she treated [Effia](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/effia). This begins a cycle: Baaba beats Effia; Cobbe beats Baaba.

While Baaba treats Effia poorly, Cobbe protects her because she is in fact biologically related to him. This cycle of beating also demonstrates how women experience violence at the hands of both women and men.

**Active Themes**

[**Download it!**](https://www.litcharts.com/sign-up?book=homegoing&focus=pdf&utm_source=stretch_left_promo)

**Analysis**

When [Effia](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/effia) turns twelve, she begins to blossom into a young woman. The men of the village wait for her to begin her menstrual cycle so that they can ask [Cobbe](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/homegoing/characters/cobbe-otcher) for her hand in marriage. The family starts to receive gifts from the men.

The gifts and attitudes of the men reveal the key role of the women in society and for individual families: to be married off for a good price and to have children.

**Active Themes**

Family and Progress Theme Icon

Gender Stereotypes, Sexism, and Violence Theme Icon