

## **Belonging: Home is where the heart is (chapters 56–62)**



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- 1** GROUP WORK: How did you feel after reading the ending of *Behold the Dreamers*? How did you feel when the Jongas returned to Cameroon? Talk in groups.

**2** IN PAIRS: What does home mean to you? Is it a place, a feeling or something else? Make an equation.

`home =`

**IN PAIRS:** Read Clark's poem and summarise his idea of home

Home

Home will never go away

Home will be here when you come back

- 3 You may go to bring back fortune  
You may go to escape misfortune  
You may even go, just because you want to go
  - 6 But when you come back  
We hope you'll come back  
Home will still be here.

## Home is a fixed place

## People waiting for someone

- 4 Analyse the poem's use of language.

→ use the file on stylistic devices

Anaphor  
Parallelism/Contrast

→ KNOWLEDGE BOX  
Stylistic devices, p. 34

- 5 Explain Clark's transformation after Cindy's death and his view of home.

IV

**6** Compare Jende's and Neni's different attitudes towards home.

What does each character expect from their return to Limbe? How do these expectations reflect their personal and cultural identities? Use the quotes (p. 143).

**PARTNER A: Jende****PARTNER B: Neni****7** On a separate sheet of paper, write a poem from either Neni's or Jende's perspective.

You can also write your own poem about what home means to you.

You may consider the following prompts:

- What does home mean when you are forced to leave it?
- How does the sense of belonging shift with place?
- How do you reconcile the past with the present in your concept of home?

Add on: Record your poem as a spoken-word piece and add a sound file to capture the emotion in your voice.

**PARTNER A: Jende**

"[T]his country is full of lies and people who like to hear lies. If you want to know the truth I'll tell you the truth: This country no longer has room for people like us. Anyone who has no sense can believe the lies and stay here forever, hoping that things will get better for them one day and they will be happy. As for me, I won't live my life in the hope that someday I will magically become happy. I refuse to!" (p. 332, l. 14 – p. 333, l. 3)



LERNHILFE  
Additional quotes  
[q-r.to/bfStj0](http://q-r.to/bfStj0)

"Jende was going to be somebody in Limbe when they returned. He was going to be a businessman. He would get a nice brick house for them in Sokolo or Batoke or Mile Four, and she would have a maid." (p. 350, l. 4–6)

"The truth, sir,' he said, 'is that my body may still be here, but my heart has already gone back home. It is true I came here to escape a hard life and I did not want to go back. But when I had no choice but to go back, I found myself happy thinking about home, sir. I will miss America, but it will be good to live in my own country again. I already picture myself going to visit my father's grave to show him my daughter. I see myself walking around Limbe with my friends, getting a drink, taking my son to the stadium. I am no longer afraid of my country the way I used to be.'" (p. 373, l. 23–31)

"Enough was enough. He wanted no more of life in a roachfilled apartment in a Harlem neighborhood of fried chicken joints, storefront churches, and funeral homes where young men in cornrows and saggy pants perpetually lingered outside, mourning one of their own and carelessly spitting in his direction. He wanted no more of climbing five flights of stairs to share a bed with his daughter while his son slept in a cot inches away. He wanted no more of smiling for appearances as he stacked dishes and polished silverware, and he certainly wanted no more of riding the subway from work late at night, arriving home sweaty, greasy, and drained.

To him, living such a life for another year would have been the curse. Not recognizing when to go back home would have been a curse. Not realizing that he would be happier sleeping in a bedroom separate from his children, going to visit his mother and his brothers whenever he wanted, meeting his friends at a boucarou in Down Beach for roasted fish and beer by the ocean, riding around in his own car and sweating outside in January ... that would have been the curse." (p. 359, l. 11 – p. 360, l. 11)

IV

**PARTNER B: Neni**

"I love New York so much, Jends,' she said.  
'I'm so happy here.'" (p. 350, l. 18f.)

"Having a man other women wanted was a curse masquerading as a blessing, she told herself. But it was a source of pride, nonetheless." (p. 350, l. 2f.)

"For her children, Neni wavered between joy and sorrow – joy for the beautiful things Cameroon would give them; sorrow for the things it wouldn't. They would grow up in a spacious house in Limbe, learn to speak French, master how to dance to *makossa* music. They would live near doting grandparents and too many uncles and aunts and cousins." (p. 350, l. 7–12)

"Neni, for her part, could summon no joy as the date of their departure drew close. Her tears flowed without provocation on the subway, at Pathmark, in Central Park, in the apartment in the middle of mundane chores. She felt no excitement at the thought of being reunited with her family and old friends, only apprehension at the notion that she might never be happy in Limbe as she'd been in New York. She worried that she might have too little in common with her friends, being that she was now so different from them, being that she had tasted a different kind of life and been transformed positively and negatively in so many different ways, being that life had expanded and contracted her in ways they could never imagine." (p. 360, l. 16–27)