

WRITER'S REPORT: WEEK 3: MANOKA

By Timothy Chilezi

The story that we had to conduct a writer's report on this week was titled *Manoka* and this story is set in Durban, South Africa and covers the story of a girl by the name of Manoka who is navigating how to deal with a generational family curse that has been placed on the women in the family.

To be honest, when I started reading this story, I was immediately confused with what was going on and as the story progressed, I thought that we would begin to get clarity on what the main idea of the story would be, but the story is nothing short of a rollercoaster. The more confused I became with the story and what they wanted to communicate with the reader, the more detached I was with what was going on and I therefore struggled to continue reading the story. There weren't any emotional connections that I had formed with any character, and I believe that the characters weren't fleshed out so that we could at least relate to one of them.

Manoka as the story title gives us the idea of who or what the main idea of the story is, being the girl in the story who goes by the name of Manoka. It was difficult to get a translation of the name, but I do believe that it translates to, 'ocean'. This title fits in well with the context of the story as we see that the main character has a connection to with the water and in the end, ends up being submerged into the water. "The contact made me dizzy... Anxiety rose up into my throat,". These lines are the reaction that she has when she interacts with the sea water that Tendai keeps in a bottle, and this displays the connection that she has with or rather the weird relationship she has with the sea water.

The story structure is literally everywhere in *Manoka* as one moment, we are the beach where Manoka and Ndumiso get intimate, the next moment, we are at the church and then after that suddenly, we are back to the beach front. This story does not follow a linear pattern, but does have a beginning, middle and end where we are exposed to the conflict, which is Ndumiso dying and then the resolution being that we find out that Manoka is cursed and that the curse took over her and made her kill Ndumiso. The experimentation with the structure left me very confused to a point where I couldn't even follow the events of the story that were unfolding. I feel that the separation of paragraphs would constitute for more structure, and we would have an idea of when the time transitions and when a new idea is being introduced. "I am going to drown, I have never been underwater," serves as huge turning point in the story as we see this as Manoka's first time contacting the sea water and this gets her to respond to the water in a way that displays a sort of pain and rejection to it. The POV shifts between Manoka and the different characters such as Ndumiso, Tendai and Koko are quite confusing. You don't when exactly you are reading as a specific character until their names are mentioned.

There is a lot of use of personification in the story and this personification is used to personify the water in the story, giving the water life and making it seem as if it is a living being. To think of it this does add to the importance of the water in the story. "The water kept inching closer to embrace our legs," is a way that describes the water flowing to shore and close to her legs. The way that the author describes these events make it seem as if the water is alive and has somewhat of a relationship with Manoka, like it was trying to take her in during this moment. We get to know just how much the water is influential to the plot and serves as the main idea of the story.

“He smiled and I suddenly had the urge to run my tongue over the gap between his front teeth,” this, I had no idea what it meant and what the narrator was trying to imply and I feel like it was a very poorly executed way to represent whatever action the writer was trying to describe in the story. Did he want to kiss him? Say something and give him a tongue lashing? We have no idea. This sentence had me confused and I couldn’t understand how to break it down.

Manoka comes across as a character that is fearful for most of the story but also a character that has become accustomed to the life that she had to get used to being, living without a father and mother. Her growing accustomed to this norm gets to not want to leave for Durban and experience a new place. She is settled and comfortable with the life and love that Koko provides for her and doesn’t want anything to change that.

“Could you ask God to send me an email with a detailed plan of my life...,” is a quote that shows us how Manoka is just taking things as they come during her life’s proceedings and she has gotten comfortable with the life that she has to the extent where even she doesn’t have a clear plan for it, even though she is being sarcastic here.

Overall, this story as I described earlier was a rollercoaster which had too much going on in it. I was lost for most of the story and order which the decided to tell the story, the back and forth between different scenes was the perfect cause for a quick headache if you’re looking for one. The ending was probably the only good thing, where the water finally takes her and her daughter into their world where she can find the love of her life Ndumiso again and live forever together. Overall, this isn’t something that I enjoyed and that I would not ever read again.