

**THE DEFINITIVE  
GUIDE**

**TO**

**WHEN THE SUN  
GOES DOWN**

**BY**

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<b>The Guilt, Rayda Jacobs (South Africa)</b>	

## 1. Plot

### a. Introduction

We meet Mrs. Lilian Thurgood at the side of her house picking guavas. Her two dogs: Tembi and Tor alert her of somebody's presence at her gate. She is not a very strong woman; she walks with the aid of a cane. Flowers are everywhere sprouting in her compound and this gives her pleasure.

### b. Narrative Hook

She engages the man at the gate in a conversation

### c. Rising Action

William Sidlay has a letter to prove that he is collecting money for some organization. He is looking for handouts(donations) if he can't find work. Lilian doubts the authenticity of the letter.

Even as she rummages for change in her purse, she knew she was making a mistake to empathize with William. People like William took advantage of people like Lilian or murdered them. Lilian, like the rest of the whites, was filled with guilt of having gained her privileged position because of her race. She gives him the five rand, even though she could ill afford it.

### d. Climax

William offers to work for the money. He says it's too much. She opens the gate for him to clean her garden, despite doubts. He however refuses to stop working when she (Lilian) makes the request. She had to go into the

house for the phone was ringing. William followed her there.

e. Falling Action

Lilian bids him to leave but he declines. He demands 10 rand for his effort. When she threatens to call her husband, William tells her that she lives alone. He insists on ten rand besides the 5 he'd been given.

f. Dénouement

Feeling threatened she sets the dogs on him. She gets a gun from her bedroom. She gets back her five rand before seeing him off. Although she comes out of the episode unscathed, she does not boast about it to her friends, may be still consumes with guilt. Where there was guilt there was opportunity. Write an essay to confirm this using

Rayda Jacob's The Guilt for your illustrations.

2. Setting

The story is set in a white suburb in South Africa.

Mrs. Lilian (a pensioner) Thurgood's home is a fortress, 10 foot high wall fence, and has a large compound in which she has fruit trees: guavas and lemons. She also has flowers in her garden: geraniums, basil and oregano. She lives alone. The incident with William takes place in the morning.

3. Conflict.

"The Guilt" has both external and internal conflict.

i) Internal conflicts

- First Mrs. Lilian Thurgood experiences internal conflict. She did not have to answer the call at the gate. She says she had ignored many such calls.

- She also suffers from internal conflict when confronted with the forged letter William Sidlay presents. She takes it anyway.
- She is faced with another instance of internal conflict when she discovers that she has 5 rand 23 cents. The five rand she thinks is too much and the 23 cents too little. She gives him the five rand in spite of herself.
- Another instance of internal conflict is on the night it was raining and she had to get the door. She wonders whether it is racist to it one were afraid to open doors to strangers. She does it anyway to make for the guilt of benefitting from the old regime.

ii) External Conflict

- William Sidlay threatens Lilian physically. She gives Tembi & Tor the first command which allowed them to terrorise but not draw blood. She wonders what they might do if she gave the second signal she doesn't use it.
- Next, she goes for the gun which she uses to drive William out of her compound and survives a potentially murderous situation.

4. Characters

Although several characters are mentioned in this story, the action focuses on Lilian and William.

a. Lilian

Physical attributes

- She is a white woman over sixty-six years old and walks with a limp owing to a painful leg for which she takes medicine.
- Assign character traits to Mrs. Lilian Thurgood based on the following situations.

- i) "Can I help you?" Lilian asked.  
Respectful courteous
- ii) She handed the letter back to him and said, "wait here," kind
- iii) Based on the incidents with the African woman who'd knocked her door at night, the woman who'd seen her sitting in the "stoep", the man who rung persistently at her gate, you would say that Lilian is generous?
- iv) Her sudden anger when confronted with five rand 23 cents and she longs for her husband's presence – he would have ordered the man off the grounds.  
Insecure
- v) She would not lock the door behind her, she told herself. She trusted him.  
Naive/trusting
- vi) He came forward.  
"Sa!" Lilian commanded the dogs.  
Decisive
- vii) The fact that she did not give the last command to the Alsatians nor pull the trigger of the gun. humane
- viii) The fact that she did not tell the truth to Margaret, Ruth and Ethel May. modest

❖ Assign character traits to William Sidlay based on the following situations.

- i) The fact that he did not panic when confronted by Tembi & Tor. Calm courageous brave

- ii) The fact that he forged a letter to gain entry into white homes dishonest
- iii) The fact that he wanted the five rand besides demanding for 10 rand. greedy
- iv) The fact that he knew Lilian lived alone and that no one was going to come to her aid. scheming
- v) The fact that he moved towards Lilian when she threatened to call the police. menacing
- vi) Sidlay producing a letter allowing him to beg after being told by Lilian that she had no work. persistent

## 5. POV

The story is told from the omniscient narrator perspective.

## 6. Theme

- i) Guilt
 

All the generous actions of Mrs. Thurgood are driven by guilt-she says that it was making good on the guilt, the guilt they were accused of having.
- ii) Deception
  - a) William Sidlay forges a letter that he purports allows him to collect funds for an organisation. It is a plan to gain entry into white people's homes and either take advantage of their guilt or murder them.
  - b) The woman who'd seen Lilian sitting on the stoep deceives her that she will sell

her eight plants for four rand and plant them. She asks for water to wet the ground when Lilian returns with the hose she finds 30 plants planted and a bill of 12 rand which she had to pay.

iii) Race relations

- ❖ The blacks do anything in their power to take advantage of the whites.
- ❖ On their part, the whites feel inclined to help the blacks because of the guilt they have that their privileged position was a benefit of the previous white regime.

Question

Show that people pay dearly for showing their weaknesses. Using Rayda Jacob's „The Guilt“ show that this is true.

## **When the Sun Goes Down by Goro wa Kamau**

### **The Plot**

We meet Steve, a successful businessman, walking down the streets of his home town. He receives questioning stares from the people standing along the streets who pretend to be going on with their businesses while in truth they are discussing Steve. He runs into his boyhood friends, Kanja. He invites Kanja to his home for a chat. He asks Kanja to tell him of the rumours about him doing rounds in the town. Kanja informs him that it is rumoured that he is marrying Maureen.

We learn that people suspect that Maureen is infected with the HIV virus. Steve confirms it is true. Steve then relates the sad circumstances of Maureen's marriage to an abusive and promiscuous soldier.

When Kanja meets Maureen, she unashamedly opens up and tells him how she learned that she was infected with HIV. It was long after she had struck friendship with Steve and was carrying his child. It is at this point that Steve also took an HIV test and it turned out that he too was positive.

Maureen serves Kanja with juice he declines to take and finally Steve shares it with his son. This stigmatisation (discrimination) hurts Maureen and sends her into a depression. Despite Steve's appeal to her that they fight the disease together, she is unable to overcome her depressive mood.

One evening while asleep, Maureen becomes delirious and starts mumbling bible verses. Tom, a sympathetic neighbor, helps Steve to take her to hospital. When Maureen realizes where she is, she stages a protest demanding to be taken home to die. She does not recover from her depression.

She is buried a week later. She leaves Steve and Kanja and Kimotho to continue the struggle.

### The Title

The title, “When the Sun Goes Down”, is made in reference to Maureen’s feelings of depression, hopelessness and guilt to the point of giving up on life. It creates the impression that for her, all is lost.

### Setting

The story is set in a rural town in Central Kenya. The villagers know each other by age, name and family. This explains the concerns of each other’s welfare. It also explains how this familiarity results into interference in the private lives of one another.

The story is set in the modern times. HIV is a reality and so are ARV’s.

### Conflict

We shall approach conflict from two perspectives: conflict developed by Maureen.

a) Conflict developed by Steve.

Steve largely develops external conflict

- i) In the introductory part of the plot Steve is confronted with external conflict: between him and the villagers. He has made a decision that has not gone down well with the villagers. They believe that he deserves better than marrying Maureen. This is because

Maureen is HIV positive. However, no one is ready to seek his opinion on the matter but they all talk behind his back about his affair with Maureen. His decision to marry Maureen therefore alienates him from the people who looked up to him. His mind is however made up and he doesn't care what they think or say about him He; has no friends but Kanja

- ii) The second external conflict he develops is between him and Kanja, his boyhood friend.

Kanja has heard rumours about Steve's intentions to marry Maureen; however he is afraid for Steve because rumour also has it that she is HIV positive.

Steve feels that Kanja, his only remaining friend, should not be part of the rumour mill. He has no control over this and it turns out that his friend indeed has come fishing for information based on the rumours he's heard. What is more, his friend had also made advances to Maureen but was unsuccessful. Further, his friend brings the HIV stigma right into their house when he refuses to drink the juice Maureen serves him. It is this conflict with Kanja that is central to the story and is responsible for the ultimate death of Maureen.

- iii) The other external conflict Steve develops is between him and Maureen.

Pp19 Maureen explains to Kanja how Steve came to learn that he had HIV. This was her way of taking responsibility for pass the virus to him; this was her way of making him a victim and Steve resented it. He forbids her to reason like that but will not stop.

Pp22 Maureen is hurt by Kanja's refusal to take the juice she serves him. She says it's worthless to live if people cruelly discriminate against you. Steve would have none of this and implores her not to think like that to no avail.

Pp25-26 Steve not only buys the most nutritious foods for her but also cooks them but Maureen wouldn't eat. She suffers from nausea after a few bites, what is more she yearns for death. Despite his remonstrations with her that she banishes such thoughts of death from her head she wouldn't stop.

Pp26-27 Maureen's sense of guilt finally gets the better of Steve. Her deep seated sense of guilt reinforced by the careless talk of the neighbours finally gets Steve to contemplate the terrible possibility of her death.

- iv) Steve also develops external conflict between him and HIV/AIDS.
  - He tries to have good mental health by making Maureen avoid negative talk, this is a battle he loses for her but does not succumb to. He continues to live positively He talks of counting their blessings.
  - He stops smoking at the urging of his doctor. This too is a battle that he is winning.
  - He buys nutritious foods and takes his drugs. He tells Maureen that she has to eat and take her drugs daily. Although Maureen loses this battle Steve does not he is in it for the long haul. He is determined to stay alive.

Even Maureen acknowledges this pp20 she says that she has no doubt he will live.

- b) Maureen develops external conflict as well as internal. Internal conflict

Maureen blames herself for passing the virus on to Steve. Pp19 She protests that she was faithful both to her husband and to Steve. She tells the story of how Steve found out he was positive to assuage herself/lessen her guilt

Pp26 As she gets delirious she mumbles that she was faithful both to her husband and to Steve.

#### External Conflict

- i) She develops a conflict between her and HIV

- This is another conflict central to the story. From the time we meet Maureen there is no doubt she is losing the battle against HIV. When we first meet her we are told that she looked somewhat weary.
  - When Kanja refuses to take the juice she serves him, she is devastated. (pp21) she asks Steve why people must be so cruel. She refuses to forgive herself for bringing this cruelty on Steve. Subsequently she refuses to eat and it is hinted that she may have stopped taking her drugs- (pp26) Steve reminds her that she has to eat and take her drugs daily.
  - When forced to eat (pp26) she develops nausea and says that she longs to rest – euphemism for die.
  - At the hospital, she tells the nurse that she is dying. (pp28)
  - (pp21) tears flow down her face as she thinks of Kanja's action and wishes people were more compassionate.
  - (pp26) she declares that she is a living dead
  - In short, Maureen's sun went down the day she discovered she'd passed on HIV to Steve.
- ii) She also develops a conflict between her and the Kanja's of this world. When Kanja refuses to take her

- juice, she is devastated and asks Steve why people are so cruel. She feels that her family is discriminated against because she brought AIDS into it.
- She hardly goes out for fear of what people will say.
  - Pp 26 Steve laments that her sense of guilt was the product of listening to lose speaking tongues.

### Themes

Two of the best developed themes in this story are fear and guilt. They are both developed by Maureen.

- Kanja develops the theme of hypocrisy – friendship cracks at mention of AIDS.
- HIV/AIDS is developed by both Steve and Maureen. The author uses Steve to show how people can live positively with AIDS. Maureen on the other hand serves to illustrate how hopelessness and not AIDS kills people infected with HIV.
- Ignorance is developed by:
  - ❖ Kanja – not taking the juice Maureen serves
  - ❖ The town's folk in general – not knowing that their negative talk kills worse than AIDS.
  - ❖ Mr. Kobia- fears contracting AIDS if an AIDS sufferer is carried in his car.
- Loneliness is developed by both Steve and Maureen.

### Characterisation

1. Steve: determined, loving, realistic, open, sociable, hardworking
2. Kanja: hypocritical, ignorant, lustful
3. Maureen: hopeless, faithful, loving, religious, hospitable, stoic

**Essay Question**

1. Life is worth living even if one is suffering from HIV.

Using Goro wa Kamau“s When the Sun Goes Down for your illustrations show that this is true.

## **Leaving by Moyez G. Vassanji**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set in Dar es salaam, Tanzania. We first meet the family leaving on Uhuru Street where the Narrator's mother runs a shop. Later they move to the residential area of Upanga, upon her selling her shop.

### **2. Plot**

The story opens with the concept of leaving. The girls are getting married. Mehroon marries a former school mate who leaves in Dar. Razia marries a wealthy man who leaves in Tanga. Then there is Firoz who drops out of school and gets employed. The narrator's mother then sells her shop and moves from Uhuru Street to Upanga residential area.

The narrator informs us their mother laid hopes on he & Aloo. This is because they both excel at school. The narrator joins the local University. Meanwhile, in his last year at school, he proves to be exceptionally bright in his studies.

Mr. Datoo, a farmer student and teacher at the boys' school, visits the town from U.S.A. the similarity of

Datoo's and Aloo's background makes Aloo feels that he too could study in the USA. He starts writing applications to various universities in America. His ambition is to study medicine. When the results are out, he has straight A's. However, the local varsity gives him a place to study Agriculture.

This is what makes the offer from CIT more appealing. They not only offer him a place at the university but also give him a scholarship. His determination to study in

America intensifies; however, the money required for transport and upkeep as well as his mother's fear of losing her son stands in his way.

After seeking Mr. Velji's opinion, and some reflection, his mother is ready to let go. She bids Aloo not to smoke nor drink and not to marry a white woman. Her fears allayed, she sends Aloo to America for further studies

### 3. Conflict

This story is about Aloo's determination to study medicine

- i) The first conflict he faces is bureaucracy and corruption. On (pp 35) the narrator hints at this:

But some bureaucratic hand, probably corrupt, dealt out a future prospect for him that came as a shock. This explains why the family does not want to question the university about Aloo's placement. Clearly, with his straight A's deserved a place in the medicine class. However, the family does not even think about arguing his case with the varsity would be an exercise in futility. Nothing would come out of it.

- ii) The second conflict is developed by Velji and Aloo's mother on pp 3 he tells Aloo's mother, "But if you send him, you will lose your son. It's a far place, America,"

It is his mother, however, who fully develops this conflict on page 35, after Aloo has overcome his shock of getting CIT placement and scholarship, we are told:

But first he had to contend with mother.

She does not believe it and thinks that he is teasing her.

Next she raises issue with the money required. 3000 shillings is required for pocket money. She further questions where they'd raise his air fare from- it was not a little money that needed. She concludes that no one in Dar would help him

Pp 36 she gets angry at him and asks him why he wants to go away, so far from them and wonders whether they mean so little to him. Further, she is worried that something might happen to him.

Her final resistance to his leaving is on page 39- she asks him to promise that he will not marry a white woman, nor will smoke nor drink. At this point we now understand her fear at telling him go: she would lose him to a different culture that all the values she'd taught him would be in vain.

#### 4. Characters and Characterisation.

- i) Aloo a) intelligent – scores straight A's in his final exam
  - b) respectful -pp 36 He had raised his voice to her, the first time I saw him that.

-pp 37, they stood up when Velji came in.

- c) determined: - studied hard in order to study medicine

- wrote many applications with the aim of getting a varsity in America.

- ii) Mother

- hardworking – raised the children as a single parent upon the death of her husband
- Cautious – sought Mr. Velji’s opinion on Aloo’s case.
- loving - feared to lose her son.

## 5. Themes

### i) Family/family values

The narrator’s mom has raised her children well.

Marriage therefore is an important institution for them. It is not important that they marry into riches although Razia does. What is important is that they get married.

The family is also supportive. Firoz was not good at school but they encouraged him to go far as he would. What is more, he has been taught the importance of work ethic. So after dropping out of school he is gainfully employed as an assistant bookkeeper.

The narrator and Aloo are morally upright young men. They respect their mother and the people who come into their lives. First, they do not raise their voice at their mother. Second, the boys stand up when Mr. Velji comes into the room. Finally, although they disagree with Mr. Velji, they do not raise any objections when he says it’s a bad thing to send Aloo to a foreign country: they respect his opinion.

Finally her children neither drink nor smoke.

ii) Education.

- The two sisters are taken to school.
- Firoz is encouraged to go as far as he possibly would at school (subsequently he got employed)
- The narrator and Aloo go to university. It is instructive to know that their mom laid her hopes on them. This shows that she understands that through education her children would improve their lot.

iii) Fear

The main conflict in this story is Aloo's mother's reluctance to let him go study in a foreign country. This conflict is borne of fear

- a) That her son doesn't care much for the family
- b) That something could happen to him
- c) That he could start smoking and drinking
- d) That he could marry a white woman

6. POV

This story is told from the 1<sup>st</sup> person pov. The narrator is the 2<sup>nd</sup> last born child in a family of 3 boys and 2 girls. It is an inspirational story of how upbringing influences the destinies of he and his siblings in general but Aloo in particular. He reports objectively the factors that influence

Aloo's destiny. We trust his judgment because he is not only an adult but he is at the university. He wished his brother well from the start and in the end it comes to pass. In the end we do not just read a story for entertainment value. Stories also have information value. For us to exploit this fully we need to answer 3 questions.

- i) Is the title appropriate?

Yes, all the 5 siblings and their mother are involved in leavings of sorts.

ii) What is the significant event?

Mr. Datoo's visit is. He inspires Aloo to be all that he can be. This is so important because schools are yet to find a place for alumni. Without a doubt they influence the destinies of students and they should therefore be incorporated in career guidance activities.

iii) What is the author's intention?

- a) First of all the author's main audience are parents. Parents should learn that the way they bring up their children determines how positively they live life and how successful that life is.
- b) The author's second audience is the youth: although the environment in which you are brought up matters; ultimately, there is no success without input. The contrast between Firoz and Aloo exemplifies this.

## **The War of the Ears by Moses Isegawa**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set in a rural Uganda during a period of civil strife. A rebel group, God's Victorious Brigades, is fighting to stamp corruption out of the country in the light of their interpretation of the Ten Commandments. The ultimate sufferers are civilians. The story's main setting is Nandere Primary School with episodes in Ma Beeda's home and the forest. Most of the activities take place in the night. Darkness symbolizes the evil that has befallen the country at large and is about to befall Ma Beeda's village in particular.

### **2. Plot**

The story opens at the close of day at Nandere Primary School. Beeda is confronted with a problem: the world outside school is full of questions he couldn't answer and things he couldn't control. This drives him into a panic that it is possible that these events beyond his control could stop the children from coming back to school.

Indeed, his fears are fanned by the letter that arrives in the school that day. The rebel group, God's Victorious Brigades, says it is the last letter they send to warn Ma Beeda of dire consequences should she fail to close the school. She however swears to defy them and believes that they have government protection. Beeda, however, is clearly terrified and feels helpless because he does not believe the government's promise would come to much.

We learn that his father had died when he was four, and now as a secondary school student, he doubles up as a teacher at his Mother's school.

To prove their point, the rebel group has dispatched four „child“ soldiers to Nandere Primary School, the only surviving school in the region. They are led by Major Azizima who is 14. The other 3 boys are his juniors. His immediate superior, Colonel Kalo, is 17. Upon reaching the school, Azizima awaits instructions from Kalo to burn it down. We learn that the supreme leader of the rebels is Generalissimo who is revered because he spoke with God. All the rules and guidelines come from him. This involves indoctrinating the child soldiers with his interpretation of the Ten Commandments and heavy doses of barbaric punishment for offences against his rules. Similarly, the soldiers mete out barbaric punishment like chopping off the ears of those who do not support the course of the rebels.

The arrival of these rebels in Beeda’s village brings to his door step those things he’d feared he has no control over. At school first they are confronted with the pane Azizima had broken the previous night, Next, Miss Bengi informs them that a man’s ear had been cut off the previous night and because of this insecurity, she intends to leave the village for the city. The gunfire later that night is the last piece of evidence that the war of the ears had finally come to their village.

### 3. Conflict

#### (a) External

- i) The first conflict we meet is between Ma Beeda and the rebels. They have been sending her letters telling her that she is a government agent and that she should close her school. The final letter is

signed by Colonel Kalo. It tells her that her punishment for defying them will be both heavy and harsh. She continues to defy them in the hope that the government's security apparatus will protect her and her investment.

- ii) Secondly, we learn that the teachers too are in direct conflict with the rebels. We are told that Beeda's is filling in for a teacher who had fled weeks ago. Further, Ma Beeda's says that she spoke to the teachers and 2 or 3 want to run away (pp 46). Then there is Miss Bengi who announces her desire to leave for the city after a man's ear was cut off (pp 59)
- iii) The major conflict is between the government and the rebels (pp 46) A war was going on in the forest and hills where government forces occasionally clashed with the rebels. This is also confirmed in the letter sent to Ma Beeda in which she is called a government agent.  
Their professed goal is to stamp corruption of out of the country.
- iv) The conflict between the rebels and the government has also brought on conflict between the civilians and government on one hand and civilians and rebels on the other.  
Major Azizima's father died in the hands of the government security apparatus. They had alleged that he was collaborating with the rebels (pp 51) We are also told that in between engagements with rebels, government forces looked for rebel collaborators (pp 46).

Then there is the conflict between rebels and civilians in general. We are told that in the period between engagements with government forces the rebels attacked civilians (pp46) Major Azizima tells us that his mother was killed by the rebels.

What is more, he'd been asked to cut off her ears (pp 51). Major Azizima also cuts off the ear of a villager who was looking for medicine for his sick wife. (pp53). Further, after this act, they trained their rifles on the shops in case people confronted them. No one did. In the letter to Ma Beeda the rebels state that the war of ears had begun. This is in reference to cutting off the ears of civilians who defied them (pp 45). Finally the village is awokened deep in the night by gunfire. (pp61)

(b) The other conflict developed in the story is internal

i) Beeda

In front of the class he knew everything and there was nothing he could not do. However, the world outside was full of questions he could not answer and things he could not control (pp43) (it is a flash-forward in the problems the villagers face from the government and rebels)

ii) Azizima

He thinks of escaping from the rebel base but if caught by the government soldiers he would be tortured or killed or both. If caught by the comrades he would be killed. Either way he would die but he wanted to live to

avenge his parents. Besides he wanted to find out what had happened to his siblings who had disappeared. Further, at school (Nandere) he felt a yearning to return to school, to study and get a certificate but he hated having to take orders from teachers. Moreover it would mean surrendering his power something he knew he would not do freely.

#### 4. Characters and Characterisation.

##### a) Ma Beeda

A widow, entrepreneur and a single parent, she has a son, Beeda

i) Hardworking – started her school under a mango tree but is now a full-fledged learning centre.

ii) Determined/Resolute

Hers is the last operational school. All the other schools have shut down at the behest of the rebels. Despite the numerous letters by the rebels that she shuts down her school, she defies them.

iii) Optimistic

Despite the war going on around her, she is hopeful that it will not touch her school. She says that the rebels have no chance of victory and that they don't have the people's support.

She also tells us that the government would hunt down all the criminals and punish them (pp57)

- iv) Secretive  
She had a journal in which she entered the Nightcrawler's reports.
  - Beeda was not allowed to look in the book. (pp 59)
  - v) Curious  
Has set the Nightcrawler to find out details of what several people had heard and seen the night before.
  - vi) Perceptive  
(pp 47) She had the ability to guess what her son was thinking and at times he disliked it intensely.
- b) Beeda
    - i) Hardworking – stays at school teaching until late
      - plans his lessons in good time
    - ii) Concerned – (pp 46) asks his mom whether she spoke to the teachers i.e. ask them to stay. -
      - Wants to know the response of the regional commander in relation to their insecurity.
- c) Azizima -
    - ambitious/violent/reflective/determined
5. Themes
- a) Human rights abuse/crimes against humanity.
  - i) Children are denied the right to education. Ma Beeda tells us that hers is the only school opening in the area, and even this is threatened to be short

lived by the rebels who have served her with a final notice to close the school.

- ii) People are killed both by the rebels and the government. Azizima tells us that government forces killed his father for allegedly collaborating with the rebels. The rebels too killed his mother for an unspecified reason.
- iii) People suffer mutilation in the hands of the rebels. The letter sent to Ma Beeda warns her that ears that don't listen to their master get chopped off and hers would be next. Azizima tells us that Blue Beast forced him to chop off his mother's ears. Azizima chops off the ear of a villager and keeps it as a trophy and proof to his superiors that he is loyal. Miss Bengi threatens to leave for the city saying she does not want her ear chopped off.
- iv) Displacement  
People are fleeing the village on account of insecurity arising from the war of the ears. Ma Beeda tells us that two or 3 teachers have expressed their intention to leave for the city. Beeda is filling in for a teacher who had fled several weeks before. Miss Bengi is thinking of going to the city to avoid the atrocities of the rebels.
- v) Enlisting of Child Soldiers.  
Major Azizima is only 14 years old and is a soldier trained and armed by the rebels. The three soldiers he is sent to Nandere Primary school with are younger than he is. His superior, colonel Kalo

is only 17 years. These children are first abducted and then forced into fighting.

vi) Barbaric treatment of the soldiers at the base.

Sex was forbidden at the base except for the four people in high command. Anyone who broke this rule got one hundred strokes of the hippo-hide whip. Rape was punished with amputation of the left hand. Dissent and theft were punished with death. There is no appeal against the words of the spies. They were made to chant Generalissimos hatred for the Uganda

government for hours on

end. b) Family relations

- i) MaBeeda trains her son on the work ethic; he not only knows his house hold chores but loves his teaching job.
- ii) Beeda is very respectful of his mother and she too of him.

- When his mother summons him, he drops what he is doing and goes to her for example when he was talking to Miss Bengi and his mother summons him he goes to her despite the fact he would have liked to continue talking to her.
- She too is respectful of him when he burns their supper; she resists the urge to raise her voice at him. Further, although she'd lost her appetite, she respectfully eats some of the food he serves her.

c) Violence

- War going on between government and rebels
- Government torturing and killing rebel collaborators – death of Azizima's father

- Rebels mutilating or killing government sympathisers – death of another chopping of the ears of a man.
  - breaking of a window pane at the school and its imminent burning down.
  - Killing and mutilation of soldiers who break rules at the camp.
- d) Fear.

Pp46 Beeda is afraid that teachers will desert the school; further, he is afraid that the promise of their safety by the regional commander may not hold water. He is afraid that something might have happened to uncle Modo

Pp 54 Most people went home early and were barricaded inside their house by nightfall.

Pp 51 Azizimo is afraid that if he runs away from the base he'll be executed by the rebels upon capture. Further if he does escape he'll be tortured or killed by government agents upon capture.

Pp 53 After Azizimo had chopped off the ear of a villager, the train their rifles on the shops- Nobody came out to confront them for fear of being killed or mutilated by the rebels.

Pp 54-6 MaBeeda wakes up feeling that a messenger was at the door, waiting to break the news that her school was no more. It was a daily ordeal which reached its peak every morning.

## **The Mirror by Haruki Murakami**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set in the narrator's house in the night. He is seated with some friends and they are relating scary stories or those of premonitions.

There is however, another setting in which the narrator rebels a frightful moment in his life. This is at a school junior high school in which he was employed as a lone night watchman at the age of 18 or 19. The night was windy and hot. Mosquitoes buzzed all over amidst the noise of the wind. The broken gate of the swimming pool made banging rhythmic banging noises in the dark night. This description creates a scary mood which is consistent with his frightening experience.

### **2. Plot**

The narrator is hosting a number of friends and they pass time relating scary experiences or those of premonitions. The narrator says that there is a force linking the world of the living with that of the dead giving rise to the narrator of stories being related.

These forces he says restrict people to either group those people who see ghosts are unable to have premonition and vice versa. The forces don't give people the ability to do both (that is, they are mutually exclusive)

The narrator then distances himself from these experiences. He says that in his 30yrs he has neither seen a ghost nor had a premonition. However, he admits that he has had a scary experience which he narrates for the first time. He had kept it secret for fear that if he spoke of it then it might happen all over again.

He relates how in his 2 am round on a scary night, he thinks he notices something in the hallway. Upon closer inspection it turns out that a mirror, which had previously not been there, gave his reflection. The mirror has him spell bound until he forcefully tears himself from it and shatters it rashes back to the janitor's room to sleep.

In the morning, he goes back to inspect the scene of the incident. He finds the cigarette butt and his kendo that he dropped. However, that shattered mirror is not there.

### 3. Conflict

- (i) The first conflict is about the nature of these supernormal experiences. The narrator tells his friends that all their experiences fall into two broad categories. The repetition of the phrase “all your stories”, suggests that his friends were not in agreement with him.
- (ii) The second conflict is that the narrator is immune to verse experiences. He describes an incident in an elevator with two friends who swear they could see a woman standing next to the narrator. He insists it was only the three of them in the lift.
- (iii) The third conflict is between the narrator and his parents.  
At seventeen they expected him to proceed to college after high school. He declines, and instead wonders all over Japan working at various manual jobs.
- (iv) The last conflict is internal. He believes that he is immune to the supernormal experiences. Yet he has this encounter with a non-existent mirror that

holds him captive and seems to control him. He keeps this event secret for over 12 years, but finally he relates it. What is more, he keeps away from mirrors. He is afraid the scary incident would happen again yet he swears he does not believe in supernormal forces.

4. Character and characterisation. Narrator
  - a) proud
    - Thinks that people that have encountered ghosts or have had premonition are not normal and that he is unique because he“s never had those experiences.
  - b) fearful
    - Feels apprehensive about mirrors and does not keep them around him.
    - He was too scared to fix the broken gate because of the dark night.
    - Terrified by the mirror incident he runs back to the janitor“s room.
  - c) rebellious
    - Refuses to go to college and chooses to do manual work.
  - d) Hospitable
    - Hosts his friends and having been entertained by their stories he too narrates one that he has kept secret in order to further entertain them.
  - e) Analytical
    - Upon listening to his friend“s stories he separates them into two categories: those of ghosts and premonitions; further, he says a force links people to these things. He goes a step further and says the

impression he gets is that these experiences are mutually exclusive.

## 5. Themes

### i) Identity Crisis

- At 17 when the narrator should be proceeding to college, he chooses to wander all over Japan doing manual work. This is a typical teenage problem as they try to identify who they really are, different from what their parents want them to be.
- What is disturbing though is that at 30, more experienced with life, he says he'd do it all over again. This rebellious streak is stuck with him.
- He also believes that he is different from other people.

Other people see ghosts; he doesn't. Other people have premonitions; he doesn't. Yet he is very much like them because of the encounter he had with an imaginary mirror that still controls his life.

### ii) appearances vs reality

It appears to him that the supernormal operates at two levels: ghosts and premonitions. He believes he does not belong to either. The reality is different, a third level exists which is even more ruinous than the other two as demonstrated by his fear of mirrors based on an encounter with an imaginary mirror. i.e. things are not what they seem.

## 6. POV

Story is told from the first person pov. This is apt because the personal story of the narrator becomes credible

coming from his own mouth. That traumatic experience helps us understand his phobia for mirrors.

7. a) Is the title appropriate?

Yes it is. It discusses the profound effect an imaginary mirror has on the narrator.

In real life mirrors do not show real objects; they are merely a reflection of what those objects are. The narrator's experience is an illustration of the power of the mind to create illusions. Ironically, this is the reality for human beings; their minds are constantly creating illusions: of ghosts and what the future holds. This is what is normal. Running away from this reality creates a disturbed mind like the narrator's who is now avoiding mirrors.(It exemplifies the saying: things are not what they seem.

- b) What is the significant event?

The narrator's rebellion. His not going to college has him serving as a night watchman. It

Is in this job that he has his experience with an imaginary mirror.

- c) What is the author's aim?

He draws out attention to the fact that things are not what they seem.

The narrator has built this façade that he is immune to the experiences of ordinary people: sighting ghosts and having premonitions. It turns out that he had had a traumatizing experience that has him running away from mirrors. And the important thing is that this experience was created by his imagination.

Discuss the saying that things are not they seem. Use The Mirror by Haruki Murakami for your illustrations.

## **Diamond Dust by Anita Desai**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set in Bharti Nagar, an urban civil servants residential area in India. The events take us from Mr. Das' house, to the streets of Bharti Nagar, into the Lodi Gardens and down the alleys of the town.

### **2. Plot**

We are introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Das and Diamond, Mr. Das' problematic dog. It is not only a nuisance to Mrs. Das but to service providers and children as well. To Mr. Das, he is a lovable pet hence the name Diamond.

As a result of Diamond's nature C.P. Biswas asks Das why he named the dog Diamond and not the more probable coal after its black colour. Das wouldn't hear of this neither does he have an explanation for Mr. Biswas. What is more, Das outs his dog before family; on return from work he greets Diamond then the family members. Mrs. Das has a premonition that all this is not going to end well. But Das is unstoppable. He even frolics with Diamond in public something that displeases his colleagues. His friends Biswas and Base see Das' behavior as bringing shame to them before their superiors:- the undersecretary and the retired Joined Secretary.

Mrs. Das too disapproves of this attachment to Diamond. Over the years she has had to clean after Diamond: its urine, smell and fur from floor rugs and seats. She has even sacrificed a cooking pot has to move out of the house for one hour as Diamond's

meat cooks. Her protests do not yield any change.

Ironically, Das complains that an animal's nature can't be changed by domestication.

Children, though they approved of Diamond, teased him when Das wasn't around. He cautions them against using sticks or stones against Diamond or running away from him. They protest that they'd be bitten the way Ranu was if they don't run.

However, the real problems begin when Diamond matures into a full grown god. He moves from a nuisance to a menace. First, there is his phobia for uniform. He bellows at the postman, chases him and tears his trousers. The result is Mrs. Das doesn't get her mail regularly for it is thrown at the hedge. Then there are the other service providers: electricity meter readers telephone repair men, and garbage collectors who do not render their services to the Das family because Diamond attacks them when they do. Finally there are the school children who cannot get to the bus stop without adult protection. Neighbours however do not report him to the police out of both propriety and pity.

In the end, Diamond becomes a pain to Das during mating seasons. He disappears for long stretches and during this period Das spends days and nights in search of him. What is more, his behavior when he catches Diamond mating alarms parents. Mrs. Das too wouldn't have Diamond back in the house until he's been cleaned. Further, Diamond is a threat to his job. He spends time looking for him instead of going to work or when he does go to work he is distracted.

Diamond's final escapade ends badly for both of them. Diamond is caught by the dog catchers and he faces certain death. Das sees him in the moving van jumps onto it and plunges to death.

### 3. Conflict

A conflict arising from Diamond's actions

#### i) Diamond & Mrs. Das

Diamond generally upsets Mrs. Diamond. He upsets the table, when she sets Das' food. He knocks her down. He gets more attention than her children do. She had to mop after him when he was a puppy and constantly urinated on the floor. She had to put up with the smell of the dog in her next house. Diamonds further had to be constantly removed from rugs, sofas and armchairs. Her letters got lost or never reached her because Diamond attacked the postman when he made deliveries. She had to nurse Mr. Das when he caught flu in the cold nights in search of Diamond. Finally, her husband dies when he tries to save Diamond from the moving fog catcher's van.

#### ii) Diamond and the neighbours

- a) The children would throw stones or sticks at Diamond, then he'd break loose and run after them nipping at their heels or stopping when they fell in the dust.
- b) When his phobia for uniform grew he would chase children on their way to or from school. The result was that they could

neither go to the bus-stop nor come from it, without adult protection.

- c) During the „badmashi“ days, Diamond would howl so loudly keeping the neighbours awake. This would go on until he snapped his collar.

B) Conflicts arising from Mr. Das“

actions:-i) Das and Mrs. Das

a) Mrs. Das complained that he gave more attention to Diamond than he did to his children or grandchildren pp 3 Not even about our children – not even your first-born son – or your grandchildren, have you made so much of us that dog. She also complains that on his return from work Das greeted the dog “Diamond, my friend” before greeting Mrs. Das, his grandchildren or anyone at all.

b) She refuses to go to the butcher’s for buffalo meat for Diamond nor would she cook the meat when Das brought it he had to do it himself. Further, she asks him to substitute milk and bread for Diamond’s meat but Das would hear none of this.

c) She complains that her letters don’t reach her because Diamond attacks the postman when he makes deliveries. Das instead accuses the postman of being cowardly.

d) When Diamond goes out on his last escapade in Nov. the night chill made Das sick and she

had to nurse him every time he came back empty handed. Further, she pleaded with him to give up Diamond before the search kills him to no avail.

- iii) Das and his colleagues/neighbours
  - a) C.P.Biswas is convinced the name Diamond is too good for the dog and wonders when it was given such a name. He'd rather it be named coal after its black coat. Das says he'd never do such a thing to Diamond.
  - b) His colleagues had caught him frolicking with Diamond in public like a child. They feel he's taken leave of his senses and this worries them. Further, they feel that his behavior embarrasses them before their superiors, the under-Secretary and the retired Joint Secretary.
  - c) When Diamond starts running after school children, many parents went to complain to Das but he remained deaf to their pleas. Parents also took offence too when he led the children in search of Diamond upon his first disappearance. What annoyed them was Das separating Diamond from his partner before the children.
- iv) Das and Diamond

Diamond, following his animal instinct would go out in search of mating partners. Das feared the dog catchers would catch up with him and kill him. So, he would go out in search of Diamond

every time he disappeared. Ultimately, it is the arrest of Diamond that leads to Das' death.

v) Diamond and Service providers

The postman suffers the worst attack of the service providers. Diamond bellows at him, chases him and tears a strip off his trousers' leg. After this he delivers the Das letters at the hedge. The other service providers who decline to serve the Das' indene officials of the BOE, telephone lines repairman and garbage collectors.

4. Characters and Characterisation

i) Mrs. Das

Tolerant – tireless cleans after Diamond

- Does not give up living with Das on account of Diamond Neat – cleaned the puddles and fur Diamond left behind her own pet, a cat, fed neatly off its bowl.

ii) Mr. Das

- Inconsiderate

Although his pet makes many people suffer, he'd not give it up.

- Unrealistic

He expects animals to remain true to their nature but not his Diamond.

5. Themes

i) Obsession

Das' obsessive nature towards his dog disrupts the lives of his family, neighbours/colleagues and service providers

ii) Animals“ nature

We should not expect animals to change their nature just because we have domesticated them. This is illustrated by Diamonds disruptive behaviour in Das“ life as well as that of his family and neighbours.

6. POV

Third person point of view. Appropriate because the first person would have been very biased. We are therefore able to experience Diamond“s disruptive behavior in all spheres of Bharti Nagar.

7. a) Is the title appropriate?

Dictionary .com defines diamond dust as pulverized diamonds uses as an abrasive.

Diamonds abrasive nature rubs everyone the wrong way including its owner.

b) What is the significant event?

Mr. Das“ obsessive behavior towards Diamond.

c) What is the aim of the author?

i) The author cautions against obsessive behavior Mr. Das does because of the excessive love he has for his dog. Besides, he is oblivious to the pain it causes other people.

ii) The author also cautions against the danger pets pose to both their owners and society in general. An animal nature can“t be changed simply because it is domesticated. Diamond stays true to this statement which ironically is made by Mr. Das. The other irony in relation to this statement is that Mr.

Das“ personality does not change despite the many pleas from friends and family.

Task: One person“s pleasure can be a terrible displeasure to someone else. Write an essay that is in support of this statement with illustrations from Anita Desai“s story “Diamond Dust”

## **Arrested Development by Sandisile Tshuma**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set on a road trip from Zimbabwe's capital Bulawayo, to Beitbridge, a town bordering South Africa.

The setting moves from Max's garage, to a contraband ferrying vehicle and ultimately to Beitbridge. This is at a time when Zimbabwe is experiencing hyperinflation.

### **2. Plot**

The narrator and tens of travelers are waiting at Max's garage for vehicles to take them to their various destinations. The narrator is an academic researcher in search of data on order jumping. There is no public transport and so the travelers are at the mercy of private vehicle owners. As a result of the collapse of public service provision, the people of Zimbabwe have developed infinite patience in order to get anything they want.

After three days of waiting, the narrator struggles with other passengers to get onto the back of a pick-up that has stopped next to her. They are charged an exorbitant fare.

Though they pay up, the driver takes them back to Max's alleging that his costs will not be covered. Presently she is directed by a tout to a vehicle ready to leave for Beitbridge. She finds herself travelling in the company of two contraband dealers, the driver and the woman in mid-thirties. She learns that the police take bribes to ignore the contraband. She learns that the lot of the cross-border traders is way better than that of highly educated Zimbabweans. For example she and her friend Lihile who has despaired of her lot ever improving. From the

passenger who joins them at Gwanda, she learns that ignorance is preyed upon in a very cruel way.

This cruelty on one another wises up victims. Survival for con-artists therefore is a daily struggle.

Zimbabweans are filled with loneliness and despair. Even for the cross-border traders, the risks are many. The best everyone can do is resign themselves to their fate like Lihile who now fetches water and easily contends with blackouts

The narrator's research however offers a ray of hope that might salvage the youth from their endless troubles in search of a livelihood.

### 3. Conflict

#### i) Poor public service provision.

The public looks to the government for the provision of public service. These have either broken down completely, like transport, or are not efficiently provided like electricity, water etc. the public is powerless to bring on any improvement and have resigned themselves to waiting.

#### ii) Private transport

With the collapse of public transport, private vehicle owners have moved in to fill the gap. They charge fares that the public can bear. They even use unscrupulous means, like taking them back to the pickup stations, to Max on fares.

### iii) The Public

The public is its own worst enemy. They have perfected vigoroni: the art of getting ahead of the crowd and on top of the pile. A tiny old woman painfully elbows the narrator to earn her place on the vehicle to Beitbridge. The narrator in return scales the sides of the pick-up without regards to the less athletic woman.

The passenger who joins them at Gwanda is conned of 780 rand.

Payment defaulters in the cross-border trade are sold off to Nigerians in Johannesburg”.

The traders are mugged by bandits who strip search them.

They pay off every government officer they come in contact with for their businesses to continue. They pay off border officials, highway police, magistrates even farmers. For example, Gloria pays a border official in order to cross the border without a pass. The driver

“buys” a ticket from the police to avoid paying more bribes on the way.

## 4. Characters and Characterisation i) Narrator

### a) Observant

-vividly describes the boarding of the twin-cab pickup -places the Gwanda passenger as a Tshuma

### b) Intelligent

-an academician carrying out a research project

c) Focused

The wealth made by the cross-border traders does not make her give up the quest of improving the lot of the youth in return for quick riches in business.

ii) Cross-border traders:

-opportunists

-cunning

-daring- crossing of the Limpopo

iii) General populace

-impotent – powerless to bring about change (not every via ballot)

-Greedy – charge exorbitant fees for services transport and products (fuel)

- Police & govt. officials take bribes

Government officials swindle cash meant for development projects like the Matabeleland Zambezi Water Pipeline.

-con one another e.g. the Tshuma boys conned by the money changers.

-Resigned- Lihile now fetches water and contends with the blackouts despite her education and exposure at the U.K.

-Generous – there who have found work in S.A send cash and groceries to their relatives in Zimbabwe.

## 5. Themes.

The best developed theme in this story is suffering. There are many other themes but not well developed.

i) Suffering

a) No public service or they are inefficient.

-the narrator waits for 3 hours before she gets transport. The Tshuma man had waited 18 hours for the mini-bus to Bulawayo to fill.

- b) The narrator had waited for 2 hours at the bank to withdraw money.
- c) black -outs are common place and house taps are dry
- d) payment defaulters are sold off to Nigerians in Johannesburg
- e) traders sometimes have to cross the crocodile infested river Limpopo. At times they are attacked by bandits
- f) The practice of Vigoroni has robbed them of etiquette.

The narrator is elbowed painfully by a tiny old woman as they scramble for space on a pick-up

### ii) Impotence

-In the first two paragraphs, the word wait has been used five times and waiting once. This apparent patience is actually the collective weakness not strength of Zimbabweans”. But it is not in the nature of a Zimbabwean to question or complain.”pp 88

-the educated like Lihile have despaired and put her life expectancy at 40 (or just below). What is more, she has adapted to the dry taps and blackouts.

### iii) Corruption

-pp 93 – There is no palm that cannot be greased, apparently border officials, highway police, magistrates all take bribes -  
pp 87 people in high office swindle project funds-  
Matebeleland Zambezi Water Pipeline has never taken off.

iv) Human rights violations

pp 93 payment defaulters are sold off to Nigerians in Johannesburg, traders are subjected to strip searches by bandits

v) Insecurity

traders are mugged by bandits in the farmlands of Limpopo Province.

vi) Loneliness

pp 93 – I am struck by a loneliness that I have noticed in everyone lately. On page 93 Gloria tells us that:

“Trust no one, not even relatives.” This lack of trust seems to be the source of the loneliness.

6. POV

1<sup>st</sup> person narrator makes the story more credible because of her high academic status and the fact that she is the only person doing something to bring about change.

7. a) Is the title appropriate?

Yes. Arrested development, though a contradiction, points to the fact that the impotence of 12million people has ensured their quality of life does not improve.

b) What is the significant event?

The discovery of the patience of Zimbabweans

c) What is the aim of the author?

Unless people do something about their circumstances, their lot will never change.

## **Sandra Street by Michael Anthony**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set in a suburb street called Sandra. It is no ordinary street. It houses a residential area, a school and it leads into a forested hill. Sandra Street maintains a somewhat natural environment: there are no fences or gates, a few houses, a small population and its people live in harmony. Neighbouring residential areas are a little way off.

### **2. Plot**

We are introduced to Steve, the narrator; Mr. Blades, his new teacher who is a nature lover and Sandra Street. We learn about the natural environment of Sandra Street through a composition by Kenneth, a boy from the other side of town. His story leads to a conflict between boys from the other side of the town and those from Sandra Street. The Sandra Street boys feel that their town has been described negatively.

Mr. Blades reads a few more stories, some of which say very nice things about Sandra Street. His delight at these did not appease most of the boys from Sandra Street. In a desperate attempt to calm them, he asks the class to write a composition on the other side of town. This only fuels the conflict between the boys.

However, the narrator does an objective assessment of Kenneth's composition and finds that it was a truthful description of Sandra Street. He even begins to appreciate its beauty. He is so caught up in his reflections he does not realise the break bell has gone. It takes Mr. Blades to bring him back to the present.

The following Tuesday the boys fight again as a result of what they wrote about the other side of town. More compositions are written on other subjects yet Sandra Street did not go away. Mr. Blades, who is new to Sandra Street, is waiting for the mango season to find out whether the boys had given an accurate description of Sandra Street during that season. What is more, Mr. Blades takes an interest in Steven's writing.

The two of them appear at the window several times looking out at Sandra Street. With every discussion they have at the window, Steven's observation ability grows so does this love of nature. His interest in nature takes him to the hills where he explores the river, mango and banana groves and even gets to put away green bananas in the „immortelle“ roots to ripen.

In his last encounter with Mr. Blades at the window, Steven invites him to the hills to inspect his bananas. At the hills, Mr. Blades, who had thought the trip was a nature trail walk, is disappointed that Steven only focuses on the ripening bananas and not the view of Sandra Street the hill affords them.

### 3. Conflict

a) The main conflict revolves around Mr. Blades and Steven. Mr. Blades is a nature lover. He sees in Steven a similar spirit which is however latent. There is an uneasy relationship in which the master trains the pupil to appreciate his environment. The challenge is in showing Steve the beauty of his environment without telling him what stands out as beautiful. So it is a journey in which Steven awakens to the beauty that is his environment with Mr. Blades as his hands-off guide.

NB: This journey is made up of a series of conflicts between Blades and Steven. Identify all of them.

b) Kenneth's work and Steven

This is one in the series of conflicts mentioned in (a) above. However it stands out because it runs through the entire story. Mr. Blades contrasts Kenneth's writing with that of Steve. Kenneth seems to have well developed observation powers" Steve does not. It is Kenneth's composition on Sandra Street that Mr. Blades uses to arouse Steven's passion for nature. Although it is unprofessional, Mr. Blades uses Kenneth's work to criticize Steven's (pp 103,106).

c) Further, conflict develops between the boys from Sandra Street and those from the other side of town. Each writes disparagingly about the other's residential area resulting in two bruising battles. What is the import of these fights? Steven gives us the answer. "He had written in anger what I thought of now in joy" pp 99. Each of these pupils has a latent love of the environment in them. It however is not well directed. Mr. Blades tries to direct Steven's love of nature and remove the juvenile jealousy and hatred he possesses.

d) Steven experiences internal conflict.

i) First, although he likes to hear the steel band (they do not have one in Sandra Street) he puts it in his composition to disparage the other side of town he describes its sound as horrible (pp98).

ii) As Steven begins to appreciate the beauty of Sandra Street, it also fills him with a sense of sadness. He says

that certain sadness came over him as he looked over the houses across to the hills (pp 100).

iii) Steven writes in his compositions about his experiences at the hills but hopes that Mr. Blades will not see the reality in it. He wonders how Mr. Blades had found out about the bananas; he put out to ripen in the roots of the „immortelle“ (pp104-105).

e) Mr. Blades suffers internal conflict

His dilemma is how to make the pupils appreciate Sandra Streets“ beauty without telling them what is beautiful. Thus, when/he reads Kenneth"s work class and appreciates it, he is misunderstood by the boys from Sandra Street. His attempts to placate them by reading stories that said nice things about Sandra Street fall through. Instead of telling them what to look out for, he gives them an assignment to write about the other side of town. His teaching style is allowing learners to discover. He makes a compromise by guiding one.

## **TWILIGHT TREK by SEFFI ATTA**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set in Gao, Mali. It then moves through Mali and Algeria upto Tangier, a Moroccan coastal town. This is desert country ant the travelers suffer the heat of the scorching sun and constant sand storms. The trek itself must take place in the night- it covers two nights. The travelers stop at a camp on a mountain just outside Tangier. It is a stinking mess.

### **2. Plot**

The story opens with the narrator receiving a fake passport in the name of Jean Luc from an agent in Gao, Mali. He narrates how he sold marijuana to raise his fare. Impatient that the money was not coming in quickly enough, he steals from his employer. He threatens to send a gang to sodomise him then slit his throat. The narrator scales up his immigration time-table and starts his illegal immigration journey.

At the start of the journey he meets Patience, a girl he travels with to the Tangier camp. During the journey they face a lot of suffering. It is a bumpy ride and the sandstorms drive sand everywhere. In the day, they have to hide under the truck from the scorching sun. What is more, their guide increases the fare by \$100 or he abandons them in the desert.

They pay up and the second leg of their journey starts. Even this leg is disappointing. Their guide drops them at

the foot of the mountain and they complete their journey on foot.

When they reach the camp the narrator is shocked by the insalubrious conditions. Men, women and children all live under plastic sheets and there are no sanitation facilities in sight. Further, they are warned to be wary of thieves, Moroccan security forces, conmen and plagues. Their final destination, Cueta, presents a challenge to get to. Obazee says that he“s been trying for six years but keeps getting caught by the police who beat him up.

The narrator finds out from Obazee how to cross the sea and what dangers each mode of transport presents and the cost. This information excites him and he shares it with Patience who has resorted to reading the bible for solace. He is ready to meet her crossing fee. She wonders where he would get the money from. He shows her where his money is hidden.

They wake up in the morning to find that Obazee is moving the camp further away from the security forces.

The narrator wouldn“t move because he is still waiting for Patience who had gone to Tangier to find a “samsara”.

He also discovers that she has taken his money. He waits to no avail. He has to start all over again.

### 3. Conflict

The story raises conflicts at different levels. External conflict develops at two levels. First there is conflict

between people. Second, there is conflict between man and nature.

The other level of conflict is internal. The narrator through his dreams understands that his mother's advice was worth taking yet he can't or wouldn't take it.

We will now examine conflict in the chronological order that they are developed.

i. Illegal immigrant and foreign embassies (pp109)

The foreign embassies will not grant visas to illegal African immigrants effectively denying them an opportunity to move to Europe. The Africans believe they can still get to Europe. They will cross the Sahara and get to Morocco then cross the Mediterranean Sea into Spain.

ii. The narrator and drug seller (pp 109)

The narrator disagrees with his mother and runs away from home. To survive he sells marijuana. Dissatisfied with how much he was making, he steals from his employer. His employer in return promises to send a gang to sodomise him then slit his throat. To avoid this treatment he starts his journey to Europe.

iii. The narrator and his mother

When the narrator was little his mother would dress him up like a girl. He would struggle during such treatment (pp109). When he got older, she tried to pimp him to a Lebanese man who liked light skinned boys. He runs away from home to avoid such treatment (pp110). Further, we learn that his dreams enhance this mother and

child conflict. His mother tries to dissuade him from making the trip by narrating to him horror stories of illegal immigration attempts. He is still in Gao and would have turned back but he doesn't (pp110).

In the second dream, she alludes to the Promised Land, a story from the bible. However, the people who seek the Promised Land end up us taxi drivers, night guards, cleaners of plates and toilets and some become homeless sleeping in the cold of ghettos and streets. Yet others go on to become sex slaves or cultural slaves (pp113/4).

In his penultimate dream, his mother uses strong images of death to hint at Jeans imminent failure. He still does not take her advice.

In the final dream she dismisses Patience as a common prostitute and that her reading of the bible was of no value. She gives him more stories of frustrated immigrants. He does not heed his mother's advice that he stays away from Patience and the trip.

#### iv. Illegal immigrants and nature

When the trek gets underway, the travelers find out that they can only travel in the night and the winds are very cold then. The sand too presents a problem. It hurts their eyes, stings their nostrils and mats their chests. It is also in their food and

water. Their tongues swell so badly they cannot converse. Their legs are cramped. Others suffer from piles and wheezing chests.

The conflict with nature continues when they stop in the day. They suffer the scorching sun and hide underneath the truck to avoid the heat. There is however no escaping the sand which is all over them including in their underpants (pp112/113).

v. Travellers and Tuareg guide

At the start of the second leg of their journey, the travellers get blackmailed by their Tuareg guide. They are deep in the Sahara desert and the guide tells them to pay an extra \$100 each or he abandons them. They pay up (pp114/5)

vi. Illegal immigrants and environment

a. The camp is insalubrious

The narrator describes it as an open sewer (pp115). There is lack of privacy. Men, women and children all sleep under plastic sheets. The environment is a health hazard.

b. They suffer constant bites from fleas. Many are coughing. They are warned that even the air that they breathe may carry plagues (pp115/6).

c. At the camp they are told to beware of thieves, Moroccan security forces and con men.

vii. The narrator and Patience

She steals his money and heads for Tangier and the world beyond.

4. Character and characterisation

a. The narrator

Independent minded

- When he was little his mother dressed him up as a girl and he'd resist this.
- When she tried to pimp him out to a homosexual, he ran away from home.

b. Gifted

He plays football very well. This is the main reason why he wants to travel to Europe where he hopes to develop his talent further.

c. Friendly

Befriends Patience and helps her through the difficult times. He is willing to pay part of her fare.

d. Naïve

Trusted Patience and tells her where his money is hidden. She steals it and abandons him at the camp.

e. Braggart

He brags to Patience about his football skills and how he was going to make a career out of playing football in Europe.

f. Irreligious

- His mother has not taught him religion. She says that Africans too can compile their stories in a holy book.

- When he reads about God promising the Israelites food, he says that he was tired and that the fairy wasn't going to help them.

## 5. Themes

### a. Suffering

This is the best developed theme in the story. Identify all the instances of suffering that the travellers go through.

### b. Poverty

This is the real cause of the trek.

- The narrator's mother earns a living as a prostitute. The money she earns barely covers expenses. She sells ground nuts to supplement. What is more, she is ready to pimp her son to homosexuals to augment her earnings.
- The Muslim women in Gao cannot afford to share their meal with strangers. There just isn't enough to go round.
- The highways are full of potholes and the taxis are in a state of disrepair.

### c. Opportunism

- The narrator takes advantage of the trust his boss has in him and steals his money.
- His mother is happy to have a child of mixed race. His light skin is particularly favoured by homosexuals and she had been grooming him to earn money from the trade.

- The Tuareg guide blackmails the travellers in the desert. He raises the fare by \$100 at a time he knows they can't default.
- Patience takes advantage of Jean. He trusts her enough to tell her where his money is hidden. She steals it and does not care about his plight.

## 6. Style

### **Satire**

Satire is made up of three literary devices: irony, wit and humour. Its objective is to expose the vices and follies of individuals or societies in such a way that they appear ridiculous.

It is the heavy presence of irony in this story that directs our attention to satire. Let us now consider some of the outstanding instances of irony.

### **Irony**

- The most important instance of irony comes at the start of the story and it's concluded at the end. The narrator dupes his master and steals his cash. During the trek he befriends Patience. He builds a tent at the camp which he shares with her; he promises to meet the cost of her crossing the sea and to prove that he can he shows her the where the money is. She steals it and abandons him at the camp. It is the same money that he had stolen from his employer.
- Another instance of irony that runs through the story plays out between the narrator and his mother. She raised him with only one purpose in mind: to pimp him

out to homosexuals. He flees from home because of this. However, throughout the trek she remains the only voice of reason through his dreams. She constantly impresses upon him the folly of his action.

- Obazee is also an ironic figure. He holds a degree. His knowledge and skills ought to be used in the service of the people of his country. He is however portrayed as lacking in imagination. For six years he is stuck in the camp described as an open sewer. All his attempts to get to Cueta have been thwarted by the Guardia Civil. He fancies himself as the leader of the camp. This is a complete waste of university education.

NB: Find more instances of irony. Notice that each of these ironic situations points to a human weakness. That is satire.

Now let us examine the things that have been satirised in this story.

**a) Opportunism (callousness of human nature and greed)**

The writer satirises the callousness of human nature in taking advantage of those around them for personal gain. The opportunists satirised in this story include:



**The narrator**

At the time Patience steals from him he has \$1000. This means that he stole a lot of money from his employer. The money has not brought him any benefit. First, the journey through the desert has been a very difficult one. Now far away from home he is not only destitute but he has no way of salvaging himself. Further, his inexperience has made him prey to the older Patience.



### **The narrator's employer**

He deals in marijuana. This drug corrupts the youth. What is more is that he uses the young Jean to peddle his drugs and pays him peanuts. The result is that Jean steals from him.



### **The narrator's mother**

She raises Jean with the intention of pimping him out to homosexuals. This is child abuse. She lamely tells him about the Lebanese: "He'll only touch you". Her son runs away from home because he does not wish to be a homosexual.



### **The Tuareg guide**

His greed is satirised. Deep in the desert he takes advantage of the travellers and asks them for more money or he abandons them. The poor souls would die in the desert. They pay up.



### **Patience**

Her greed too is satirised. Jean was ready to share his loot with her so that they cross the sea into Spain together. She however steals his money and leaves him destitute.

## **b) Brutality/ violence**

### i. The police

The last time Obazee tries to get into Cueta illegally, the Guardia Civil catch him and beat him up severely. It is the Medecins Sans Frontieres that saves his life. (pp119)

### ii. Bandits

There is talk that travellers are sometimes attacked by bearded moslems and bandits when their trucks break down in the desert. There is no

guarantee that the police would arrive in time to rescue them. Such stories make some women turn back at the last moment (pp111).

iii. Samsara

In his fourth dream, his mother narrates the story of the Senegalese girl who couldn't swim. The Samsara who carries her in his dhingy refuses to get close to the shore. He orders her to jump out of the dhingy into the sea and find her way somehow. (pp 121)

c) Collective folly of illegal or illegal immigration



At the end of the first dream, the narrator's mother tells him that the lesson to be learned from the deportation story is that the world is round and that means if one ran too fast, one might end up chasing the very homeland one is running from.



In his second dream she tells him the story of disillusionment. Those who finally reached The Promised Land wonder what they were chasing. They end up driving taxis,, washing plates and toilets, guarding buildings at night, sleeping in the streets, serving as sex slaves and enslaving themselves to the West through marriage (pp113-4)



The illegal immigrants have neither clear plans nor the money to get them to Spain from the camp. The narrator says of the people in the camp: These people here are not like any

villagers; they are like refugees on television, squatting under plastic sheets: men, women and children. The implication is that they choose to lead a squalid life yet nobody sent them away from their villages which are more comfortable than the camps.



Obazee gives a very poor show for an educated man. He lives a squalid life and fancies himself the camp leader demanding to be addressed with respect. How can a man who doesn't respect himself be respected by others. He should be using his university education to improve the lot of his people back at home. Six years have gone by with nothing achieved and many more will go by because he can neither go forward nor turn back.

## 7. POV

The story is told from the first person point of view. It makes the story credible. We would not believe that people can be so wicked or so stupid unless we hear it from the horse's mouth.

## 8. a) Appropriateness of the title

Harrap's Essential English Dictionary defines a trek as a long journey usually on foot.

Twilight, on the other hand is the period immediately after sunset.

Indeed the trek for the two days begins after sunset. In the day they rest to avoid the patrolling police. The journey is undoubtedly long although very little of it is done on foot.

Figuratively too, the sun is not yet up for this would be immigrants. They are not realistic in their ambition to immigrate.

b) Significant event

The notice of revenge on Jean by the drug baron is the significant event in this story. He says that he could not afford to be sodomised against his will so he flees (pp109).

c) Aim of the author

- i. Show the ridiculous lengths to which people will go to try and improve their lot.
- ii. Show human suffering occasioned by poor decision making.

Q. 1

What are some of the elements that Sefi Atta exposes as ridiculous in Twilight Trek?

Q. 2

Discuss the suffering the illegal immigrants undergo in Twilight Trek by Sefi Atta.

## **I STAND HERE IRONING BY TILLIE OLSEN**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set in USA after the depression and WWII but before the economy had fully recovered. The narrator is ironing the family's clothes on an ironing board in her house.

### **2. The plot**

The narrator, a mother of five in her late 30's, stands ironing her family's clothes. She reflects on a question asked her by somebody handling her daughter, probably a teacher at school. The unnamed person wants her to visit and give information that could be used to help her withdrawn daughter, Emily.

She doesn't think she should go because she believes she doesn't have an answer. She believes her 19 year old daughter has lived through experiences that have altered her life in ways a mother cannot understand.

Through her reflections, we however get the picture. Emily, very beautiful at birth, is her first born. Her husband abandons them when she is only eight months. The narrator, a working class mother, could not afford to employ a nanny. At first she left the baby with an inconsiderate neighbour. Later she took her to her grandparents.

A year goes by before Emily reunites with her mother. Two reasons are given for this long period of separation. First, the narrator could not raise the fare. Second, Emily suffered an attack of chicken pox.

When she returns, their lot has not improved. She is shipped to school where she suffers in the hands of nasty children because of the scars left by chicken pox. She also suffers in the hands of inconsiderate teachers who sent her back to the bullies. What is more, the economic hardship makes her mother send her back to her grandparents. When she returns, she finds that she has a new father.

Things get worse for Emily when her siblings start coming: four in total. Her mother barely has time to smile at her, let alone comfort her in the nights when she has nightmares. She therefore feels rejected and unwanted.

The only saving grace is that her condition, we are not told what it is, impairs her growth. She therefore looks much younger than her age. Inconsiderate children tease her because she does not fit the picture of the stereotype beauty. Her younger sister does not help much. She too bullies Emily.

In the end, the narrator is less harassed by the task of parenting. The children have grown older and don't require much attention. She begins to pay more attention to Emily. At first these moments are rejected. Gradually, communication does begin to take place but only on Emily's terms. The narrator is therefore hopeful that ho intervention is requires and that her daughter will end up well.

### 3. Conflict

- i. All the conflicts in this story centre on Emily and the challenges she goes through from infancy to young adulthood. She is born to young parents who have no means of raising her. Her mother is only 19 and America is going through its worst economic crisis: the great depression. Clearly not ready for the sacrifices of parenthood, her father abandons them when she is only eight months old. She lacks a father's love throughout her life.

Her new daddy does not fare any better. In the night when her mother is tired and cannot comfort her when she has nightmares, he does not step in.

- ii. Her mother's love is not forthcoming either. At eight months she has to be with a neighbour during the day as her mother earns her keep. When the financial crisis deepens, she has to go and live with her grandparents for one year. During this period there is absolutely no contact between mother and daughter. This movement to her grandparents happens twice. When she reunites with her mother at the age of 2, she has to go to school. This is the only way her mother could go to work. School exposes her to more loneliness. She is tormented by both pupils and teachers (pp129-30).

Emily's conflict with her mother worsens when the clinic persuades her to send Emily away to the convalescent home in the country. For the first six weeks the narrator was not allowed to see her daughter. When she was finally allowed, she

could only speak to her daughter from a distance. The situation was made worse because Emily was not allowed to hold or keep the many letters her parents wrote her. They were only read to her once.

Emily's mother also remembers a time when an old man living in the back told her that she should smile at Emily a little more when she looked at her. This was a time when Emily was an only child. The narrator remembers this when the other children had come and they were receiving the smiles but it was too late for Emily (pp130)

- iii. The other conflict develops between Emily and her siblings.

When Susan was born, her mother was away in hospital for one week. Upon her return, Emily was not allowed near her mother or the baby for another week. She had to endure two weeks of loneliness. As a result, she became delirious with fever (pp131). What is more is that she didn't get better, and suffered nightmares. When she called out to her mother, she'd ask her to go back to sleep because it was just a dream. She was too exhausted looking after Susan there was no energy left to look after Emily.

There are more problems with Susan. The narrator refers to the relationship between them as poisonous. Their mother acknowledges that she solved the conflicts between the two very badly. She blamed Emily for them. She says that Emily had a corroding resentment towards Susan.

Then there is the social contest between the siblings. Susan had the good looks that Emily lacked. Further, she was more confident and articulate than Emily. She stole Emily's jokes and riddles and the audience lived her. The most cruel thing was losing or breaking Emily's precious things without apology and getting away with it (pp133-4)

- iv. The instance between Emily and a boy she loved  
Emily loved a boy painfully through two semesters. Months later she reported to her mother how she'd stolen money from her purse to buy the boy his favourite candy. He however showed her no affection but liked another girl, Jennifer, better. She pleaded with her mother to tell her why this happened but she had no answer (pp133).
- v. School

School too presents a challenge; she was neither glib nor quick. To her teachers, she was a slow learner who kept trying to catch up. What is more, she was chronically absent. This was in part because of her illness and because her mother just wanted to have her children together, so she made her stay at home with her siblings who not of school going age yet (pp133).

Susan too did contribute to her problems with school. She sometimes mislaid Emily's homework. Subsequently, Emily would go to school her homework not done. Her mother says

she'd suffer over the unpreparedness, stammering and unsure in her classes (pp135).

As a result Emily develops this attitude that there is more to life than school. On the eve of her mid-term exams, she tells her mother not to wake her early with the rest in the morning. She reasons cynically that there might be another atomic bomb in a couple of years that would kill all of them and that it would not matter that somebody had excelled at school (pp136).

vi. Emily and poverty

All though all of Emily's problems stem from poverty, there is one event that stands out: her ability to imitate. Her mother had suggested that she one day try it out in the school amateur show. She did and she won. She got invites to perform to thrilled audiences. However, because there was no money to develop her talent, it eddied, clogged and clotted in her (pp135).

4. Character and characterisation

The main character in this story is well developed. She is brought out as a very ordinary woman who has both weaknesses and strengths.

a) Strengths

i. Determined

She looks after her family despite the economic strain. She says that she'd go out to work or go out to look for work (pp128).

ii. Responsible

Looked after Emily as best as she could. When she couldn't be there, she left her with a neighbour or took her to her grandparents.

iii. Reflective

At the beginning of the story, someone has asked her to visit and give insights that might help improve Emily's lot. The rest of the story is her reflection on what her achievements and failures have been in bringing up Emily.

iv. Honest

She admits her mistakes in the upbringing of Emily. She was distracted both by poverty and the sheer amount of work involved in raising five children almost single handedly. She says that the first six years of Emily's life, she was either away working or Emily was away with her grandparents (pp136). When Susan was born she was too exhausted in the nights to comfort Emily when she had nightmares (pp 131).

b) Weaknesses

i. Fearful



She is afraid that she may not raise her child right. Emily is brought up by the book. She is fed when the book says she should and not a minute too soon (pp127).



She fears to raise the child alone and often sends her back to her paternal grandparents' home although her husband had deserted her (pp128).

- ❖ She is afraid of going to talk to the person who wants insights into Emily's life. In fact, she will not go. She says, "Let her daughter be; the only thing that Emily needs to know is that she is not helpless" (pp136).
  - ❖ She sends her child to the convalescence home for fear she would be taken away from her. The child only returns when the social worker says so even though it was clear to her long ago that the home was not improving Emily.
- ii. Biased
- She was more lenient with Susan than she was with Emily.
- ❖ She says that when it came to balancing the hurts and the needs between Emily and Susan, she did badly in the earlier years. This was because she felt that Emily had a corroding resentment towards Susan.
  - ❖ She did not smile as readily with Emily as she did with the other children. She remembers the old neighbour's admonition that she smiles more readily with Emily. This face of joy she admits she started wearing too late for Emily. She therefore does not smile as easily as the others (pp130).
  - ❖ She readily made Emily miss school but is very strict with her siblings' school attendance (pp133).

### iii. Resigned

She is resigned to the fact that Emily is different from the other children.

When she went to school to watch Emily's performance, she only recognized the Emily that nearly drowned into the curtains. She however cannot come to terms with the Emily that is spell binding and exuding control, command and confidence. Little wonder that she does nothing to nurture Emily's talent (pp135). That is to say that according to her Emily is a misfit and that is how things should stay.

## 5. Themes

### i. Poverty



The narrator is a working class mother. She says that she worked or was out looking for work (pp128).



The long hours she spent ironing are indicative that she could not afford to employ somebody to do it. Her daughter asks her: "Aren't you ever going to finish the ironing, mother?" (pp135).



Of Emily's condition, she says: "We were poor and could not afford for her the soil of easy growth (pp136).



The goodbye note that Emily's father writes is another indication that they are poor. He writes:

"He could no longer endure sharing want with them" (pp128). Want as a noun means a state of extreme poverty.

### ii. Suffering

Emily's life is one of suffering right from birth.

- ❖ Being a first born, her mother brought her up by the book. This meant that she had to endure hours of hunger because her mother only fed her when the book said that she should.
- ❖ At eight months her father walks out on them. She has to be left with a neighbour, who didn't like her very much, when her mother went out to work or look for work. Later she is sent to her father's relatives because her mother could not afford to raise her.
- ❖ At her grandparents' she comes down with small pox which scars her face for life.
- ❖ Then there was her stay at the convalescent home. For the first six weeks she is not allowed to see her mother. When she is finally allowed to visit, they can only see one another from a distance lest the children are contaminated. Further, the only friend that Emily makes, a little girl, is taken away from her. Emily laments that: "They don't want like you to love anybody here" (pp132).
- ❖ There is someone else Emily loved. This is the boy at school. She even stole money from her mother's purse to buy him his favourite candy. He however liked Jennifer better.

NB: There are many more instances of Emily's suffering. Identify and illustrate all of them.

Do you think the narrator too undergoes suffering? Explain your answer.

### iii. Family relationships

- ❖ Try to find answers to the following issues raised about Emily's family.
- ❖ Trace the development of the relationship between Emily and her mother.
- ❖ Give illustrations to show that the relationship between Emily and Susan is a sour one.
- ❖ Supply evidence to show that Emily's four siblings got preferential treatment.

## 6. POV

This story is told by the first person. The events are made more credible through the use of stream of consciousness.

The narrator's reflections and the memories jump from one thought to another as she gives us insights on why Emily turned out the way she did.

## 7.

### a) Appropriateness of title

The title is symbolic

- ❖ It is a symbol of the poverty of the narrator and the general harsh economic period in which Emily was born and raised. Besides putting in long hours for the people who employ her, the narrator had to put up even longer hours to take care of her own household chores.
- ❖ It is also a symbol of the tortured thoughts and memories that go through the narrator's mind as she tries to understand why Emily turned out the way she did.
- ❖ Finally it is a symbol of hope. At the end of the story the narrator says that Emily should know that she is

not as helpless as the dress on the ironing board before the iron.

b) Significant event

The significant event in this story is Emily's father deserting his wife and daughter (when Emily is only eight months old).

c) Aim of the author

The writer depicts the suffering endured by the working class families in America during the great depression.

### Question

Write an essay to show the suffering that Emily has endured in her 19 years.

## **THE RETRACTION BY STANLEY O. KENANI**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set in three countries. First, there is the narrator's home country, Zambia. Part of it is set in his village and part of it in the capital, Lusaka. Secondly, it is set in Lilongwe, Malawi. The final setting is Johannesburg, South Africa. The movement between Botolo and Lusaka dominates the story. Another important aspect of the setting is the contrived setting. The contrast in the two contrived settings brings out the futility of the complaint letter against Tatha.

### **2. The plot**

The narrator receives an email from Tatha, a former airline hostess, with Malawi Air. She complains that she loses her job on account of a complaint letter that the narrator writes.

Through a series of flashbacks, we learn exactly how he came to write the complaint. The airline served alcoholic drinks on the plane. However, the hostesses were under strict instructions to give additional drinks to passengers only after they had finished what they had been served. This was the only limitation.

The narrator however comes from a culture in which pride at a drinking place depends on the number of bottles that one places on the table. Every time he rings for a hostess, it is Tatha that appears and politely declines to serve him an extra drink unless he has finished what he's been served.

Towards the end of the journey, another hostess asks the passengers to write down their comments on slips of

paper that she provides. The narrator confesses he was drunk having been drinking for two hours but still gives his comments. He alleges that Tatha had been rude to him throughout the flight.

Tatha's email touches him so much that he sells most of the things that he'd bought with the prize money and travels by road to Malawi, a 1000km journey, to retract his complaints and to personally apologise to Tatha.

He does not get the responses he had expected and travels back home crestfallen but happy with what he had done. Years later, he sees Tatha in a magazine crowned the hostess of the year at Kenya Airways.

### 3. Conflict

#### i. Tatha and Zgambo

This is the main conflict in the story. Tatha's dream from childhood has been to work for Air Malawi. This she has achieved and wishes to develop her career.

What brings her and Zgambo together is fate. Fate would have it that Zgambo would win an air ticket at a raffle draw courtesy of the Lundazi District council. Fate would have it that he boards the plane on which Tatha was on duty. Fate would have it that at drinks time, the less sophisticated Zgambo, would wish to invoke his tribal pride of beer drinking. Fate would have it that airline drink policy allowed for only one drink at a time and Tatha would politely advise him so. However, there was no upper limit. Fate would have it that Zgambo would take advantage of the upper limit policy and get drank. Finally, fate would have it that the airline, in a bid to offer world class services, had resorted to seeking passengers' views on the flight and that the drunken Zgambo would

make his comments that Tatha had been rude to him throughout the flight.

That's it. A man's ego took advantage of company policy and ruined ta fledgling career.

This conflict is further developed when Zgambo visits Blantyre to retract his comments. He goes to Tatha's home and she bluntly refuses to welcome him despite the rain. She claims that the apology would do her no good, nor will the retraction amount to anything. Finally, he turns to leave and she runs up to him to ask him in until the rains die down. She adds that she was confused by the whole event. He declines to go in with her.

ii. Zgambo and the airline's CEO

Zgambo gets to Blantyre and visits the Malawi Air office. His intention is to meet the CEO and retract his comments. He does meet the CEO but finds out that the retraction is not a one man affair. The CEO has to present the matter to the disciplinary committee. There was nothing more for Zgambo to o but leave.

iii. Zgambo and other service providers.

a) Zgambo and the café receptionist

She was downright rude to him. He says there was a trace of irritation, sarcasm or both in her voice. Further, she does not wait for his full name but fills the entire space with his surname in block letters and in very poor handwriting. She then tears off the receipt before he finishes spelling his name and hands it to him. This is because she was in a hurry to close.

- b) Zgambo and bus service to Blantyre

The buses were small and jam packed with sweating humanity. The bus industry sacrificed human comfort for the sole purpose of maximising revenue. What is more, they did not entertain comments on the services they provided.

- c) Zgambo and Malawi Air receptionist

The receptionist spoke endlessly on the phone as she served Zgambo. She dismisses his pleas the he sees the CEO sooner just so that she can get back to her telephone conversation. Hardly a world class service. The call was not a business one.

#### 4. Character and characterisation

- i. Zgambo

- a) Careless/irresponsible

He made disparaging comments about Tatha's work to take revenge on an employee who had declined to soothe his ego because what he demanded was against company policy. As a result, she lost her job.

- b) Reflective

Upon receiving Tatha's email about the consequences of his actions, he reviews the events on the plane and says that he had not acted judiciously. He seeks to correct his actions by retracting the comments he'd written.

- c) Determined

He seeks the most effective way to make the retraction. It turns out emails are not taken seriously and the Zambian postal system is ineffective. He is left with only one option: travelling to Malawi. To achieve this he has to sell most of the things that he'd

bought using the gift shopping voucher from the raffle. He sold most of the things at a fraction of their cost. Further, he endured the discomfort of the buses and inns to make the retraction in person. Finally, he patiently waits for several hours to meet the CEO and makes his retraction.

d) Concerned

He is bothered that his comments resulted in Tatha losing her job. After meeting the CEO he walks out feeling assured that Tatha would be reinstated. He is relieved when he finds out a couple of years later that Tatha got a new job and was excelling at it.

5. Themes

i. Integrity

This is the main theme of the story. Many characters display a lot of dishonesty in this story. For example, the narrator only learns that his actions on the plane lacked integrity after they had caused Tatha her job.

Most of the service providers he meets lack integrity and are merely concerned about themselves. Therefore the services they offer are poor at best.

Malawi Air too is a prisoner of its own policies. They were quick to dismiss Tatha on account of a comment from a solitary passenger who was drunk. The claims were not verifiable. What is more, they were at pains to rescind an unfair decision that they had made even after a personal retraction by the complainant. They also have double standards: passengers on their planes are asked to make comments on the quality of service but visitors to their offices are given such an opportunity. As a result,

the receptionist uses company resources, time and phone, for personal benefit without fear of retribution.

Finally and most importantly, Tatha acted with integrity but lost her job on account of bureaucracy. However, because of her integrity she lands a similar job in a different company and is soon crowned Employee of the Year. Integrity pays.

### Suffering

Another theme worth examining is suffering. Find out all the characters that undergo suffering in this story. Name them and illustrate the suffering they go through.

## 6. Style

### i. Irony

The chief device that the author uses in this story is irony.

The narrator had complained about Tatha's alleged rudeness on the flight to South Africa. Her behaviour is contrasted with the other service providers who are downright rude to him. This makes Tatha's integrity stand out.

### ii. Symbolism

The rain is a symbol of suffering.

We encounter rain in the evening the evening that Zgambo went to visit Tatha. We are told that it was raining when the taxi they were in pulled over in front of Tatha's house. The narrator steps out of the cab and into the rain. In the seconds that it takes him to reach the door, he was heavily soaked. His entire conversation with Tatha is held with the rain hitting him hard. He pleads with Tatha to let him in because it was freezing cold in the rain. After Tatha dismissed him and shut the door in

his face, he stands facing the door for a long time oblivious of the rain.

When he chooses to walk away, Tatha calls him back but he walks on. She joins him in the rain and tries to convince him to stay in the house until the rain stops. She says that her actions were as a result of the pain she was filled with.

The rain therefore symbolises the suffering that the two undergo.

## 7. POV

The story is told from the first person point of view. The narrator makes a mistake for which he wishes to make amends. The story is about the challenges he faces in his attempt to retract his comment on Tatha's conduct on the flight to South Africa. Coming from the horses' mouth, the story is credible. The honest remorse of the narrator is evident.

## 8.

### a) Appropriateness of title

The retraction is an appropriate title because the narrator made a comment on Tatha's conduct that he should not have made. He tells the Malawi Air CEO exactly that. But the real story is in the lessons he learns as he tries to make the retraction. He learns that most people discharge their duties completely devoid of integrity and that he had judged the one person who served him with integrity wrong. Above all, he learns that his efforts to make the retraction did not go to waste. Tatha did get a job at a new company and continued to excel.

b) Significant event

The significant event in this story is Tatha writing a email to complain to Zgambo that he has hurt her career. Without this email he would never have known that he had wronged Tatha. It is responsible for his making the retraction.

c) Aim of the author

This is a morality story. The writer cautions us against doing things just because we can. There is a need to reflect upon the possible outcomes of our actions on the people we deal with. People should behave with integrity whether or not they are being watched. The message in short is that integrity pays.

## **TASK**

We like to cause suffering to ourselves and those around us.

Write an essay to show the validity of this statement using The Retraction by Stanley O. Kenani for your illustrations

## **The Bamboo Hut by Grace Ogot**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set among the people who live on the shores of Lake Victoria. It is a rural setting in the era of the African chieftaincy. The story is completely devoid of Western influence and examines the shortcomings of the inherited chieftaincy and how this affects the chief's family. Further, it examines the morality of the decisions these people make owing to the pressure of the inherited chieftaincy.

### **2. The Plot**

Chief Mboga goes to the foot of the Ramogi Hills to pray for a son. He is a man both stressed and depressed because none of his many wives have borne him a son to inherit his throne. This is the final plea he is making on this sacred spot.

His wife, Achieng" is pregnant and due to give birth soon. Unknown to anybody, she is carrying twins. Two months after Mboga"’s visit to the sacred hill she gives birth alone at the river bank where she had gone to fetch water. She is disappointed when she gives birth to a baby girl. Her disappointment is not long lived though because she goes into labour again and this time the twin is a boy. Overjoyed and desiring to please her husband, she abandons the girl child by the bank and takes the boy back home to the happy chief.

Her secret tears at her heart but when she goes back to the river bank after staying indoors for the mandatory 4 days, the baby is not there.

Many years later the chief encounters a girl that impresses him with her bravery and he wishes that his son marries her. His son, Owiny, too is impressed by the girl and vows to marry none other. However, the protocol of marriage in a chief's home has to be followed. It turns out that nobody knows the girl's father because her foster mother had found her abandoned by the river bank soon after birth. The right decision is reached at the chief's home: his son cannot marry a woman of unknown parentage.

Owiny would have none of this. He had set his eyes on Awiti and no substitute would appease him. Achieng" is a tortured mother. Awiti"s story fits that of the child she had abandoned by the river bank. She has no choice but to tell the truth.

The chief has a moral obligation to punish her for the wrong that she had done. (it was taboo to throw away a new born child and she was therefore not worthy of being the chief's wife) He chooses not to and instead organises a celebration and keeps his family together.

### 3. Conflict

#### i. Mboga and the gods

Chief Mboga feels that the gods have denied him happiness. For many years he had beseeched Ramogi, the ancestor of the Luo people, to intercede on his behalf for a son. He is not happy because he hasn't a son to inherit his chieftaincy.

#### ii. Achieng"

She badly wanted to please her husband by being the first wife to bear him a son. So focused is she

that when she gives birth to twins se abandons the girl child by the river bank for she argues that she will spoil the fun. She soon finds out that this decision comes back to haunt her. She can neither find the child she had abandoned nor the peace of mind that should have come naturally to her for bearing the heir to the chief's throne.

iii. Owiny and Mboga

Owiny is very disappointed when he finds out that he cannot marry Awiti. He tells his father that he has chosen Awiti over the beaded stool.

iv. Achieng" and Mboga

Achieng realises that she is the only one who can resolve the conflict between her husband and son. However, this comes with a risk to her personal safety. If she reveals that she had abandoned a new born baby, then the rules demanded that she be sent away. She chooses to tell the truth despite the consequences.

The chief too has a problem because he risks breaking his family. He makes up his mind to keep Achieng" despite the mistake that she had committed because losing her would break his heart. Further, he argues that she had borne a lot of pain when she lost the opportunity of seeing her child.

4. Character and characterisation

Mboga: traditional, merciful, strict,

authoritarian Owiny: resolute/stubborn,

Achieng": decisive

## 5. Themes

### i. Tradition

A number of Luo traditional practices are brought out in this story:

Marriage, child naming, chieftaincy, religion

### ii. Clemency/forgiveness

"Achieng" had gone against the rules of the community. As a result, she was supposed to be sent away. The chief gives two extenuating circumstances against effecting this decision. The first is the heartache it was going to cause him to lose the woman he loved; secondly, he pitied her for the pain she had lived with upon losing her daughter. The third reason is a very interesting revelation: people have secrets and he does not know the extent of these secrets. But it makes him learn that though he was a powerful chief, he was still human and his own family kept secrets from him.

### iii. Power/authority

Chief Mboga although considered a mighty leader understands his limitations. If the chieftaincy is to remain in his lineage he has to sire a son. There is nothing he can do about this. Besides, he needs a son to look after him because he has no authority to keep his daughters from going away upon attaining marriage age.

Further, he follows all the laid down procedures to prepare for the marriage of his son. When it turns out that his son cannot marry Awiti, he does

not use his office unjustly to influence the marriage although he risks losing his son for he is determined to marry Awiti. The import of this is that leadership is a challenge and that the use of power/authority for the common good is its sole object. This the mighty chief achieves.

The only time he uses his office to suit his purposes is the time he refuses to send Awiti away but chooses to celebrate the return of his daughter.

## 6. POV

This story is told from a third person point of view. This is appropriate because it is a controlled admiration of a leader by his subjects. Any other point of view would have been subjective. The audience is able to find reason to admire the leadership of Mboga as he deals with a difficult period in his tenure involving personal matters. He comes out us a leader who makes judicious decisions. Certainly leadership is not a bed of roses.

## 7. a) Aptness of title

The title is symbolic. The bamboo hut in Mboga's home was beautifully built and well kept, however it was reserved for the woman who would bear the chief a son. Achieng" does and she is treated with the respect that the hut was. When the chief learns of the mistake she had committed in order to please him, she is forgiven her sins. That decision too is symbolic because it brings out the gentler side of the chief or the human face of leadership. The bamboo plant is a delicate one just like the decision the chief had to take on this issue.

b) Significant event

The significant event is the arrival of the twins; in particular their being born by the river bank away from prying eyes. This allows Achieng" to make a personal decision that allows the story to develop.

c) The aim of the author

The author is concerned with the pressures that people in position of authority have to deal with as they conduct their business. Mboga is called a great chief; some also call him a mighty chief. This is because he applies the rules even when his family is affected and all this to the common good. This therefore should be the goal of any leader.

Task

Leadership is not a bed of roses. Discuss this assertion in light of the events in this story.

## **TUESDAY SIESTA by GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ (COLOMBIA)**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set in Colombia. Part of the setting is the train and the other is the banana growing plantations of Colombia. The train affords us an opportunity to get a closer look at the mother and her daughter. One thing that is very clear is their poverty. But we also get a great insight into their self-esteem. The banana plantations they pass on their way to their destination depict the monotony of life which is made worse by the hot weather that brings life to a standstill for a couple of hours every day. This stifling heat is a very important component of the setting. It helps to develop the oppressive nature of relationships among these people.

### **2. The plot**

We meet a bereaved family, mother and daughter, on a train. They are on their way to mourn her only son who had been shot allegedly in the act of stealing. The town they are going to is far away necessitating the train ride which the deceased's sister is taking for the first time. Upon disembarking from the train, they walk straight to the church and demand to see the deceased's grave.

It turns out that the deceased was not known even by the priest. He hears his name for the first time from the mother of the deceased. He begs her to wait until the sun goes down before she goes to the cemetery but she insists she has a train to catch at three. He

gives her the key to the cemetery and follows it up with a question on poor upbringing. The deceased's mother protests that she raised her son as a morally upright person but he was only a victim of their poverty.

By this time word has done the rounds about their presence and a sizeable crowd of curious onlookers has already gathered outside the church to catch a glimpse of mother and daughter. The priests' best efforts to dissuade her from walking into the crowd fail.

### 3. Conflict

- a) The most noticeable conflict is between the people and the weather.

The heat is extreme.

On the train the oppressive nature of the weather is described in a number of ways.

- The air became humid and they could not feel the sea breeze any more.(pp165)
- By twelve the heat had begun. (pp166)
- The band was playing a lively tune under the oppressive sun. (pp166)
- A dry burning wind came in the window... (pp168) When they get off the train we get more descriptions of

the heat:

- The town was floating in the heat. (pp168)
- The woman and the girl walked over to the shady side of the street. (pp168)
- It was two. At that time, weighed down by the drowsiness, the town was taking a siesta. (pp168)

- In some houses, it was so hot that the residents ate lunch in the patio. (pp168)
  - At the parish house we are told, “An electric fan was humming inside”. (pp168)
  - The priest asks the mother why she has to go to the cemetery in the heat and pleads with her to wait until the sun goes down. (pp170)
  - The priests’ sister tells her that she will melt in the hot streets. (pp173)
- b) The mourners and time

When the story opens we are told that it was 11:00am. On that train trip we are continually reminded of the passage of time.

- By twelve, the heat had begun. (pp166)
  - It was almost two. (pp168) This is the time they disembark from the train.
  - At the priests’ house she is told to go back after three and she replies that the train leaves at three-thirty.
  - Hers therefore is a race against time. Ironically, in her hosts’ town, time is of no importance, it comes to a standstill at eleven and wakes a little before four. (pp168)
- c) The mourners and poverty
- The narrator tells us that the woman and her child were both in severe and poor mourning clothes. (pp165)
  - Further, we are told that they were the only passengers in the lone third-class car. (pp165)
  - The woman we are told bore the conscientious serenity of someone accustomed to poverty. (pp166)

#### 4. Character and characterisation

##### a) Bereaved mother

###### i. Dignified (Having or showing self-esteem)

- She does not allow her poverty to result in low self-esteem.

On the train she sits upright and we are told that she bore the conscientious serenity of someone accustomed to poverty.

- She is concerned about their looks. As they are about to disembark from the train she gives her a comb and asks her to comb her hair. She too dries the sweat from her neck and wiped the oil from her face.

- At the priests' house she shows calm determination as she insists that she has an emergency and needs to be served.

- When the priest does not understand who Carlos is, she tells him that he was the thief that was killed a week ago and that she was his mother.

- Asked why she did raise a morally upright son, she says that she did and that he was a very good man. He however had no work and may have moved to the plantations in search of better pasture, having lost all his teeth to boxing.

- The crowds that gather to stare at her make the priest and his sister very uncomfortable but not her. She tells them that she is all right and walks right into the crowd.

## 5. Themes

### a) Human relations

This is the major theme of this story.

- The young man died an unnecessary death. There is no hint of insecurity in the area. For 28 years she had lived alone and had never had to fire the gun. His death was not looked at as tragic because no one knew him.
  - When the priest asks her to identify herself, she does so confidently and in precise details. This makes the priest uncomfortable (he blushes). We can only infer that owing to her circumstances he had not expected her to be so dignified.
  - The members of this community break from their languid siesta routine and move out into the streets to catch a glimpse of the mother of a thief. The priest and his sister are so scared by the scene they try to dissuade her from going out but in vain. She does not lose her self-esteem and walks out into the streets filling up with crowds of people.
- ❖
- The bereaved mother is therefore a symbol of people who life has treated badly but do not succumb to the labels that society ascribes them. They are strong willed and dignified.

### b) Suffering

This is the other theme developed in the story.

- i. The bereaved mother shows a lot of stoicism as she mourns the death of her son. We are told that the priest looks at them in amazement when he realises that they were not going to cry. (pp171)

- ii. Further, she is faced with a difficult situation in which no one knows her family and against her son's alleged crime she is judged. The priest asks her whether she ever tried to get him on the right track. The priest is evidently find fault with her parenting ability. (pp171)
- iii. This family cannot afford good clothing. We are told that mother and daughter were dressed in severe mourning clothes. Further, the deceased we are told used a rope for a belt and was barefoot.
- iv. This family also faces discrimination. The crowds break from their routine siesta just to catch a glimpse of the deceased man's family. The priests' sister is so scared she tells them that they were going to melt. The mother stoically endures the questioning stares of the people who want to see what the mother of a thief looks like.

The members of this community too have their own problems.
- v. The heat is evidently one of the things that cause them untold suffering. They have to close down public schools, offices, and stores everyday at 11:00am and open just before 4:00pm on account of the heat.
- vi. The priest too has his moment of suffering. When he asks the woman to identify herself, she does so with so much confidence that he blushes and breaks into a sweat. His suffering stems from the fact that he had judged the woman

badly and her sense of self-esteem is what puts him under undue pressure.

## 6. Style

The chief style in this story is symbolism.

### i. The heat

In its tedium, that is monotony, the heat represents the deceased's mother's life. It is very oppressive and has few choices if any.



She has raised her children well telling them what is wrong and what is right. This does not however save her son from the harsh realities of life. He has to eat. He takes to boxing which to say the least only hurts her son. When he abandons this, he moves further afield only to die in search of food.



She has to face the curious crowd outside the church. If she stays until the sun goes down then she will miss the 3:30pm train and she does not have the means to lodge in the town for the night.

NB: What do you think the heat symbolises in the lives of the banana plantation farmers?

It symbolises the loss of control of their lives. The heat controls how their day is run. They routinely break at eleven and resume work at four. Nothing exciting happens nor do they create avenues for entertainment. This is why the diversion presented from their routine by the arrival of the mourners stirs them from their routine.

ii. The death of her son symbolises fate.

The nature of his death is such that nobody could save him. He had just arrived in the town, no one knew him but he was hungry and was ignorant of the risk of knocking on people's doors in the night as a stranger.

His mother accepts this reality stoically. She tells the priest that she is the mother of the thief that was killed there the previous week.

She also does not question the reason for her poverty. She takes it for a fact and lives in it with dignity. She pays for third class car because that is what they can afford; it is instructive that they are the only ones in the car- it means most people can afford to pay for better transportation. It does not bother her that they are the only passengers on it. However, before they disembark she makes sure that she and her daughter are as presentable as they can be.

7. POV

The story is told from a third person point of view. It is however omniscient objective. There is no comment on the characters or their thoughts. No interpretations are offered. We have to interpret the events on our own. This is good for the story because the author wants us to see things as they are. He does not wish to unduly influence our thinking. However, the details offered are sufficient to convince us that human beings are very quick to judge one another and often with very wrong conclusions being jumped to.

8 a) Appropriateness of title

The title of this story is appropriate. It is the Tuesday of August. It is a typical hot day in the calendar of the banana plantation people. They have all taken a break from the heat at 11:00am as usual and are having their siesta. This unfortunately will not be an ordinary siesta because an event happens that wakes them from their mid-day sleep: the mother of the slain thief is in town and everyone wants to catch a glimpse of her. So it is for them a story about a Tuesday that their siesta was interfered with.

b) Significant event

The significant event in this story is the decision of the mother of the slain thief to visit her slain sons' grave. Her trip necessitates that we learn about her economic background and why the slaying of her son was fated.

c) Aim of the author.

The author picks a sad event in the life of a poor mother to show us how strong we can be both in adversity and grinding poverty. No one can therefore take your self-esteem from you but yourself. First we must view ourselves with pride then those around us will see our dignity.

## **Two Stories of a House by Leila Abouzeid (Morocco)**

### **1. Setting**

This story is set in a Moroccan town. It is told in two parts. The first part is set in a courthouse while the second part is set in the roof house of an old woman. The first setting is a very formal one with a government officer presiding and passing judgment. The second one is very informal and the two old women pass their own judgment.

### **2. The plot**

Khadija Bent Ahmed has lost the house she has lived in for over thirty years and has therefore taken the matter to court. The defendant is Meeluda Bent Al-bacheer, her land lady. Khadija feels that she has paid rent all those years and been of help socially to the defendant and this ought to give her ownership of the house. Meeluda on the other hand thinks that the rent was insignificant and it does not make Khadija an owner. She therefore convinced Khadija to vacate the house for renovation upon which she would return.

This was not to be. Khadija's house was the first floor and to get there she had to use the stairs. Meeluda gets the repair man to destroy the stairs and the landing. Subsequently she says they cannot be repaired and that the whole house is coming down.

The judge's verdict: Khadija should go and take her belongings and cease to lay any claim on the property. In her devastated mood, Khadija learns of an old woman with a story similar to hers. She goes there to share her story. The woman tells her about her own tribulations which she feels are even more devastating

than Khadija's. Her husband of over forty years had divorced her and married a girl below twenty years old. What annoys her is that she was the girl's benefactor. The girl was pregnant out of wedlock and was hiding from her brothers. Since the old woman was barren she gets into a deal with the girl that she will hide her shame and in return she would leave the child she was carrying to her. Her husband takes to the girl and marries her and then divorces the old woman. Although she keeps the two children (twins) their mother secretly meets them every day when the old woman is out of the house.

### 3. Conflict

The first conflict is between Khadija and Meeluda. Kahdiya feels that she should own the property she has lived in for over thirty years. Her claim does not make sense. She has been a tenant and therefore she was paying for a service. This is Meeluda's argument which the judge upholds.

This conflict however reveals some very important facts. Khadija also had a conflict with her husband. She feels that her husband squandered the family wealth through his generosity. He was hospitable at the expense of his family.

This also brings us to another very important fact: women have no right to own property. It appears that it is the men who handle family finances. So even though Khadija knew how best to spend the family's

resources in order to secure her future, she was not allowed to make financial decisions. This can be confirmed through the second case in which the old woman is thrown out of the house she says her sweat is in and now has nowhere to go.

The second conflict is developed by the divorcee  
She is in conflict both with her husband and his new wife.

She feels that the new wife has ruined her marriage.  
They had made a deal and the girl swore on the saint's tomb that she would only give birth in the old woman's house and then leave for her the child.

Instead she made herself comfortable as a wife.

The other conflict she develops is with her husband.  
She acknowledges that she has not been able to bear any children for him. However, during the period she was married to him she worked hard and they got to own a house. Now he has thrown her out of it and she is destitute. What is more is that she is in her sunshine years and does not have the strength to start all over again. Therefore she feels that her husband has treated her very unfairly.

Both women develop conflict with religion. Khadija says that Meeluda swore to Mecca, and the divorcee says that the young girl swore on the saint's tomb.  
None of these people honoured their pledges.

In khadija's case, she tells the judge that the reason she has taken long before bringing the case to his court is that she had still left the case with the saints.

It therefore means that her disillusionment with her religion is what finally makes her bring the case before the judge. She feels that her faith was misplaced.

This is the same reaction that we get from the divorcee. She had hoped for God's reward for helping the girl but suffers a divorce instead. This makes her a very cynical woman: she says that there is no good neighbour in this world, no grateful people, and no faithful husbands.

4. Character and characterisation  
Khadija- unrealistic, religious  
Meeluda –cruel  
Divorcee-hard working, religious  
Please supply illustrations that confirm these traits.
5. Themes  
Place of the woman in society  
This is the major theme in this story. This is brought to us through the experiences of two women.  
Khadija has a husband who is pleasure loving. She dutifully serves him as a wife but when he dies her future is not secure and there is no law to protect her from the harsh reality of life. This is why the urban setting is extremely important. Men cannot hope to carry on as if they are in the village and forget their obligation to their families.

The divorcee too develops this theme. She swears that she worked hard as a wife and attributes the house she and her husband lived in and all the good

things in it to her efforts, at least partly. Now in her sunshine years she is thrown out and becomes destitute. She seems to understand that justice will not be served anywhere so unlike Khadija, she does not report the matter for arbitration to any authority but simply becomes cynical of human nature.

So for both women society has failed to protect them from the ill wind of the world despite their devotion to their religion and men.

6. Pov

The story is told from a third person point of view. This is appropriate because it gives us an objective view of the goings on in women's lives in this society.

7. a) Appropriateness of title

Two Stories of a House is an interesting title. It leads us to believe that we are going to look at one house and hear two stories about it. This however is not what obtains. There are actually two houses and two stories. So why is the house in the title singular? The pains and the resulting misery to the women is the same. The author implies that take any two women in this society and you will find that they identify with each other's suffering. The title is therefore appropriate in the cry for equity.

b) Significant event

Khadija's going to court and the divorcee becoming the village girls' benefactor.

C) Aim of the author

The author is appealing for gender parity. This is a patriarchic community in which women have little or no say about their own affairs. The author thinks that this state of affairs should change.

## **THE LAW OF THE GRAZING FIELDS BY CYPRIAN EKWENSI**

### **1. Setting**

This story is set among the nomadic people of West Africa. It is most likely Nigeria. What is more important though is the time. The story is set in pristine Africa before the influence of the west. It is a typical short story with the events taking place in a very short time. The first part is set in Amina's compound. We then move to the open veld and ultimately Yalla's house.

### **2. The plot**

This is a complex plot. The story is not in the order in which the events occur. Flashback has been used.

The story opens with Modio struggling to return Amina into her hut. She was making an attempt to elope with her boyfriend but her brother had suspected this and lay in wait. When she had tried to make her dash to freedom, he stopped her.

Amina then tells us why she was fleeing now. The first arrangement had failed because Yalla had not honoured the time they had set. As Modio locked her in the hut her world collapsed. She wondered how Yalla was going to save her without even knowing where she was.

Unknown to her he was already around and had a plan. He set a hut on fire and used the resulting confusion to get Amina out of her hut. They took a horse that had been set aside for the groom and their adventure began.

Poisoned arrows were hurled at them and towards the end of the journey one got him. He was prepared for them. In his hut was an antidote. If only Amina could get him into the house they would be successful. She uses both her strength

and determination to get him into the hut. He had won because the law of the grazing fields existed.

### 3. Conflict

#### **Amina and her father**

She laments that she was not consulted over the marriage issue. Her father had accepted the cattle first and told her about it later (pp183).

When Modio asks her about Jama, she tells him that that is their affair.

Her father is excited about the bride price but not she. She says that her father might hand her over to Jama but he won't be there when she is being taunted by other women about his cowardice. (pp183)

#### **Amina and her brothers**

Modio was suspicious of her behaviour and therefore set a trap for her. Jama had not paid the full bride price and therefore could not yet take her. This intervening period presented Yalla with an opportunity to steal Amina. That evening Modio lays in wait with a pack of wild cattle dogs which he sets on Yalla and then grabs Amina. He takes her back to the hut swearing that she was going nowhere but Jama's.

Her elder brother disturbed by this incident begins to plan how they were to escort her when the time finally came. He says he would ride behind her because she could not be trusted after what she had been through with Modio.

#### **Amina and Jama**

She is averse to marrying him because he does not fit the stereotype male of the community. This is supposed to be the masculine type that would protect their families from attack by wild animals. According to her he is weak-kneed and

effeminate. He had failed the flogging test. She says that he had wept and begged as they flogged him at the sharo. She would be an embarrassment to her if she married him.

### **Her brothers and Yalla**

They knew he was planning to elope with Amina. This is why Modio kept vigil. When he finally gets the girl they run after them and the brothers are not afraid to use poisoned arrows if only to get their sister back and take her to Jama.

When he finally beats them to his hut, they tell him that their father will know no rest until Yalla will have compensated for his cattle. (pp189)

Finally they acknowledge defeat. One of the brothers says that Yalla is a man. He set fire to their camp, stole their sister and then called them thieves for taking back their horse that they had saddled for another bridegroom.

4. Character and characterisation Amina-strong willed, determined, proud Yalla-courageous, determined, humorous, loving Get your illustrations to prove the above traits.

5. Themes

a) Tradition

This is the most important theme in this story. We learn about the culture of these pastoralists in relation to marriage.

- i. First there is the law of the grazing fields. A man may elope with a woman of his choice as long as he is not caught.
- ii. A man must complete the payment of dowry before he could take his wife. They were waiting for Jama to

deliver the last instalment of his dowry before they could hand Amina over to him.

- iii. Men had to be tested to determine their suitability for marriage. The stage for doing this was a ceremony called sharo in which the man would be flogged in public to determine how well he bore pain. Those who wept and begged during the flogging lost favour in the eyes of potential brides.
- iv. Parents arranged marriage for their daughters.  
Amina's father had first accepted the bride price then told her about it. She was not expected to have a say and that is why her brothers were trying to enforce the will of their father.

b) Love

Another theme developed in this story is love. This is a story of passion. Nothing would stop Yalla from marrying the woman he loved. She says that he was strong enough to break stubborn bulls but when he smiled and held her in his hands his face was so gentle and sweet. When they are in Yalla's settlement and he points his hut out to her, she says: "Our hut you mean".

She tells Modio when he stops her from eloping:  
"This night I will be with Yalla. He's the husband I've chosen."

Yalla on his part has suffered to get this woman to be his wife. He endured the pack of wild cattle dogs and later a poisoned arrow. Despite the poison he takes time to acknowledge Amina when he gets them to his house: "My wife!" he moaned. "Mine at last."

6.           Style

a) Flashback



It is through flashback that we learn why Amina is opposed to marrying Jama. He had wept and begged when flogged.



We also learn of how they had set to elope through a flashback. Yalla was to make scratching sounds to indicate his presence.



It is also thorough flashback that we learn of the huge dowry that Jama is paying.

b) Image

The image of a hawk has been used twice in this story.



The first time it is used with reference to Modio. He crouches before her with hands curved like the claws of a hawk about to strike.

In this instance the hawk is playing a protective role. Modio has just saved his family from embarrassment that would have come to them had Yalla been successful.



The second instance is with reference to Yalla: He was to scratch in the manner peculiar to the grey hawk that steals chickens..."

Indeed Yalla is out to steal a "chicken". Often times the hawk swoops in broad sight of owners of the chickens and steals them. This is exactly what Yalla does. It develops his courageous, even adventurous nature.

7.           POV

The story is told from a third person point of view. It makes the story credible. Because of the emotive nature of this

story, the first person may not have afforded us the balanced reporting that is availed here.

8.        a) Appropriateness of title

The story is based on the simple law that gives the story its title. It is therefore appropriate because it helps us understand the actions of Amina and Yalla. Theirs was a desperate move but the rewards were worth it.

            b)      Significant event

The significant event in this story is the payment of the dowry by Jama. Yalla and Amina are running out of time because Jama is expected to bring in the last instalment and take his bride. It therefore gives the story a sense of urgency.

            c)      Aim of the author

This story is about making choices. Everything we do has serious implications for us and those around us. This ought to be the guiding factor before we make decisions. We need to ask ourselves whether we can live with the outcomes of our decisions.

## **WHITE HANDS BY JAME KATJAVIVI**

### **1. Setting**

The story is set in two different countries. It is set both in Namibia and Birmingham, UK. Namibia is going through the difficult times of colonisation with most of its citizens feeling oppressed and tormented by the white people. The protagonist, Angelika, carries the scars of the atrocities of that regime. Her visit to England confirms that her country is not an island. England too has its fair share of strife resulting from worker dissatisfaction. The resulting strikes bring about violence and unemployment. Another important factor worth mentioning is the contrast in the weather. The Namibia she leaves is hot and dry which agrees with the political heat created by the oppressive regime. The England she visits is in the middle of winter and is therefore equally oppressive.

### **2. The plot**

The story opens with Angelika's visit to Birmingham. We are told that it was the town of her liberation. We learn that she is in the UK courtesy of her church. She has been sent there to learn English. So bad is the situation at home that it is only churches that are setting up projects to improve the lot of the people. It is in one such project the Angelica and her husband work. It is a day care centre for children whose mothers have to go to work but have nobody to leave them with. Besides studying English, she hopes to take a course in Community Studies that would help her run the day care centre.

Her friend Tembi, a Namibian nurse studying in UK, encourages her to avail herself of the medical expertise in the UK to find out why she can't have children and perhaps even have the problem remedied. Her visit to the hospital reveals that she had been sterilised. She says this was done without her knowledge by the military doctors who had removed her appendix.

The sympathetic doctors in Birmingham tell her that although the operation is considered permanent they had carried out a few reversals successfully. They are cautious though and tell her that there are no guarantees that her case too would be a success. She consents to the operation nonetheless. Again the church bears the cost of the operation.

Naturally she has to travel back home to meet with her husband to determine the success of the operation. Here too the church meets the cost. She returns to Birmingham and anxiously waits for her to find out whether she is lucky. Her periods do not come and this is a good sign. She shares this news only with Tembi for fear of raising people's expectations too high. Her luck holds out and finally it was evident to all that she was pregnant. It is only then that she informs her husband.

She continued with her studies as she carried the pregnancy to term. Six months after her baby was born she bids farewell to her benefactors and heads back home.

### **3. Conflict**

- a) The conflict with weather is very important. It develops the theme of suffering in the story. First

Angelika tells us that the Namibia she left was hot and dry. We are then told that the country is highly militarised. Political leaders are detained, tortured or forced into exile. Further, survival came through mutual support, through solidarity within communities and within families.

- b) On the other hand, England is cold and wet. It was the middle of winter. Angelika however had gone there with few clothes and no coat. The cold she says did not disappear with the day but instead settled damply in her bones. Further, we learn that England too was militarised. A miner's strike was on pitting the government against the trade unions. The new political leader declared war on the unions and police on horseback charged at protesters. However, solidarity could not hold out because of distance. Most of the unemployed gave up and moved on.
- c) Another instance of conflict is developed between Angelika and the white medical personnel. She had had frequent stomach pain but one night it became intolerable. Her brother took her to hospital. There she agonised in pain for long as she waited to be attended to. Eventually the operation was carried out. However, the doctors took advantage of the opportunity to maliciously sterilise her. Contrary to medical practice, her consent was not sought. She says that she did not sign a consent form.
- d) This sterilisation brings conflict into her marriage. As a newly married couple they talked about the children they hoped to have. Eventually this talk stopped and they adopted three girls from her husband's family.

- e) Finally her people suffered privation in the hands of the colonial government. Angelika tells us that most people had houses whose walls were made of iron sheets. As a result there was no privacy in those homes. Besides, the houses were tiny and lacked amenities like toilets, showers and kitchens. Further, she says that her people still struggle to cope with life. The number of children at the centre continues to rise and the water in the reserves is inadequate.

#### **4. Characters and characterisation**

Angelika is the best developed character in this story

##### **a. Religious**

She firmly believes in God. She tells that it is God who helped her as always. This is in reference to the surgery that she undergoes to correct her sterilisation.

##### **b. Hardworking**

Every day she looked after 80 preschoolers at the children's centre that she ran. Their mothers dropped them in the early hours and collected them when it began to turn dark.

##### **c. Realistic**

When it became obvious that she was not going to have children of her own, she adopted three girls from her husband's family.

##### **d. Forgiving**

When it became clear that she had been sterilised by white doctors without her consent, her friends wished to write letters to the newspapers and contact the UN to object to the malicious behaviour of the white doctors. She objected to this approach. Clearly she

felt no bitterness towards the people who had wronged her.

**e. Secretive**

Upon missing her periods, she did not readily tell the people around her. Further, she only went to the doctor's after 7 weeks. What is more, she did not dare tell her husband for fear that something might go wrong. The only person she told was Tembi whom she asked not to tell anyone.

5. Themes

**a. Human rights abuses**

**i. Forced sterilisation**

A number of women are sterilised by white doctors without their consent. Angelika is one such woman. Further, she says that she thought of the other women it must have happened to who neither knew nor had the chance to reverse their enforced childlessness.

**ii. Oppression**

Political leaders were detained, tortured or forced into exile.

**iii. Forced resettlement**

The natives had been resettled into remote reserves. The narrator says that the village had been pushed into the rocky hills by colonial settlement.

**b. Friendship**

**i. Church**

The church is responsible for a number of humanitarian assistance. The narrator says that as the South African rule oppressed the

people of Namibia, it is only the churches that could set up projects to help the people.

Further, the church met the cost of Angelika's education, treatment and travel expenses. We are told that they offered assistance from an emergency fund so she could give birth in Birmingham and continue her studies afterwards.

#### **ii. The people of Namibia**

The narrator tells us that the people survived the traumatising experiences because of their solidarity. She says that survival came through mutual support, through solidarity within the communities and within the families: helping people who did not have enough food, caring for those who were sick, looking out for each other's children.

#### **iii. Tembi**

We are told that it was Tembi who began to show Angelika around to ensure that she did not spend too much time alone in her room. Further, she is the one who suggested that Angelika seeks proper treatment. As a result, Angelika found out that she had been sterilised without her consent, but what is more the doctors were able to reverse her condition which was thought to be permanent.

#### **iv. The people of England**

Angelika visits England at a time they were facing labour unrest. The administration was

harsh and the police charged on protestors. She says that the people sent parcels of food across the country to the places that the strike held out the longest.

**6.**

**a. Appropriateness of title**

The title is appropriate. The white hands that are talked about were responsible for both the suffering and joy of the protagonist. It is the malicious white doctors in South Africa who sterilised her without her consent. This was a supremacist statement. If they could stop the blacks from reproducing, then the superior white race would have the country to themselves. Ironically, it is the white doctors in England who identify the reason why she cannot conceive and correct the problem through surgery.

**b. Significant event**

The significant event in this story is the sterilisation of Angelika by the white doctors in Windhoek.

**c. Aim of the author**

This is a sad story that uses contrast to show that both evil and well-meaning people exist. A group of people should therefore not be condemned because one of them has acted out of line, rather we should judge individuals by their strengths and weaknesses. The strong

message is therefore one of tolerance and building friendships.

Task

Q 1 Friendship helps overcome adversity. Using Angelica's experiences both in Namibia and England show that this is true. Give illustrations from Jame Katjavivi's White Hands.

Thank you very much for the purchase of this eBook.

I hope enjoyed reading it and that it did add value to your teaching/learning.

*Walter Akach*

PS: If there ever is a need to wish to share your thoughts about this work feel free to drop me a word at [walterakach@gmail.com](mailto:walterakach@gmail.com)