

1. Discuss the significance of the title *Second-Class Citizen* in relation to Adah's experience in England.

The title *Second-Class Citizen* is highly symbolic and reflects Adah's experience of marginalization as both a woman and a Black immigrant in Britain. In Nigeria, Adah already faces gender discrimination; however, it is in Britain that she truly feels dehumanized by society.

The term "second-class citizen" refers to a person who is systematically discriminated against and denied equal rights. Adah realizes this when she encounters racism in housing:

"Sorry, no coloureds, no children."

Despite being educated and driven, she is viewed as inferior due to her race and status as a foreigner. Furthermore, her husband Francis reinforces this status by dismissing her ambitions and reminding her of her place:

"You are only a woman. What do you know?"

Thus, the title encapsulates the emotional and social alienation Adah suffers. However, it also highlights her resistance to this imposed status. As she gains confidence and asserts her independence, she begins to reject the limitations placed upon her, aspiring to write and claim her voice. The title is therefore both a commentary on societal oppression and a reference to Adah's internal journey toward self-worth.

2. Examine the role of gender in the novel. How does Adah challenge the patriarchal norms of both Nigerian and British society?

Gender is a central theme in *Second-Class Citizen*, and Emecheta uses Adah's character to critique patriarchal structures in both Nigerian and British contexts. In Nigeria, girls are seen as less valuable than boys. Adah's early struggle to get an education demonstrates this:

"She was a girl who had been brought up to believe that boys were the only ones worth educating."

Adah's desire to succeed intellectually and professionally defies these expectations. Her move to England is motivated by ambition, not just duty to her husband. However, once in England, she faces new forms of gendered oppression. Francis expects her to be submissive and even burns her writing, symbolically trying to silence her voice:

“Francis took her manuscript and threw it into the fireplace.”

Despite these setbacks, Adah evolves into a symbol of female resilience. She secures a job, raises her children, and eventually begins to write, asserting her autonomy. Through Adah, Emecheta shows that while gender norms are deeply entrenched, they can be challenged through education, inner strength, and self-belief.

3. How does Emecheta use setting to reflect Adah’s internal and external struggles?

Emecheta uses setting as a reflection of Adah’s mental and emotional state. In Nigeria, although restrictive, Adah’s world contains hope; she sees education as a path forward. The move to England, however, introduces her to physical and social environments that mirror her displacement.

The harsh London climate, cramped living conditions, and unwelcoming landlords reflect her alienation:

“The room was damp, the ceiling brown with rot, and the only light came from a single broken window.”

This description of her accommodation parallels her psychological state—trapped, cold, and barely surviving. Emecheta emphasizes how the "mother country" is indifferent to immigrants’ dreams. The oppressive surroundings are also internalized by Adah, who struggles with self-doubt.

As Adah begins to reclaim her identity, the narrative shifts from detailed external settings to internal reflections, showing her emotional growth. The contrast between environments in Nigeria and Britain strengthens the novel’s theme of cultural dislocation and personal resilience.

4. In what ways is *Second-Class Citizen* a feminist novel?

Second-Class Citizen is a feminist novel because it critiques the societal norms that suppress women and charts the journey of a woman discovering her strength and agency. Adah’s story exemplifies resistance against both traditional and modern patriarchal structures.

From childhood, Adah fights for education in a male-dominated culture. In marriage, she is expected to serve her husband and remain silent. Francis embodies this oppressive masculinity:

“He wanted to be obeyed. Not consulted, obeyed.”

Despite these challenges, Adah insists on working and dreams of writing. Her actions challenge both African and Western expectations of female behavior. Even when her husband tries to silence her by destroying her manuscript, she persists.

“She had always known she would write.”

Emecheta’s portrayal of Adah’s journey reflects the feminist ideal of personal autonomy. The novel doesn’t just expose injustice; it empowers its protagonist and, by extension, its readers.

5. Compare the presentation of male and female roles in the novel. What commentary does Emecheta provide on marriage and family?

Emecheta contrasts male and female roles to expose the imbalance of power in marriage and family. Men like Francis are portrayed as emotionally distant and entitled. He expects obedience without contributing emotionally or financially:

“He was the father. The head. Even if he did not provide, he was still the boss.”

Women, by contrast, are burdened with work, childcare, and emotional labor. Adah is both a mother and a breadwinner, yet is treated as inferior. Emecheta uses this imbalance to critique traditional marriage structures that do not value women's contributions.

The novel shows that marriage can become a tool of oppression when it reinforces outdated gender roles. Adah eventually decides to leave her abusive husband, an act that defies cultural expectations but reclaims her dignity.

Thus, Emecheta presents female roles as evolving, and male roles as rigid and destructive. She advocates for a redefinition of family based on mutual respect and shared responsibility.