

REJECTION By Mariama Ba

MY OWN CRISIS CAME three years after your own. But unlike in your own case, the source was not my family-in-law. The problem was rooted in Modou himself, my husband.

My daughter Daba, who was preparing for her baccalaureate, often brought some of her classmates home with her. Most of the time it was the same young girl, a bit shy, frail, made noticeably uncomfortable by our style of life. But she was really beautiful in this her adolescent period, in her faded but clean clothes! Her beauty shone, pure. Her shapely contours could not but be noticed.

I sometimes noticed that Modou was interested in the pair. Neither was I worried when I heard him suggest that he should take Binetou home in the car – “because it was getting late,” he would say.

Binetou was going through a metamorphosis, however. She was now wearing very expensive off-the-peg dresses. Smilingly, she would explain to my daughter: “Oh, I have a sugar-daddy who pays for them.”

Then one day, on her return from school Daba confided to me that Binetou had a serious problem: “The sugar-daddy of the boutique dresses wants to marry Binetou. Just imagine. Her parents want to withdraw her from school, with only a few months to go before the bac, to marry her off to the sugar-daddy.”

“Advise her to refuse, I said.

“And if the man in question offers her a villa, Mecca for her parents, a car, a monthly allowance, jewels?”

“None of that is worth the capital' of youth.”

“I agree with you, mum. I'll tell Binetou not to give in; but her mother is a woman who wants so much to escape from mediocrity and who regrets so much her past beauty, faded in the smoke from the wood fires, that she looks enviously at everything I wear; she complains all day long.”

“What is important is Binetou herself. She must not give in.”

And then, a few days afterwards, Daba renewed the conversation, with its surprising conclusion.

“Mum! Binetou is heartbroken. She is going to marry her sugar-daddy.

Her mother cried so much. She begged her daughter to give her life a happy end, in a proper house, as the man has promised them. So, she accepted.”

“When is the wedding?”

“This coming Sunday, but there'll be no reception. Binetou cannot bear the mockery of her friends.”

And in the evening of this same Sunday on which Binetou was being married off I saw come into my house, all dressed up and solemn, Tamsir, Modou's brother, with

Mawdo Ba and his local Imam.' Where had they come from, looking so awkward in their starched boubous? Doubtless, they had come looking for Modou to carry out an Important task that one of them had been charged with. I told them that Modou had been out since morning. They entered laughing, deliberately sniffing the fragrant odour of incense that was floating on the air. I sat in front of them, laughing with them. The Imam attacked:

"There is nothing one can do when Allah the almighty puts two people side by side."

"True, true," said the other two in support.

A pause. He took a breath and continued: "There is nothing new in this world."

"True, true," Tamsir and Mawdo chimed in again.

"Some things we may find to be sad are much less so than others ..."

I followed the movement of the haughty lips that let fall these axioms, which can precede the announcement of either a happy event or an unhappy one. What was he leading up to with these preliminaries that rather announced a storm? So, their visit was obviously planned.

Does one announce bad news dressed up like that in one's Sunday best? Or did they want to inspire confidence with their impeccable dress?

I thought of the absent one. I asked with the cry of a hunted beast:

"Modou?"

And the Imam, who had finally got hold of a leading thread, held tightly on to it. He went on quickly, as if the words were glowing embers in his mouth: "Yes, Modou Fall, but, happily, he is alive for you, for all of us, thanks be to God. All he has done is to marry a second wife today. We have just come from the mosque in Grand Dakar where the marriage took place."

The thorns thus removed from the way, Tamsir ventured: "Modou sends his thanks. He says it is fate that decides men and things: God intended him to have a second wife, there is nothing he can do about it. He praises you for the quarter of a century of marriage in which you gave him all the happiness a wife owes her husband. His family, especially myself, his elder brother, thank you. You have always held us in respect You know that we are Modou's blood."

Afterwards there were the same old words, which were intended to relieve the situation: "You are the only one in your house, no matter how big it is, no matter how dear life is. You are the first wife, a mother for Modou, a friend for Modou."

Tamsir's Adam's apple danced about in his throat. He shook his left leg, crossed over his folded right leg. His shoes, white Turkish slippers, were covered with a thin layer of red dust, the colour of the earth in which they had walked. The same dust covered Mawdo's and the Imam's shoes.

Mawdo said nothing. He was reliving his own experience. He was thinking of your letter, your reaction, and you and I were so alike. He was being wary. He kept his head lowered, in the attitude of those who accept defeat before the battle.

I acquiesced under the drops of poison that were burning me: "A quarter of a century of marriage", "a wife unparalleled". I counted backwards to determine where the break in the thread had occurred from which everything had unwound. My mother's words came back to me: "Too perfect...." I completed at last my mother's thought with the end of the dictum: "... to be honest". I thought of the first two incisors with a wide gap between them, the sign of the primacy of love in the individual. I thought of his absence, all day long. He had simply said:

"Don't expect me for lunch." I thought of other absences, quite frequent these days, crudely clarified today yet well-hidden yesterday under the guise of trade union meetings. He was also on a strict diet, "to break the stomach's egg," he would say laughingly, this egg that announced old age.

Every night when he went out, he would unfold and try on several of his suits before settling on one. The others, impatiently rejected, would slip to the floor. I would have to fold them again and put them back in their places; and this extra work, I discovered, I was doing only to help him in his effort to be elegant in his seduction of another woman.

I forced myself to check my inner agitation. Above all, I must not give my visitors the pleasure of relating my distress. Smile, take the matter lightly, just as they announced it. Thank them for the humane way in which they have accomplished their mission. Send thanks to Modou, "a good father and a good husband", "a husband become a friend". Thank my family-in-law, the Imam, Mawdo. Smile. Give them something to drink. See them out, under the swirls of incense that they were sniffing once again. Shake their hands.

How pleased they were, all except Mawdo, who correctly summed up the import of the event.

Alone at last, able to give free rein to my surprise and to measure my distress. Ah! Yes, I forgot to ask for my rival's name so that I might give a human form to my pain.

My question was soon answered. Acquaintances from Grand Dakar came rushing to my house, bringing the various details of the ceremony. Some of them did so out of true friendship for me; others were spiteful and jealous of the promotion Binetou's mother would gain from the marriage.

"I don't understand." They did not understand either the entrance of Modou, a "personality", into this extremely poor family.

Binetou, a child the same age as my daughter Daba, promoted to the rank of my co-wife, whom I must face up to. Shy Binetou! The old man who brought her the new off-the-peg dresses to replace the old faded ones was none other than Modou. She had innocently confided her secrets to her rival's daughter because she thought that this dream, sprung from a brain growing old, would never become reality. She had told everything: the villa, the monthly allowance, the offer of a future trip to Mecca for

her parents. She thought she was stronger than the man she was dealing with. She did not know Modou's strong will, his tenacity before an obstacle, the pride he invests in winning, the resistance that inspires new attempts at each failure.

Daba was furious, her pride wounded. She repeated all the nicknames Binetou had given her father: old man, pot-belly, sugar-daddy! -- the person who gave her life had been daily ridiculed and he accepted it. An overwhelming anger raged inside Daba. She knew that her best friend was sincere in what she said. But what can a child do, faced with a furious mother shouting about her hunger and her thirst to live?

Binetou, like many others, was a lamb slaughtered on the altar of affluence. Daba's anger increased as she analysed the situation: "Break with him, mother! Send this man away. He has respected neither you nor me. Do what Auntie Aissatou did; break with him. Tell me you'll break with him. I can't see you fighting over a man with a girl my age."

I told myself what every betrayed woman says: if Modou was milk, it was I who had had all the cream. The rest, well, nothing but water with a vague smell of milk.

But the final decision lay with me. With Modou absent all night (was he already consummating his marriage?), the solitude that lends counsel enabled me to grasp the problem.

Leave? Start again at zero, after living twenty-five years with one man, after having borne twelve children?

I take a deep breath.

I've related at one go your story as well as mine. I've said the essential, for pain, even when it's past, leaves the same marks on the individual when recalled. Your disappointment was mine, as my rejection was yours. Forgive me once again if I have re-opened your wound. Mine continues to bleed.

You may tell me: the path of life is not smooth; one is bruised by its sharp edges. I also know that marriage is never smooth. It reflects differences in character and capacity for feeling. In one couple the man may be the victim of a fickle woman or of a woman shut up in her own preoccupations who rejects all dialogue and quashes all moves towards tenderness. In another couple alcoholism is the leprosy that gnaws away at health, wealth and peace. It shows up an individual's disordered state through grotesque spectacles by which his dignity is undermined, in situations where physical blows become solid arguments and the menacing blade of a knife an irresistible call for silence.

With others it is the lure of easy gain that dominates: incorrigible players at the gaming table or seated in the shade of a tree. The heated atmosphere of rooms full of fiendish odours, the distorted faces of tense players. The giddy whirl of playing cards swallows up time, wealth, conscience, and stops only with the last breath of the person accustomed to shuffling them.

I try to spot my faults in the failure of my marriage. I gave freely, gave more than I received. I am one of those who can realise themselves fully and bloom truly when

they form part of a couple. Even though I understand your stand, even though I respect the choice of liberated women, I have never conceived of happiness outside marriage.

I loved my house. You can testify to the fact that I made it a haven of peace where everything had its place, that I created a harmonious symphony of colours. You know how soft-hearted I am, how much I loved Modou. You can testify to the fact that, mobilised day and night in his service, I anticipated his slightest desire.

I made peace with his family. Despite his desertion of our home, his father and mother and Tamsir, his brother, still continued to visit me often, as did his sisters. My children too grew up without much ado.

Their success at school was my pride, just like laurels thrown at the feet of my lord and master.

And Modou was no prisoner. He spent his time as he wished. I well understood his desire to let off steam. He fulfilled himself outside as he wished in his trade union activities.

I am trying to pinpoint any weakness in the way I conducted myself.

My social life may have been stormy and perhaps injured Modou's trade union career. Can a man, deceived and flouted by his family, impose himself on others? Can a man whose wife does not do her job well honestly demand a fair reward for labour? Aggression and condescension in a woman arouse contempt and hatred for her husband. If she is gracious, even without appealing to any ideology, she can summon support for any action. In a word, a man's success depends on feminine support.

And I ask myself. I ask myself, why? Why did Modou detach himself?

Why did he put Binetou between us?

You, very logically, may reply: "Affections spring from nothing; sometimes a grimace, the carriage of a head can seduce a heart and keep it."

I ask myself questions. The truth is that, despite everything, I remain faithful to the love of my youth. Aissatou, I cry for Modou, and I can do nothing about it.

Yesterday I celebrated, as is the custom, the fortieth day of Modou's death. I have forgiven him. May God hear the prayer I say for him every day. I celebrated the fortieth day in meditation. The initiated read the Koran. Their fervent voices rose towards heaven. Modou Fall, my God accept you among his chosen few.

After going through the motions of piety, Tamsir came and sat in my bedroom in the blue armchair that used to be your favourite. Sticking his head outside, he signalled to Mawdo; he also signalled to the Imam from the Mosque in his area. The Imam and Mawdo joined him. This time, Tamsir speaks. There is a striking resemblance between Modou and Tamsir, the same tics donated by the inexplicable law of heredity. Tamsir speaks with great assurance; he touches, once again, on my years of marriage, then he concludes: "When you have 'come out' (that is to say, of

mourning), I shall marry you. You suit me as a wife, and further, you will continue to live here, just as if Modou were not dead. Usually, it is the younger brother who inherits his elder brother's wife. In this case, it is the opposite. You are my good luck. I shall marry you. I prefer you to the other one, too frivolous, too young. I advised Modou against that marriage."

What a declaration of love, full of conceit, in a house still in mourning. What assurance and calm aplomb! I look Tamsir straight in the eye. I look at Mawdo. I look at the Imam. I draw my black shawl closer. I tell my beads. This time I shall speak out.

My voice has known thirty years of silence, thirty years of harassment.

It bursts out, violent, sometimes sarcastic, sometimes contemptuous.

"Did you ever have any affection for your brother? Already you want to build a new home for yourself, over a body that is still warm. While we are praying for Modou, you are thinking of future wedding festivities.

Ah, yes! Your strategy is to get in before any other suitor, to get in before Mawdo, the faithful friend, who has more qualities than you and who also, according to custom, can inherit the wife. You forget that I have a heart, a mind, that I am not an object to be passed from hand to hand. You don't know what marriage means to me: it is an act of faith and of love, the total surrender of oneself to the person one has chosen and who has chosen you." (I emphasised the word "chosen".)

"What of your wives, Tamsir? Your income can meet neither their needs nor those of your numerous children. To help you out with your financial obligations, one of your wives' dyes, another sells fruit, the third untiringly turns the handle of her sewing machine. You, the revered lord, you take it easy, obeyed at the crook of a finger. I shall never be the one to complete your collection. My house shall never be for you the coveted oasis: no extra burden; my 'turn' every day; cleanliness and luxury, abundance and calm! No, Tamsir!

"And then there are Daba and her husband, who have demonstrated their financial acumen by buying up all your brother's properties. What promotion for you! Your friends are going to look at you with envy in their eyes."

Mawdo signalled with his hand for me to stop.

"Shut up! Shut up! Stop! Stop!"

But you can't stop once you've let your anger loose. I concluded, more violent than ever: "Tamsir, purge yourself of your dreams of conquest. They have lasted forty days. I shall never be your wife." The *Imam* prayed God to be his witness.

"Such profane words and still in mourning!" Tamsir got up without a word. He understood fully that he'd been defeated.

Thus, I took my revenge for that other day when all three of them had airily informed me of Modou Fall and Benetou.

Activity 1

Questions for group discussion, or for written work.

- 1 . What are the reasons Binetou does not want to get married? (2)
2. What are the reasons she is being pressured to be married? (2)
3. Describe Binetou's change (or metamorphosis) in the first four paragraphs of the story. (4)
4. Compare the first visit of the three men, with their second visit, saying why the second is different. (4)
5. Daba urges her mother to break with her husband after he takes a second wife. Why does she stay with him?
6. Ba describes the life of women in her society. Write a paragraph on the situation of women, as described in the story. (2)
7. How does the speaker regain some of her pride in the story? (4)

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Rejection

by Mariama Bâ

Mariama Bâ (born April 17, 1929 – August 17, 1981) is a Senegalese author and feminist who later became a teacher. Her two French-language novels were both translated into more than a dozen languages. Born in Dakar, she was raised a Muslim.

Her frustration with the fate of African women is expressed in her first novel, *Une si longue lettre* (1979), translated into English as *So Long a Letter*.

Mariama Bâ used her novels to reveal the unjust treatment of women justified by a patriarchal society, polygamous practices, and certain Muslim traditions.



Mariama Bâ

1. Summary

The narrator is an Islamic wife who takes care of her household including supporting her children's education. She is a caring person who accommodates friends of her daughter, Daba, when they come to study in her home. Her husband, Modou, also shows interest in the beautiful young girl, Binetou by taking her home at times after studying.

Daba is Binetou's confidant. When she starts transforming, wearing very expensive clothes, she freely shares all the information about having a 'sugar daddy'/'blessor'. However, when things get serious, (Binetou's old man wants to marry her), the narrator and her daughter advise her not to do so because she will have to drop out of school.

Binetou's mother puts her under pressure to accept the hand of marriage. She wants to live a better life and have a proper house which will be provided by the wealthy man. Binetou is not excited about the marriage, but she submits to her mother's plea and agrees.

The three men, Tamsir (Modou's brother), Mawdo Bâ and a local Islamic Spiritual Leader, break the news that the narrator's husband has taken a second wife. The narrator is shocked, she has not been hinted about such arrangement. She decides to be in control of the situation by staying calm. Daba is furious and feels betrayed and humiliated by his father and friend.

After 40 days the three men visit the narrator for a spiritual intercession on the part of the late Modou. Tamsir announces his intention of marrying the narrator after she comes out of mourning. The narrator, for the first time, does not keep quiet but stands her ground and rejects him in front of the other men.

She finally ventures out her anger and gets her revenge on the three men who once came to humiliate her by breaking news of Modou's marriage to a young girl. The narrator's rejection of Tamsir is the turning point of her life, no one will ever bully her or tell her what to do.

2.Title

Rejection means the dismissing or refusing of a proposal/idea. The story is about the narrator, who at the end of the story rejects the idea of marrying her late husband's brother. The rejection gives the narrator power and voice over a patriarchal society.

3.Themes

3.1 Cultural and religious practices

In this short story the narrator, an Islamic wife, submits to her cultural values. At the beginning she enjoys being the only wife, but crisis erupts when a second wife joins in the marriage without any consultation. She hates the fact that she must pretend to be happy and support the young co-wife. Her feelings are not considered by her in-laws especially Tamsir who announces his intention to marry her on the 40th day which is crucial in mourning her late husband.

3.2 Broken relationships

The narrator's relationship with her husband, Modou, is shaken when he takes a second wife without consulting her. The family expects her to accept the new living arrangement of being left alone at times. The narrator's daughter, Daba and Binetou's relationship ends when Binetou becomes her father's second wife/ her step- mom. The narrator's relationship with her in-laws is shaken when she openly refuses Tamsir' intention to marry her after Modou's passing.

3.3 Betrayal

The narrator feels betrayed by her life partner, Modou, who takes a second wife without consulting her. She is expected to accept without questioning her husband. The narrator's daughter, Daba, feels betrayed by her close friend Binetou, who is taken by her father as his second wife. Both the narrator and Daba feel betrayed by Binetou whom they welcomed in their home to do schoolwork.

3.4 Gender inequalities/ patriarchy/ abuse

Men like Modou and Tamsir dominate their marriages. They take decisions without consulting their partners. Women in their lives are treated as objects that do not have feelings. Modou shows no respect to girls as he exploits the young Binetou by making her his second wife.

Binetou's mother abuses her daughter when she begs her to marry Modou. She sees Binetou's marriage as a life changer and social status upgrade.

4.How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story takes place in Dakar, Senegal. Most events take place in the narrator's home where she stays with her family.

4.2 Structure and Plot Development

Exposition

The narrator introduces the story with 'MY OWN CRISIS CAME' which indicates that she has been living happily at home. The most interesting thing in this story is the introduction of Binetou, a classmate to Daba (narrator's daughter) who frequently visits the narrator's house. She is described as young, beautiful, evidently poor and she gets the attention of the narrator's husband.

Rising Action

Binetou's relationship with an old man transforms her into a new person who wears expensive dresses. The narrator's daughter shares all news of her friend with her mother, the narrator including Binetou's crisis of being courted by the 'sugar daddy'. Binetou gives in to the idea of marrying the old man because her mother is desperate for a better life that will be provided by her suitor.

Climax

The arrival of the three men Tamsir, Mawdo and a local spiritual group '*Imam*' bring crisis to the narrator's world. She learns about her husband's new wife, Binetou. The narrator and her daughter's worlds are shaken by the news as they have never thought of Binetou's 'sugar daddy' to be Modou (husband and father). They both feel humiliated and powerless as they experience Modou's rejection.

Resolution

The narrator finally gets a chance to give vent to her bottled anger on the 40th day of mourning her late husband, Modou. Tamsir's announcement on his intention to marry her makes her speak her heart out. She deals with the initial crisis, which is highlighted in the beginning of the story. She stops taking the abuse and brings back her power/ independence as a woman. Never again shall any man decide on how she must live her life.

4.3 Characterisation

The narrator	• She is a round character. She experiences both inner conflict and outer conflict. • She is emotionally strong and content with her life at the beginning of the story. • After her husband's rejection/betrayal of taking a second wife who is very young, she puts on a brave face though she is disappointed. • She deals with her rejection by refusing to be married again or submitting to the cultural practice of being inherited by a husband's brother. • She is determined never to be bullied again; she boldly displays her independence from her in-laws.
Modou	• He is a secretive and cunning man. • He is an autocratic patriarch who rejects his wife for a young girl who is his daughter's classmate. • He is abusive, uses his money to lure Binetou/ the poor girl into marrying him.
Binetou	• She is young and beautiful. • She is a shy, naive and poor girl. • She is Daba's close friend/ classmate. • She is untrustworthy. She betrays her friend Daba when does not disclose the name of her 'sugar daddy'
Binetou's mother	• She is a manipulative and desperate poor woman. • She is a <i>gold-digger</i> who uses her daughter to improve her lifestyle.
Tamsir	• He is a supportive brother to Modou. • He is a courageous man. • He is an opportunist who tells the narrator that she is his good luck charm. • He follows his heart and shares his intention to marry the narrator.
Daba	• She is a supportive and caring young girl. • She is protective of her mother.

4.4 Narrator's point of view

The story is narrated by the main character. She is an Islamic wife who enjoys her married life at the beginning of the story. She tells the story of how she experienced a crisis at home and eventually becomes a bitter person. The story is told from the narrator's point of view in the form of a letter/diary that is written to a friend.

4.5 Style

A formal register is mostly used in the story. There is some dialogue within the story to portray the character's feelings/emotions. The dialogue brings the story to life. Characters can be known better through what they say. The use of contractions also brings informal register, especially when the narrator speaks to her daughter and Aissatou (the friend she is writing the letter to).

4.6 Diction and figurative language

The writer uses **idiomatic expressions** in order to emphasize meaning:

- e.g. – haughty lips.
- too perfect to be honest.

Some examples of **figures of speech** in the story include:

SIMILE:

- The narrator compares the pride resulting from the success of her children at school to praises/accolades given to her husband 'Their success at school was my pride, just like laurels thrown at the feet of my lord and master.' (Page 57)

METAPHOR:

- The narrator refers to 'the cry of a hunted beast' to describe how she panicky asked the three men about her husband just like an animal that is a victim of prey would cry for help (Page 53).
- The narrator describes the fastness of Iman's explanation of the status quo to getting out something that causes unbearable pain. 'He went on quickly, as if the words were glowing embers in his mouth'. (Page 53)
- The narrator compares her accepted shock/ heartbreak with dripping poison that painfully destroys her. 'I acquiesced under the drops of poison that were burning me'. (Page 54)
- The narrator compares Binetou to a sacrificial lamb as she agreed to marry Modou to please her mother. 'Binetou, like many others, was a lamb slaughtered on the altar of affluence'. (Page 55)

HYPERBOLE:

- The narrator exaggerates her accepted shock/ heartbreak/pain with dripping poison that hurts so much 'I acquiesced under the drops of poison that were burning me'. (Page 54)

RHETORICAL QUESTION:

- The narrator questions Binetou's opinion in the marriage though she knows that she has little say in the matter. 'But what can a child do, faced with a furious mother shouting about her hunger and her thirst to live?' (Page 55)

4.7 Tone and Mood

Tone:

- A gloomy, downhearted and depressed tone.

The narrator uses this tone when the story begins, the choice of first words in the story “MY OWN CRISIS CAME...” creates a melancholy atmosphere.

- Enraged tone

The narrator feels betrayed by her husband when she is rejected for a younger wife.

Daba is furious at his father Modou who took her close friend /classmate to be his second wife.

- Cheerful tone

Binetou changes from being a shy girl after getting an old man who bought her expensive clothes.

The tone becomes exciting when she thinks she is in control of the situation.

Mood:

- sad, angry, emotional (initially)
- happy, optimistic (at the end)

Activity 2

'Rejection'

Read the following extract and answer questions which follow:

I acquiesced under the drops of poison that were burning me: 'A quarter of a century of marriage', 'a wife unparalleled'. I counted backwards to determine where the break in the thread had occurred from which everything has unwound. My mother's words came back to me: 'Too perfect. ...' I completed at last my mother's thought with the end of the dictum: '... to be honest'. I thought of the first two incisors with a wide gap between them, the sign of the primacy of love in the individual. I thought of his absence all day long. He had simply said: 'Don't expect me for lunch.' I thought of other absences, quite frequent these days, crudely clarified today yet well hidden yesterday under the guise of trade union meetings. He was also on a strict diet, 'to break the stomach's egg,' he would say laughingly, this egg that announced old age. 5

Every night when he went out he would unfold and try on several of his suits before settling on one. The others, impatiently rejected, would slip to the floor. I would have to fold them again and put them back in their places; and this extra work, I discovered, I was doing only to help him in his effort to be elegant in his seduction of another woman. I forced myself to check my agitation. 10 15

- 2.1 Choose a description from COLUMN B that matches the name in COLUMN A. Write only the letter (A-E) next to the question
Numbers (2.1.1(a) to (2.1.1 (d) in the ANSWER BOOK.

COLUMN A	COLUMN B
(a) Modou	A caring and protective
(b) Binetou	B opportunist and desirous
(c) Daba	C courageous and submissive
(d) Tamsir	D secretive and cunning
	E shy and naive

4X1 (4)

- 2.2 Describe the setting of this extract. (2)
- 2.3 Explain why the following statement is FALSE: (1)
- Modou has three wives.
- 2.4 Refer to line 1 ('I acquiesced under ... were burning me') (1)
- (a) Identify a figure of speech in this line. (1)
- (b) Explain why this figure of speech is relevant in this extract. (2)

- 2.5 Refer to lines 8-9 ('He had simply... me for lunch')
- (a) What tone would Modou use in these lines? (1)
- (b) Why would Modou use this tone? (1)
- 2.6 What does this extract reveal about the speaker's character?
Substantiate your answer. (2)
- 2.7 One of the themes in this short story is broken relationships.
Discuss this theme by referring to the speaker and Daba. (3)

How to use this study guide

There is one chapter for each of the short stories. Each chapter includes a summary, a brief statement of the importance of the title, and the themes. More detail is given on how the story is told by examining:

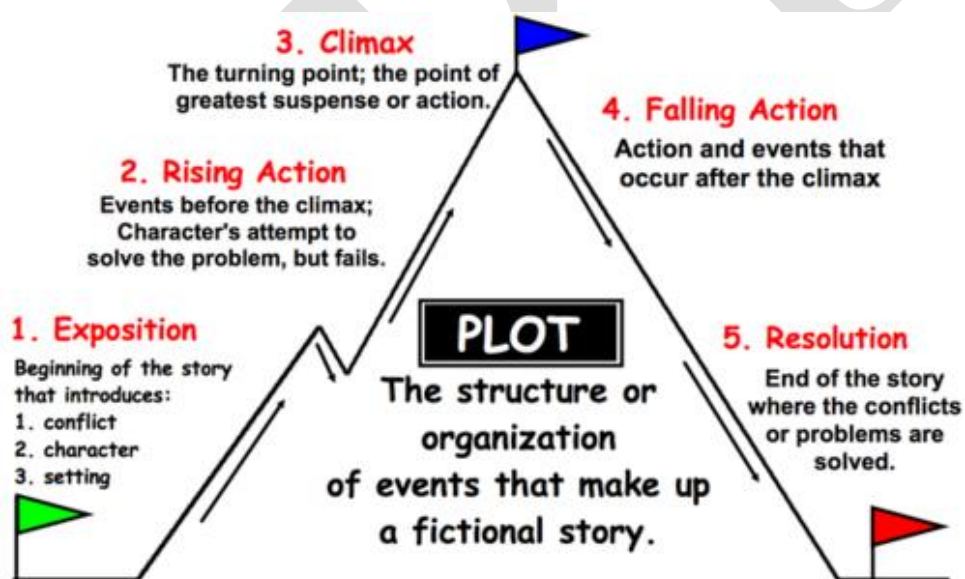
Setting;
Structure and plot development;
Characterisation;
Style;
Narrator and point of view;
Diction and figurative language; and
Tone and mood.

All of the above information is also summarised in a set of notes. Use these notes to hold the eight short stories clearly in your mind.

You can test your understanding of each short story by completing the activities, and using the answers to mark your own work. The activities are based on exam extracts.

Learn all of the vocabulary lists for each short story at the end of each chapter.

Structure and plot development



A short story requires the reader to understand and unpack its main elements. These elements apply to most short stories. The following is a simplified table that you can use with any short story immediately after reading it. This analysis will assist you when you prepare for a test, an assignment or revise for examinations.

SHORT STORY ANALYSIS SHEET	
Title: _____	Author: _____
Setting	WHEN & WHERE does the story take place?
Characters	Who are the characters in the story?
Characterization What are the personality traits of each character?	Definition of character trait: Personality characteristic or inherent value that someone has which they are unlikely to change and that helps to make an individual into the kind of person he/she is.
Theme (The Message) What is the main idea of the story?	The theme is a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work, which may be stated directly or indirectly. A short story may have more than one theme.
Tone	Tone is a quality in the voice that expresses the speaker's feelings or thoughts, often towards the person being spoken.
Mood Describe how you felt reading this story. (Use the author's intentions, not bored)	Mood explains the way you feel at a particular time: Are you feeling good or bad, cheerful or irritable, etc?
Imagery What pictures could you visualise as you read the story?	The use of literary devices e.g. figures of speech and sound devices. Simile, personification, metaphor, irony, synecdoche, metonymy, assonance, alliteration, etc. Refer to CAPS, pages 31, 32 and 46
Point of View	What narrative perspective from which the story is told?
Conflict List and describe the different types of conflict from the story. Which are internal and which are external?	Internal (self vs. self) External (self vs. person, society or nature)

Eveline by James Joyce

She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty **cretonne**(*heavy cotton/linen cloth*). She was tired.

Few people passed. The man out of the last house passed on his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the cinder path before the new red houses. One time there used to be a field in which they used to play every evening with other people's children. Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built houses in it - not like their little brown houses, but bright brick houses with shining roofs. The children of the avenue used to play together in that field - the Devines, the Waters, the Dunns, little Keogh the cripple, she and her brothers and sisters. Ernest, however, never played: he was too grown up. Her father used often to **hunt them in** out of the field with his blackthorn stick; but usually little Keogh used to keep **nix** (*being a watch man*) and call out when he saw her father coming. Still they seemed to have been rather happy then. Her father. was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive. That was a long time ago; she and her brothers and sisters were all grown up; her mother was dead. Tizzie Dunn was dead too, and the Waters had gone back to England. Everything changes. Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home.

Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided. And yet during all those years she had never found out the name of the priest whose yellowing photograph hung on the wall above the broken **harmonium**(*organ/piano*) beside the coloured print of the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. He had been a school friend of her father. Whenever he showed the photograph to a visitor her father used to pass it with a casual word:

- He is in Melbourne now.

She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question. In her home anyway she had shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her. Of course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business. What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow? Say she was a fool, perhaps; and her place would be filled up by advertisement. Miss Gavan would be glad. She had always had an edge on her, especially whenever there were people listening.

- Miss Hill, don't you see these ladies are waiting?

- Look lively, Miss Hill, please.

She would not cry many tears at leaving the Stores.

But in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married - she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been. Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence. She knew it was that that had given her the **palpitations** (*heart racing*). When they were growing up he had never gone for her, like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl; but latterly he had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead mother's sake. And now she had nobody to protect her. Ernest was dead and Harry, who was in the church decorating business, was nearly always down somewhere in the country. Besides, the invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably. She always gave her entire wages - seven shillings- and Harry always sent up what he could but the trouble was to get any money from her father. He said she used to squander the money, that she had no head, that he wasn't going to give her his hard-earned money to throw about the streets, and much more, for he was usually fairly bad of a Saturday night. In the end he would give her the money and ask-her had she any intention of buying Sunday's dinner. Then she had to rush out as quickly as she could and do her marketing, holding her black leather purse tightly in her hand as she elbowed her way through the crowds and returning home late under her load of provisions. She had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly. It was hard work - a hard life - but now that she was about to leave it, she did not find it a wholly undesirable life.

She was about to explore another life with Frank. Frank was very kind. manly, open-hearted. She was to go away **with him by the night boat** to be his wife and to live with him in Buenos Ayres where he had a home waiting for her. How well she remembered the first time she had seen him; he was lodging in a house on the main road where she used to visit. It seemed a few weeks ago. He was standing at the gate, his peaked cap pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze. Then they had come to know each other. He used to meet her outside the Stores every evening and see her home. He took her to meet **The Bohemian**(*unconventional/ non-conformist*) **Girl** and she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him. He was awfully fond of music and sang a little. People knew that they were courting and, when he sang about the **lass** (*girl or teenager*) that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused. He used to call her Poppens out of fun. First of all, it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him. He had tales of distant countries. He had started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allan Line going out to Canada. He told her of the names of the ships he had been on and the names of the different services. He had sailed through the Straits of Magellan and he told her stories of the terrible Patagonians. He had fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres, he said, and had come over to the old country just for a holiday. Of course, her father had found out the affair and had forbidden her to have anything to say to him.

- I know these sailor chaps, he said.

One day he had quarrelled with Frank and after that she had to meet her lover secretly.

The evening deepened in the avenue. The white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct. One was to Harry; the other was to her father. Ernest had been her favourite but she liked Harry too. Her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her. Sometimes he could be very nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when their mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. She remembered her father putting on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh.

Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne. Down far in the avenue she could hear a street organ playing. She knew the air. Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could. She remembered the last night of her illness; she was again in the close dark room at the other side of the hall and outside she heard a **melancholy** (*feeling sad with no obvious cause*) air of Italy. The organ-player had been ordered to go away and given **sixpence** (half a shilling). She remembered her father strutting back into the sickroom saying:

- Damned Italians! coming over here!

As she mused the pitiful vision of her mother's life laid its spell on the very quick of her being - that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness. She trembled as she heard again her mother's voice saying constantly with foolish insistence:

- Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!

She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape!

Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to

happiness. Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her.

She stood among the swaying crowd in the station at the North Wall. He held her hand and she knew that he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again. The station was full of soldiers with brown baggages. Through the wide doors of the **sheds** (*huts or shacks*), she caught a glimpse of the black mass of the boat, lying in beside the **quay** (*harbour*) wall, with **illuminated** (*lit*) portholes. She answered nothing. She felt her cheek pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty. The boat blew a long mournful whistle into the mist. If she went, tomorrow she would be on the sea with Frank, steaming towards Buenos Ayres. Their passage had been booked. Could she still draw back after all he had done for her? Her distress awoke a nausea in her body and she kept moving

her lips in silent fervent prayer. A bell clanged upon her heart. She felt him **seize**(*grab hold*) her hand:

-Come!

All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hands at the iron railing.

-Come!

No! No! No! it was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in **frenzy**(*fury*). Amid the seas she sent a cry in anguish

-Eveline! Evvy!

He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.

Class Activity 1

1. In the first paragraphs of the story Evelyn looks out of the window, and then back in to the room. Why does the author show her doing this? (4)
2. What has her life been like thus far? (3)
3. Describe the character of Evelyn's father (3)
4. What does Evelyn's new home promise her? (3)
5. Why is the Italian tune (or air) of the street organ important in the story? (2)
6. Does the life of her mother have any influence on Evelyn's thinking? Give reasons for answer. (3)
7. How much does Evelyn love Frank? Give reasons for your answer. (3)
8. Discuss the image of the sea in the resolution in the resolution of the story (4)

Eveline

by James Joyce

James Joyce was born in Dublin (Ireland) in 1882. He studied French, German, Italian and English languages and literature. He graduated in 1902. He was interested in a broader European culture and this led him to consider himself a European. He hated Ireland, considering Dublin the centre of all paralysis and his attitude was in contrast to that of W.B. Yeats. Joyce did not have any Irishness in him and he believed that the only way to increase Ireland's awareness was by making a realistic portrait from a European viewpoint.

His masterpiece is 'Dublinners', a collection of short stories completed in 1905 and published in 1914. The story, 'Eveline' comes from 'The Dubliners'. He also wrote some novels like 'Ulysses' and 'Finnegans Wake'.

Joyce died in Switzerland in 1941.

James Joyce

1.Summary

Eveline, the main character, is a young woman who lives in Dublin with her father. Her mother is dead. She is dreaming of a better life beyond the shores of Ireland such that she plans to elope with Frank, a sailor who is her secret lover and starts a new life in Argentina. With her mother gone, Eveline is responsible for the day-to-day running of the household: her father is drunk and only reluctantly tips up his share of the weekly housekeeping money, and her brother Harry is busy working and is away a lot on business (another brother, Ernest, has died).

Eveline herself keeps down a job working in a shop. On Saturday nights, when she asks her father for some money, he abuses her verbally especially since he is always drunk. When he eventually hands over his housekeeping money, Eveline has to go to the shops and buy the food for the Sunday dinner at the last minute. Eveline is tired of this life, and so she and Frank book onto a ship leaving for Buenos Aires, Argentina. But as she is just about to board the ship, Eveline suffers a failure of resolve, and cannot go through with it. Without saying a word, Eveline turns around and goes home, leaving Frank to board the ship alone.

2.Title

Eveline, the title, is the name of the main character. The story is about Eveline, her life, her relationship with her father, siblings and Frank. The story focuses on her suffering in the hands of her father and the decisions she has to make about her life.

3.Themes

3.1 Different forms of death

Death is both figuratively and literally discussed in this short story. People who are no more part of Eveline's life are described as though 'they are no more.' But this is not the case in the majority of the people who are alive but are no more in contact with her. She describes life before her mother's death better than what it is at present.

She also describes those who left Dublin and never asserts her emotional response to these happenings. From this, meaning can be inferred, which is that those people die when they leave Dublin. She fears that if she leaves Dublin, she will be considered dead. She fears that if she elopes and gets married, her marriage will be like death, she will lose her identity and she will be no more. Eveline's husband will become her master and identity, and she will 'drown' in unknown seas.

3.2 Religion and keeping promises

One of the reasons for Eveline's failure to escape is her Catholic religion. Her Catholicism beliefs enforce in her that she should be able to make sacrifices, promises and to live in guilt. She then sacrifices her own freedom and happiness in order to keep her promise which binds her with her (late) mother.

3.3 Nostalgia

Eveline's thoughts about what it means to be a 'Dubliner', makes her think of liberating herself by leaving Dublin. She feels that if she leaves, she will have to start a new life and lose her identity. She is ready to sacrifice her life, which is a reality but does not want to sacrifice her memories.

3.4 Women and society

Eveline is a typical twentieth-century Dublin woman who faces the majority of the problems that were usual then. In that society, the women had inferior value to men. This led to the oppression of women by men. Women were controlled by men and had no power. Women had to be grateful that there were powerful men in their lives. Eveline needs a male in her life who can support her emotionally and physically and she finds Frank. Unfortunately, her doubts prevents her from breaking the chains, and she is not able to challenge the system.

3.5 Escapism

Eveline tries to escape from the life she has led being suppressed and abused by her father. She believes that if she goes away, the society in Argentina will be different, and people will not judge her for her past actions (sex-related). The escape idea attracts her, but when the time to act, she cannot do it. Through this theme, the author conveys the message that escape does not always yield positive results and may even worsen the situation.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story takes place in Dublin, Ireland where the main character, Eveline grows up. It is during the early twentieth century.

4.2 Structure and Plot Development

Exposition

The main character, Eveline is introduced as a troubled teenager (nineteen years old). She looks at her surroundings, her life and her past experiences critically. She feels that under her father's abusive conduct, she is going to suffer the way her late mother suffered.

Rising Action

Eveline meets Frank who promises her a better life in Argentina than the one she is experiencing in Dublin. She writes two letters, one to her father and another to Harry, to let them know that she is going to look for a better life. The plan is to go board a ship with Frank and escape to another country where the two will get married and live happily ever after.

Climax

When the time comes for Eveline to leave Dublin, the idea of her mother's last days comes back to haunt her. On arrival at the port, the ship that was bound to take her and Frank is there. Frank is also there, and the ship is blowing the whistle, signalling its departure. Frank holds her hand, asking her to come on board. Her thoughts are too busy, and she cannot decide whether to board the ship or turn back home.

Resolution

Eveline feels as if this ship would drown her, and she decides to stay. She does not move even when Frank keeps calling her.

4.3 Characterisation

Eveline	• She is a nineteen year old girl. • She is emotionally abused by her father after the death of her mother. • Her father and siblings do not show her love. • She meets Frank whom she loves and believes running away with him will bring about change in her situation. • She works at Miss Gavan's store and also suffers emotional abuse from her. • She feels that the change of scenery will make the abuse come to an end. • She is indecisive at the end and she does not fulfil her desire to escape when she cannot board the ship and lets Frank leave by himself.
Eveline's father	• He is always drunk. • He takes all of Eveline's wages/salary on weekends and abuses her. • It is implied in the story that he sexually abuses Eveline. • He is not a caring father. • He treats his girl child differently from how he treats his boys.
Frank	• He is kind and open-hearted. He is a loving boyfriend. • She took Eveline to theatre. • He has worked on a few ships. He is well-travelled. • He can sing. • He tries to take Eveline away from her father's abuse.
Eveline's mother	• He leaves alone when Eveline changes her mind. • She suffers abuse in the hands of her husband. • She teaches her children honesty and Catholicism. She is dead.
Miss Gavan	• She own a shop. • She is an employer for Eveline. • She mistreats Eveline in front of people/customers.
Harry	• He is Eveline's brother. • He works in a church decorating business.
Ernest	• Eveline's brother who died.
The priest	• He appears in a picture, hanging on the wall in the Hills house. • He has moved to Melbourne.

4.4 Narrator's point of view

The story is narrated from the third-person omniscient point of view. The narrator allows the reader to know both the internal development of the story in the mind of the protagonist and the external development in the real world. The action is told with a rhythmical remembrance of the past so as to let the reader decide if the protagonist is doing right or wrong.

4.5 Style

The short story '**Eveline**' was the advent between adolescence and maturity. Written in 1914, which preceded the women's suffrage (right to vote) in Ireland by four years. The protagonist and title character, **Eveline**, is largely affected by the feminist issues of the time period. These feminist ideas are illustrated through Eveline's relationships with her family and boyfriend, as well the societal expectations, and her duties and obligations.

The short story is the tale of such an unfortunate individual. Anxious, timid, scared, perhaps even terrified, all these describe Eveline. She is a frightened, indecisive young woman poised between her past and her future. The story is clearly associated with details, with metonymy and synecdoche.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

- The writer uses figurative language in order to emphasise meaning :
- Some examples of **figures of speech** in the story include:

METONYMY AND SYNECDOCHE

- 'dusty cretonne' (page 61)
- 'Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque' (page 61)
- 'the night boat' (page 62)

SIMILE:

- 'passive, like a helpless animal.' (page 65)

METAPHOR:

- 'to hunt them down' (page 61)
- 'his hair tumbled forward...face of bronze' (page 63)
- 'The evening deepened in the avenue' (page 63)
- 'fold her in his arms' (page 64)
- 'out of a maze of distress' (page 64)

PERSONIFICATION:

- 'the seas of the world tumbled about her heart' (64)

4.7 Tone and Mood

Tone:

- A depressed tone.
This tone is used by the narrator to show the state of events surrounding Eveline's life.
- A harsh tone
This tone is used when Eveline's father and the boss address her and make their demands.

Mood:

- sad, emotional (initially)
- optimistic (when a decision to elope is made)
- remorse/guilt (at the end)

Activity 3.1

‘Eveline’

Read the following extract and answer questions which follow:

She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question. In her home anyway she had shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her. Of course she had to work hard, both in the house and at the business. What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow? Say she was a fool, perhaps; and her place would be filled up by advertisement. Miss Gavan would be glad. She had always had an edge on her, especially whenever there were people listening. 5

–Miss Hill, don’t you see these ladies are waiting?

–Look lively, Miss Hill, please.

She would not cry in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married – she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been. Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father’s violence. She knew it was that that had given her palpitations. When they were growing up he had never gone for her, like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl; ... 10 15

3.1.1 Choose a description from COLUMN B that matches the name in COLUMN A. Write only the letter (A–D) next to the question number (3.1.1(a) – 3.1.1(d)) in the ANSWER BOOK.

COLUMN A

- (a) Harry
- (b) Miss Gavan
- (c) Frank
- (d) Ernest

COLUMN B

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| A | Eveline’s boyfriend |
| B | Eveline’s late sibling |
| C | Eveline’s employer |
| D | Eveline’s father |
| E | Eveline’s brother |

(4 x 1) (4)

3.1.2 Refer to lines 1-5 (‘Was it wise?... with a fellow?’)

- (a) Choose the correct answer from those given below. Write down only the letter (A – D) next to the question number (3.1.2 (a)) and the answer in the ANSWER BOOK.

In this extract Eveline is asking a number of ... questions.

- A difficult
- B rhetoric
- C original
- D delicate

(1)

- (b) Why does the speaker ask this type questions?

(2)

- 3.1.3 Explain why the following statement is FALSE:
Eveline's abuse included being starved. (1)
- 3.1.4 Refer to line 5 ('they found out that she had run away with a fellow?')
(a) Identify a figure of speech in this line. (1)
(b) Explain the comparison in this figure of speech. (2)
- 3.1.5 Quote FOUR CONSECUTIVE words which prove that Eveline's position will be given to another employee? (1)
- 3.1.6 Refer to line 9 ('Look lively, Miss Hill, please.')
- (a) What tone of voice would Miss Gavan use in this line. (1)
(b) Why would she use this tone. (2)
- 3.1.7 Why would people in another country treat Eveline better? (2)
- 3.1.8 Eveline is a courageous woman.
Discuss your view. (3)
- 3.1.9 Refer to the story as a whole:
Do you sympathise with Frank?
Discuss your view. (3)

THE WIND AND A BOY by Bessie Head

Like all the village boys, Friedman had a long wind blowing for him, but perhaps the enchanted wind that blew for him filled the whole world with magic.

Until they became ordinary, dull grown men, who drank beer and made babies, the little village boys were a special set all on their own. They were kings whom no one ruled. They wandered where they willed from dawn to dusk and only condescended to come home at dusk because they were afraid of the horrible things in the dark that might pounce on them. Unlike the little girls who adored household chores and drawing water, it was only now and then that the boys showed themselves as useful attachments to any household. When the first hard rains of summer fell, small dark shapes, quite naked except for their loincloths, sped out of the village into the bush. They knew that the first downpour had drowned all the wild rabbits, moles and porcupines in their burrows in the earth. As they crouched down near the entrances to the burrows, they would see a small drowned nose of an animal peeping out; they knew it had struggled to emerge from its burrow, flooded by the sudden rush of storm water and as they pulled out the animal, they would say, pityingly: 'Birds have more sense than rabbits, moles and porcupines. They build their homes in trees.'

But it was hunting made easy, for no matter how hard a boy and his dog ran, a wild rabbit ran ten times faster; a porcupine hurled his poisonous quills into the body; and a mole stayed where he thought it was safe - deep under the ground. So, it was with inordinate pride that the boys carried home armfuls of dead animals for their families to feast on for many days. Apart from that, the boys lived very much as they pleased, with the wind and their own games.

Now and then, the activities of a single family could captivate the imagination and hearts of all the people of their surroundings; for years and years, the combination of the boy, Friedman, and his grandmother, Sejosenye, made the people of Ga-Sefete-Molemo ward smile, laugh, then cry.

They smiled at his first two phases. Friedman came home as a small bundle from the hospital, a bundle his grandmother nursed carefully near her bosom and crooned to day and night with extravagant care and tenderness.

'She is like that, 'people remarked, 'because he may be the last child, she will ever nurse. Sejosenye is old now and will die one of these days; the child is a gift to keep her heart warm.'

Indeed, all Sejosenye's children were grown, married, and had left home. Of all her children, only her last-born daughter was unmarried and Friedman was the result of some casual mating she had indulged in, in a town a hundred miles away where she had a job as a typist. She wanted to return to her job almost immediately, so she handed the child over to her mother and that was that; she could afford to forget him as he had a real mother now. During all the time that Sejosenye haunted the hospital, awaiting her bundle, a friendly foreign doctor named Friedman took a fancy to her maternal, grandmotherly ways. He made a habit of walking out of his path to talk to her. She never forgot it and on receiving her bundle she called the baby Friedman.

They smiled at his second phase, a small dark shadow who toddled silently and gravely beside a very tall grandmother; wherever the grandmother went, there went Friedman. Most women found this phase of the restless, troublesome toddler tedious'; they dumped the toddler onto one of their younger girls and were off to weddings and feasts on their own.

'Why can't you leave your handbag at home sometimes, granny?' they said.

'Oh, he's no trouble,' Sejosenye would reply.

They began to laugh at his third phase. Almost overnight he turned into a tall spindly-legged, graceful gazelle with large, grave eyes. There was an odd, musical lilt to his speech and when he teased, or was up to mischief, he moved his head on his long thin neck from side to side like a cobra. It was he who became the king of kings of all the boys in his area; he could turn his hand to anything and made the best wire cars with their wheels of shoe-polish tins. All his movements were neat, compact, decisive, and for his age he was a boy who knew his own mind.

They laughed at his knowingness and certainty on all things, for he was like the grandmother who had had a flaming youth all her own too. Sejosenye had scandalised the whole village in her days of good morals by leaving her own village ward to live with a married man in Ga-Sefete-Molemo ward. She had won him from his wife and married him and then lived down the scandal in the way only natural queens can. Even old age, she was still impressive. She sailed through the village, head in the air, with a quiet, almost expressionless face. She had developed large buttocks as time went by and they announced their presence firmly in rhythm with her walk.

Another of Sejosenye's certainties was that she was a woman who could plough, but it was like a special gift. Each season, in drought or hail or sun, she removed herself to her lands. She not only ploughed but nursed and brooded over her crops. She was there all the time till the corn ripened and the birds had to be chased off the land, till harvesting and threshing were done; so that even in drought years with their scanty rain, she came home with some crops. She was the envy of all the women of the surroundings.

'Sejosenye always eats fine things in her house,' they said. 'She ploughs and then sits down for many months and enjoys the fruits of her labour.'

The women also envied her beautiful grandson. There was something special there, so that even when Friedman moved into his bad phase, they forgave him crimes other boys received a sound thrashing for. The small boys were terrible thieves who harassed people by stealing their food and money. It was all a part of the games they played but one which people did not like. Of them all, Friedman was the worst thief, so that his name was mentioned more and more in any thieving that had been uncovered.

'But Friedman showed us how to open the window with a knife and string,' the sobbing, lashed boys would protest. 'Friedman isn't as bad as you,' the parents would reply, irrationally.

They were hypnotised by a beautiful creature. The boy Friedman, who had become a real nuisance by then, also walked around as though he were special. He couldn't possibly be a thief and he added an aloof, offended, disdainful expression to his pretty face. He wasn't just an ordinary sort of boy in Ga-Sefete-Molemo ward. He was ...

It happened, quite accidentally, that his grandmother told him all those stories about the hunters, warriors, and emissaries of old. She was normally a quiet, absent-minded woman, given to dreaming by herself but she liked to sing the boy a little song now and then as they sat by the outdoor fire. A lot of them were church songs and rather sad; they more or less passed as her bedtime prayer at night - she was one of the old church-goers. Now and then she added a quaint little song to her repertoire and as the night-time, fire-light flames flickered between them, she never failed to note that this particular song was always well received by the boy. A little light would awaken in his eyes and he would bend forward and listen attentively.

'Welcome, Robinson Crusoe, welcome,' she would sing, in clear, sweet tones. 'How could you stay, so long away, Robinson how could you do so?'

When she was very young, Sejosenye had attended the mission school of the village for about a year; made a slight acquaintance with the ABC and one, two, three, four, five, and the little song about Robinson Crusoe. But girls didn't need an education in those days when ploughing and marriage made up their whole world. Yet Robinson Crusoe lived on as a gay and out-of-context memory of her schooldays. One evening the boy leaned forward and asked: 'Is that a special praise-poem song for Robinson Crusoe, grandmother?'

'Oh yes,' she replied, smiling.

'What great things did he do?' the boy asked, pointedly.

'They say he was a hunter who went by Geta side and killed an elephant all by himself,' she said, making up a story on the spot.

'Oh! In those days, no man could kill an elephant by himself. All the regiments had to join together and each man had to thrust his sword into the side of the elephant before it died. Well, Robinson Crusoe was gone many days and people wondered about him: "Perhaps he has been eaten by a lion, they said. "Robinson likes to be a solitary person and do foolish things. We won't ever go out into the bush by ourselves because we know it is dangerous." Well, one day, Robinson suddenly appeared in their midst and people could see that he had a great thing on his mind. They all gathered around him. He said: "I have killed an elephant for all the people." The people were surprised: "Robinson!" they said. "It is impossible! How did you do it? The very thought of an elephant approaching the village makes us shiver!" And Robinson said: "Ah, people, I saw a terrible sight! I was standing at the feet of the elephant. I was just a small ant. I could not see the world anymore. Elephant was above me until his very head touched the sky and his ears spread out like great wings. He was angry but I only looked into one eye which was turning round and round in anger. What to do now? I thought it better to put that eye out. I raised my spear and threw it at the angry eye. People! It went right inside. Elephant said not a

word and he fell to one side. Come, I will show you what I have done." Then the women cried in joy: "Loo-loo-loo!" They ran to fetch their containers as some wanted the meat of the elephant; some wanted the fat. The men made their knives sharp. They would make shoes and many things from the skin and bones. There was something for all the people in great work Robinson Crusoe did.'

All this while, as he listened to the story, the boy's eyes had glowed softly. At the end of it, he drew in a long breath. 'Grandmother,' he whispered, adroitly stepping into the role of Robinson Crusoe, the great hunter. 'One day, I'm going to be like that. I'm going to be a hunter like Robinson Crusoe and bring meat to all the people.' He paused for breath and then added tensely: 'And what other great thing did Robinson Crusoe do?'

'Tasa!' she said, clicking her tongue in exhaustion, 'Am I then going away that I must tell all the stories at once?'

Although his image of Robinson Crusoe, the great hunter, was never to grow beyond his everyday boyish activities of pushing wire cars, hunting in the fields for wild rabbits, climbing trees to pull down old birds' nests and yelling out in alarm to find that a small snake now occupied the abandoned abode, or racing against the wind with the spoils of his latest theft, the stories awakened a great tenderness in him. If Robinson Crusoe was not churning up the dust in deadly hand-to-hand combat with an enemy, he was crossing swollen rivers and wild jungles as the great messenger and ambassador of the chief - all his activities were touchingly in aid of or in defence of the people. One day Friedman expressed this awakened compassion for life in a strange way. After a particularly violent storm, people found their huts invaded by many small mice and they were hard-pressed to rid themselves of these pests. Sejosenye ordered Friedman to kill the mice.

'But grandmother,' he protested, 'they have come to us for shelter. They lost all their homes in the storm. It's better that I put them in a box and carry them out into the fields again once the rains are over.'

She had laughed in surprise at this and spread the story around among her women friends, who smiled tenderly, then said to their own offspring: 'Friedman isn't as bad as you.'

Life and its responsibilities began to weigh down heavily on Friedman as he approached his fourteenth year. Less time was spent in boyish activities. He grew more and more devoted to his grandmother and concerned to assist her in every way. He wanted a bicycle so that he might run up and down to the shops for her, deliver messages, or do any other chore she might have in mind. His mother, who worked in a town far away, sent him the money to purchase the bicycle. The gift brought the story of his life abruptly to a close.

Towards the beginning of the rainy season, he accompanied his grandmother to her lands which were some twenty miles outside the village. They sowed seed together after the hired tractor had turned up the land but the boy's main chore was to keep the household pot filled with meat. Sometimes they ate birds Friedman had trapped, sometimes they ate fried tortoise meat or wild rabbit; but there was always

something as the bush abounded with animal life. Sejosenye only had to take a bag of mealie meal, packets of sugar, tea and powdered milk as provisions for their stay at the lands; meat was never a problem. Midway through the ploughing season, she began to run out of sugar, tea and milk.

'Friedman,' she said that evening, 'I shall wake you early tomorrow morning. You will have to take the bicycle into the village and purchase some more sugar, tea and milk.'

He was up at dawn with the birds, a solitary figure cycling on a pathway through the empty bush. By nine, he had reached the village and first made his way to Ga-Sefete-Molemo ward and the yard of a friend of his grandmother, who gave him a cup of tea and a plate of porridge. Then he put one foot on the bicycle and turned to smile at the woman with his beautiful gazelle eyes. His smile was to linger vividly before her for many days as a short while later, hard pounding feet came running into her yard to report that Friedman was dead.

He pushed the bicycle through the winding, sandy pathway of the village ward, reached the high embankment of the main road, peddled vigorously up it and out of the corner of his eye, saw a small green truck speeding towards him. In the devil-may-care fashion of all the small boys, he cycled right into its path, turned his head and smiled appealingly at the driver. The truck caught him on the front bumper, squashed the bicycle and dragged the boy along at a crazy speed for another hundred yards, dropped him and careered on another twenty yards before coming to a halt. The boy's pretty face was a smear all along the road and he only had a torso left.

People of Ga-Sefete-Molemo ward never forgot the last coherent words Sejosenye spoke to the police. A number of them climbed into the police truck and accompanied it to her lands. They saw her walk slowly and enquiringly towards the truck, they heard the matter-of-fact voice of the policeman announce the death, then they heard Sejosenye say piteously:

'Can't you return those words back?'

She turned away from them, either to collect her wits or the few possessions she had brought with her. Her feet and buttocks quivered anxiously as she stumbled towards her hut. Then her feet tripped her up and she fell to the ground like a stunned log.

The people of Ga-Sefete-Molemo ward buried the boy Friedman but none of them would go near the hospital where Sejosenye lay. The stories, brought to them by way of the nurses were too terrible for words. They said the old woman sang and laughed and talked to herself all the time. So, they merely asked each other: 'Have you been to see Mama Sejosenye?' 'I'm afraid I cannot. It would kill my heart.' Two weeks later, they buried her.

As was village habit, the incident was discussed thoroughly from all sides till it was understood. In this timeless, sleepy village, the goats stood and suckled their young ones on the main road or lay down and took their afternoon naps there. The motorists either stopped for them or gave way. But it appeared that the driver of the

truck had neither brake on his car nor a driving licence. He belonged to the new, rich, civil-servant class whose salaries had become fantastically high since independence. They had to have cars in keeping with their new status; they had to have any car, as long as it was a car; they were in such a hurry about everything that they couldn't be bothered to take driving lessons. And thus progress, development, and preoccupation with status and living standards first announced themselves to the village. It looked like being an ugly story with many decapitated bodies on the main road.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION, OR FOR WRITTEN WORK.

1. Why, in the second paragraph, does Head seem to prefer boys to men? (2)
2. Why do you think boys are associated with the wind in the opening paragraph? (2)
3. Why is Friedman special to his grandmother, Sejosenye? (3)
4. What do you think she wants for Friedman? (3)
5. Is Friedman a totally innocent child, or does he have some naughtiness as well? (2)
6. What story inspires Friedman to want to be better? (2)
7. Where does this story of the hunter Robinson Crusoe come from? (1)
8. What do you think is the turning point in this story? (1)
9. How does the grandmother change after this turning point? (1)
10. Why did the village expect "many decapitated bodies"? (3)

The Wind and a boy

by Bessie Head

Bessie Amelia Emery Head was born on 6 July 1937 in Pietermaritzburg and died on 17 April 1986 in Botswana. She is a South African writer who, though born in South Africa, is usually considered Botswana's most influential writer. She wrote novels, short fiction and autobiographical works.

Bessie Head described her childhood as haphazard and self-reliant. After completing her Junior Certificate, she studied for a two-year Teacher Training Certificate. In 1956 she started teaching at Clairwood in Durban. After 18 months of teaching, she resigned and moved to Cape Town where she started a career as a journalist.



Bessie Head

In March 1964 she accepted a teaching post in Serowe (Botswana) and left South Africa for good.

1. Summary

The story is about Sejosenye (a grandmother) who is raising her daughter's son in a rural village. She is raising her grandchild (Friedman) because the mother (her daughter) wanted to continue working and could not take the child with her. The ward in which they live is called Ga-Sefete-Molemo. Sejosenye takes Friedman everywhere with her, there is a close bond between the grandmother and her grandson. Sejosenye is very proud of her grandson. He is the apple of her eye.

2. Title

The title of the story refers to Friedman, the main character. He is a boy who has a magical wind blowing for him. There is something special about him. Not only is he lovable but he is envied by other parents who see him as a bright little boy who is different from other children.

3. Themes

3.1 Gender roles

In the story there is a clear distinction of gender roles between boys and girls or males and females. The boys do as they please, no one gives them guidance on how to behave as they grow up. They go wherever they want, leaving home in the morning only to come back after sunset.

Girls stay at home and do household duties that include fetching water, they do not need any education.

Sejosenye becomes the envy of other women because she can plough the land, which is a duty that is mainly associated with men.

3.2 Loyalty

Friedman is loyal to his grandmother; he listens to her stories and teachings and emulates the heroes from the stories that he has listened to. He goes hunting so that they can have meat. He becomes more loyal to his grandmother and wants to help her in any way.

Sejosenye is loyal to Friedman. She is there for him throughout his life. She takes him everywhere she goes; she is very proud of her grandson.

3.3 Change and modernity

Towards the end of the story there is evidence of change and modernity. Although the village is still rural and predominantly agrarian, there is an emergence of a new class of people who are modern and are buying cars. The driver of the truck that killed Friedman did not have a driver's licence, he rushed to get a truck so that he could fit into the privileged class.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story takes place in a rural village. The events occur at Ga- Sefete-Molemo ward in the village.

4.2 Structure and Plot Development

Exposition

The narrator introduces the reader to Friedman's phases of life. In the first phase he comes home from the hospital as a small bundle and his grandmother takes care of him. The next phase is characterised by him toddling silently next to his tall grandmother. In the third phase, he is a tall, long legged boy who has become the king of kings of all the boys in his area.

Rising Action

Whilst listening to his grandmother's stories, Friedman gets hooked on the heroic stories of Robinson Crusoe (the great hunter) and decides that one day he is going to be just like him.

Climax

Life and its responsibilities start to increase for Friedman as he starts his teenage years. He then asks for a bicycle so that he can do more for his grandmother. His mother buys the bicycle and Friedman starts running more errands for his grandmother.

Resolution

Friedman is hit by a truck whilst cycling as he was running errands for his grandmother. Sejosenye is sent to hospital for shock. She dies in hospital and the villagers bury her.

4.3 Characterisation

Friedman	• A lovable young boy who is brilliant, talented, and naughty like other boys. • He loves to listen to the stories his grandmother tells and gets captivated by Robinson Crusoe's heroic actions. • He decides that one day he is going to be like Robinson Crusoe. • He is very loyal to his grandmother and wants to help her all the time.
Sejosenye	• She is a loving grandmother who loves her grandchild unconditionally. • She does not conform to society's expectations. She ploughs the fields whilst other women sit and wait for their husbands to do it for them. • She is a confident woman who holds her head high even when the society thinks she has committed scandalous acts. • She is physically strong and independent.
Dr Friedman	• He is a friendly 'foreign' doctor who works at the hospital 'baby' Friedman was born in. • Sejosenye decides to name her grandson after him because of the friendly nature with which he treated Sejosenye when she visited the hospital.

4.4 Narrator's point of view

The story is narrated by a third person omniscient narrator who has a bird's eye view of all the events that take place in the story. The narrator gives an unbiased turn of events from the beginning of Friedman's life and through his growing up stages, until his untimely death.

4.5 Style

The story is told as a narrative that is done by a third person omniscient narrator. The reader easily gets all the details pertaining to what is happening to the characters because the narrator is not part of the story but has a bird's eye view of the events as they unfold.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

SIMILE:

- Page 134 – ‘from side to side like a cobra’ - Friedman’s movements are compared to a cobra.

METAPHOR:

- Page 133 – ‘small dark shapes’ - The narrator compares the village boys to small dark shapes as they sped out of the village to the bush.
- Page 133 – ‘extravagant care’ – The overgenerous care with which Sejosenye takes care of Friedman is compared to an extravagant gift of love.
- Page 134 – ‘a small dark shadow’ – Young Friedman is compared to a small dark shadow.
- Page 134 – ‘your handbag’ – How other women referred to Friedman because he was always with his grandmother.
- Page 137 – swollen rivers - The overflowing river compared to something that is swollen.

PERSONIFICATION:

- Page 133 – ‘a porcupine hurled his poisonous quills’ – The speed with which the porcupine raises its quills is compared to someone who is throwing something.

IRONY:

- The bicycle that was meant to help Friedman cuts his life short.
- The civil servant who come to the village to bring development bring carnage and fear to the village instead of hope and joy.

4.7 Tone and Mood

Tone:

- Cheerful, appreciative.
- Sympathetic, disappointed, and dull (after Friedman and Sejosenye’s deaths)

Mood:

- happy, optimistic
- sad, angry, emotional

Activity 6

‘The Wind And A Boy’

Read the following extract and answer questions which follow:

They began to laugh at his third phase. Almost overnight he turned into a tall spindly-legged, graceful gazelle with large, grave eyes. There was an odd, musical lilt to his speech and when he teased, or was up to mischief, he moved his head on his long thin neck from side to side like a cobra. It was he who became the king of kings of all the boys in his area; he could turn his hand to anything and made the best wire cars with their wheels of shoe-polish tins. All his movements were neat, compact, decisive, and for his age he was a boy who knew his own mind. They laughed at his knowingness and certainty on all things, for he was like the grandmother who had had a flaming youth all her own too. Sejosenyé had scandalised the whole village in her days of good morals by leaving her own village ward to live with a married man in Ga-Sefete-Molemo ward. She had won him from his wife and married him and then lived down the scandal in the way only natural queens can. Even in old age, she was still impressive. She sailed through the village, head in the air, with a quiet, almost expressionless face. She had developed large buttocks as time went by and they announced their presence firmly in rhythm with her walk.

5

10

15

- 6.1 What is the setting of the story? (1)
- 6.2 What characterises Friedman’s third phase of growth?
Mention TWO things. (2)
- 6.3 Explain why the following statement is FALSE.
Friedman’s mother is a responsible parent who takes care of her son’s needs. (1)
- 6.4 Refer to line 2 (‘tall spindly-legged... grave eyes’)
(a) Identify a figure of speech in this line. (1)
(b) Explain the comparison in this figure of speech. (2)
- 6.5 Refer to lines 13-14. (‘Even in old... impressive’).
What makes Sejosenyé remain impressive? (2)
- 6.6 Give TWO reasons why Friedman needs a bicycle. (2)
- 6.7 One of the themes in this story is gender roles.
Discuss this theme as it appears in the story. (3)
- 6.8 Sejosenyé can be admired.
Discuss your view (3)
- 6.9 Discuss the negative effects of modernism in Ga-Sefete-Molemo. (3)

THE GIRL WHO CAN by Ama Ata Aidoo

THEY SAY THAT I WAS BORN in Hasodzi; and it is a very big village in the Central Region of our country, Ghana. They also say that when all of Africa is not choking under a drought, Hasodzi lies in a very fertile low land in a district known for its good soil. Maybe that is why any time I don't finish eating my food, Nana says, "You Adjoa, you don't know what life is about ... you don't know what problems there are in this life..."

As far as I could see, there was only one problem. And it had nothing to do with what I knew Nana considered as problems" or what Maami thinks of as "the problem".

Maami is my mother. Nana is my mother's mother. And they say I am seven years old. And my problem is that at these seven years of age, there are things I can think in my head, but which, may be, I do not have the proper language to speak them out with. And that, I think, is a very serious problem.

Because it is always difficult to decide whether to keep quiet and not say anything of the things that come into my head, or say them and get laughed at. Not that it is easy to get any grown-up to listen to you even when you decide to take the risk and say something serious to them.

Take Nana. First, I have to struggle to catch her attention. Then I tell her something I had taken a long time to figure out. And then you know what always happens? She would at once stop whatever she is doing, stare at me for a very long time. Then bending and turning her head slightly, so that one of her ears comes down towards me, she'll say in that voice: Adjoa, you say what?" After I have repeated whatever it was I had said, she would either, still in that voice, ask me "never,

never, but NEVER to repeat THAT," or she would immediately burst out laughing. She would laugh and laugh, until tears run down her cheeks and she stops whatever she is doing and wipes away the tears with the hanging edges of her cloth. And she would continue laughing until she

is completely tired. But then, as soon as another person comes by, just to make sure she doesn't forget whatever it was I had said, she would repeat it to her. And then, of course, there are three, four or even more of such laughing and screaming tear-faced grown-ups. And all that performance on whatever I'd said?

I find something quite confusing in all this. That is, no one ever explains to me, why sometimes I shouldn't repeat some things I say, while other times, some other things I say would not only be alright, but would be considered so funny, they would be repeated so many times for so many people's enjoyment. You see how neither way of hearing me out can encourage me to express my thoughts too often?

Like all this business to do with my legs. I have always wanted to tell them not to worry. I mean Nana and my mother. That it did not have to be an issue for my two

favourite people to fight over. But I didn't want either to be told not to repeat that or it to be considered so funny that anyone would laugh at me until they cried. After all, they were my legs ...

When I think back on it now, those two, Nana and my mother, must have been discussing my legs from the day I was born. What I am sure of is that when I came out of the land of sweet soft silence into the world of noise and comprehension, the first topic I met was my legs.

That discussion was repeated very regularly.

Nana: "Ah, ah, you know, I thank my God that your very first child is female. But Kaya, I'm not sure about her legs. Hm... hm...hm..."

And Nana would shake her head.

Maami: "Mother, why are you always complaining about Adjoa's legs? ...If you ask me ..."

Nana: "They are too thin. And I am not asking you!"

Nana has many voices. There is a special one she uses to shut everyone up.

"Some people have no legs at all," my mother would try again with all her small courage.

"But Adjoa has legs," Nana would insist; "except that they are too thin. And also too long for a woman. Kaya, listen. Once in a while, but only once in a very long while, somebody decides nature, a child's spirit mother, an accident happens, and somebody gets born without arms, or legs, or both sets of limbs. And then let me touch wood: it is a sad business. And you know, such things are not for talking about everyday. But if any female child decides to come into this world with legs, then they might as well be legs."

"What kind of legs?" And always at that point, I knew from her voice that my mother was weeping inside herself. Nana never heard such inside weeping. Not that it would have stopped Nana even if she heard it, which always surprised me, because, about almost everything else apart from my legs, Nana is such a good grown-up.

In any case, what do I know about good grown-ups and bad grown-ups? How could Nana be a good grown-up when she carried on so about my legs? All I want to say is that I really liked Nana except for **that**.

Nana: "As I keep saying, if any woman decides to come into this world with all of her two legs, then she should select legs that have meat on them: with good calves,' because you are sure such legs would support solid hips. And a woman must have solid hips to be able to have children ."

"Oh, Mother. " That ' s how my mother would answer. Very, very quietly. And the discussion would end or they would move on to something else.

Sometimes, Nana would pull in something about my father.

How, "Looking at such a man, we have to be humble and admit that after all, God's children are many..." How, "After one's only daughter had insisted on marrying a man like that, you still have to thank your God that the biggest problem you got later was having a granddaughter with spindly legs that are too long for a woman, and too thin to be of any use . . ."

The way she always added that bit about my father under her breath, she probably thought I didn't hear it. But I always heard it. Plus, that is what always shut my mother up for good. So that even if I had not actually heard the words, once my mother looked like even her little courage was finished, I could always guess what Nana had added to the argument.

"Legs that have meat on them with good calves to support solid hips... to be able to have children."

So I wished that one day I would see, for myself, the legs of any woman who had children. But in our village, that is not easy. The older women wear long wrap-arounds all the time. Perhaps if they let me go bathe in the river in the evening, I could have checked. But I never had the chance. It took a lot of begging just to get my mother and Nana to let me go splash around in the shallow end of the river with my friends, who were other little girls like me. For proper baths, we used the small bath-house behind our hut. Therefore, the only naked female legs I have ever really seen are those of other little girls like me, or older girls in the school. And those of my mother and Nana: two pairs of legs which must surely belong to the approved kind: because Nana gave birth to my mother and my mother gave birth to me. In my eyes all my friends have got legs that look like legs: but whether the legs have got meat on them to support the kind of hips that ... that I don't know.

According to the older boys and girls, the distance between our village and the small town is about five kilometres. They always complain about how long it is to walk to school and back. But to me, we live in our village, and walking those kilometres didn't matter. School is nice.

School is another thing Nana and my mother discussed often and appeared to have different ideas about. Nana thought it would be a waste of time. I never understood what she meant. My mother seemed to know, and disagreed. She kept telling Nana that she, that is, my mother, felt that she was locked into some kind of darkness because she didn't go to school. So that if I, her daughter, could learn to write and read my own name and a little besides - perhaps be able to calculate some things on paper - that would be good. I could always marry and may be...

Nana would just laugh. "Ah, may be with legs like hers, she might as well go to school."

Running with our classmates on our small sports field and winning first place each time never seemed to me to be anything about which to tell anyone at home.

This afternoon was different. I don't know how the teachers decided to let me run for the junior section of our school in the district games. But they did.

When I went home to tell my mother and Nana, they had not believed it at first.

So Nana had taken it upon herself to go and "ask into it properly." She came home to tell my mother that it was really true. I was to be one of my school's runners.

"Is that so?" exclaimed my mother. I know her. Her mouth moved as though she was going to tell Nana, that, after all, there was a secret about me she couldn't be expected to share with anyone. But then Nana looked so pleased that out of surprise, my mother shut her mouth up. In any case, since the first time they heard the news, I have often caught Nana staring at my legs with a strange look on her face, but still pretending like she was not looking. All this week, she has been washing my school uniform herself. That is a big surprise. And she didn't stop at that, she even went to Mr. Mensah's house and borrowed his charcoal pressing iron' each time, came back home with it, and ironed and ironed and ironed the uniform. Until, if I had been the uniform, I would have said aloud that I had had enough.

Wearing my school uniform this week has been very nice. At the parade the first afternoon, it caught the rays of the sun and shone brighter than everybody else's uniform. I'm sure Nana saw that too, and must have liked it.

Yes, she has been coming into town with us every afternoon of this district sports week. Each afternoon, she has pulled one set of fresh old cloth from the big brass bowl to wear. And those old clothes are always so stiffly starched, you can hear the cloth creak when she passed by. But she walks way behind us school children. As though she was on her own way, someplace else.

Yes, I have won every race I ran in for my school. And I have won the cup for the best all-round junior athlete.

Yes, Nana said that she didn't care if such things are not done. She would do them. You know what she did? She carried the gleaming cup on her back, like they do with babies. And other very precious things. And this time, not taking the trouble to walk by herself.

When we arrived in our village, she entered our compound to show the cup to my mother before going to give it back to the Headmaster.

Oh. Grown-ups are so strange. Nana is right now carrying me on her knee, and crying softly. Muttering, muttering, muttering. That "saa, thin legs can also be useful... thin legs can also be useful..." That "even though some legs don't have much meat on them, to carry hips ..., they can run. Thin legs can run... And then who knows? ..."

I don't know too much about such things. But that's how I was feeling and thinking all along. That surely, one should be able to do other things with legs besides having them to support hips that can make babies. Except that I was afraid of saying that sort of thing aloud, because someone would have told me never, never, but NEVER to repeat such words. Or else, they would have laughed so much at what I'd said, they would have cried.

It's much better this way. Acted it out. To show them. Although I could not have planned it.

As for my mother, she has been speechless.

The girl who can

by Ama Ata Aidoo

Ama Ata Aidoo, born in Saltbond, Ghana in 1942 is an author, poet, playwright and academic. She was the Minister of Education under the Jerry Rawlings administration. In 2000, she established the Mbaasem Foundation to promote and support the work of African women writers.



Ama Ata Aidoo

1. Summary

Little Adjoa is an ambitious girl, like any other girl of her age who has dreams and aspirations of her own and truly believes that anything is possible. Maami, her mother, wants the best for her child. She wants her to soar high on success and earns a respectful position in this society. Nana, Adjoa's grandmother, has lived all her life according to society's perspective. Nana believes that Adjoa can never be a woman as she has very thin legs that will bar her from carrying a baby. Nana only changes her view about Adjoa's legs when she becomes an athlete and is successful because of her legs. The grandmother is proud of Adjoa.



2. Title

Adjoa is the little girl who struggles to speak about her feelings. She is ridiculed by her grandmother because of her tiny legs.

3. Themes

3.1 Insecurity/Fear/Innocence

The girl, Adjoa is not able to voice out her feelings because she fears that people would laugh at her. She allows her grandmother to ridicule her about her legs and she does not say anything.

3.2 Gender Stereotype

Nana, Adjoa's grandmother makes fun of her granddaughter's thin and long legs. She believes that a girl's legs should have flesh in them and that is in preparation for the child-bearing stage.

3.3 Conflict

Nana and Maami (mother and daughter) argue about the choice of husband Maami has. Nana blames Maami's choice of a husband for the type of child she has. The child, Adjoa, has skinny legs and that causes conflict between the two women. Maami does not see anything wrong with Adjoa's legs while Nana thinks they are not acceptable.

3.4 Success

Adjoa becomes a successful athlete when her teachers realise that she can run faster. She is chosen to represent the school at the district games.

3.5 Pride/Appreciation

Maami becomes Adjoa's number one fan when she becomes famous and successful in athletics. She prepares her school uniform for her, accompanies her to school and to athletic events. She takes pride in carrying her granddaughter's trophy.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story takes place in Ghana, Africa, in a village called Hasodzi. The main character walks five kilometres to reach the school in the nearby small town. The walks are not a problem for her as she is used to long walks in the village.

4.2 Structure and Plot Development

Exposition

The main character, Adjoa, faces a challenge of not being able to voice out how she feels. The one time she tries to say something to her grandmother, Nana, she becomes a laughing stock. She then learns to keep quiet.

Rising Action

There are arguments between Maami and Nana about Adjoa. The arguments are mainly about Adjoa's legs that are too thin and long, Adjoa's father who is not a good choice for a husband and about that it is not necessary for Adjoa to attend school.

Climax

Adjoa participates in athletics with her classmates and wins each time. Her talent is recognised by her teachers who select her to represent the school's junior section at the district games.

Resolution

Nana changes her perspective when Adjoa's skinny legs make her a winner in running. She becomes so proud that she does favours and walks with her to school and carries her trophy.

4.3 Characterisation

Adjoa	• She is a seven year old girl. • She is the narrator of the story. • She is the main character. • She has a fear of talking because of her grandmother's behaviour towards her (Adjoa) statements. • She has thin and long legs. • She becomes an athlete by default. • She is chosen to represent the school in the district's athletic meetings.
Nana	• She is Adjoa's grandmother. • She makes fun of Adjoa's statements. • She tells and retells Adjoa's stories and laughs about them with anyone that visits their home. • She does not think Adjoa should attend school. • She does not agree with Kaya regarding Adjoa's legs. • She does not think Adjoa has suitable legs to carry hips that could allow her to bear children. • She changes her mind when Adjoa becomes successful because of her long and thin legs. • She is proud to walk with Adjoa, shows kindness towards her and even does favours for her.
Maami/Kaya	• She is Adjo's mother. • She wants Adjoa to attend school and be better than her. • She argues with Nana in support of Adjoa. • She does not talk too much.
Mr Mensah	• He is the neighbour to Adjoa's family. • He lends Nana a charcoal pressing iron for her to press Adjoa's school uniform.

4.4 Narrator's point of view

The story is narrated from the first-person view. The narrator, Adjoa, is the main character. The narrator allows the reader to know both the internal development of the story in her mind as the protagonist and the external development of the story in the world of her grandmother and her mother.

4.5 Style

The story is told in a conversation-like narrative. The author uses direct quotations from characters to allow the reader to understand each character's tone, attitude and insight.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

- The writer uses figurative language in order to emphasise meaning:

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSION

- 'touch wood'

- Some examples of **figures of speech** in the story include:

SIMILE:

- 'She carried the gleaming cup on her back, like they do with babies'(page 146)

METAPHOR:

- 'Africa is not choking under a drought' (page 142)
- 'Hasodzi lies in a very fertile lowland in a district' (page 142)
- 'I came out of the land of sweet soft silence into the world of noise and comprehension,' (page 143)
- 'But if any female child decided to come into this world with legs,' (page 143)
- 'my mother was weeping inside herself.'(page 143)
- 'Nana would pull in something about my father.' (page 144)
- 'felt that she was locked into some kind of darkness' (page 145)
- 'it caught the rays of the sun and shone brighter' (page 146)

IRONY:

- 'some other things I say would not only be alright, but would be considered so funny, they would be repeated so many times for so many people's enjoyment.'(pages 142-143)

4.7 Tone and Mood

Tone:

- An apprehensive tone.
This tone is used by the narrator/Adjoa to show the state of her mind at the beginning of the story.
- A harsh/cruel/mockingly tone
This tone is used by Nana, Adjoa's grandmother when she makes comments about her legs.
- Cheerful tone
Nana's tone changes when she realises that Adjoa is becoming successful because of her long and thin legs.

Mood:

- sad, emotional (initially)
- optimistic (when a decision to elope is made)
- remorse/guilt (at the end)

Activity 7

'The Girl Who Can'

Read the following extract and answer questions which follow:

'But Adjoo has legs,' Nana would insist; 'except that they are too thin. And also too long for a woman. Kaya, listen. Once in a while, but only once in a very long while, somebody decides nature, a child's spirit mother, an accident happens, and somebody gets born without arms, or legs, or both sets of limbs. And then let me touch wood: It is a sad business. And you know, such things are not for talking about everyday. But if any female child decides to come into this world with legs, then they might as well be legs.'

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'What kind of legs?' And always at that point, I knew from her voice that my mother was weeping inside herself. Nana never heard such inside weeping. Not that it would have stopped Nana even if she heard it, which always surprised me, because, about almost everything else apart from my legs, Nana is such a good grown-up.

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In any case, what do I know about good grown-ups and bad grown-ups? How could Nana be a good grown-up when she carried on so about my legs? All I want to say that I really liked Nana except that.

Nana: 'As I keep saying, if any woman decides to come into this world with all of her two legs, then she should select legs that have meat on them:

- 7.1 Complete the following sentence by using the words in the list below. Write only the word next to the question number (7.1(a) – 7.1 (c)) in the ANSWER BOOK.

better; mother; thick; grandmother; thin; worse
--

Nana is Adjoo's (a)... who believes that children who are born disabled are (b)... than girls who are born with (c)... legs. (3)

- 7.2 Quote a SINGLE word which proves that Nana does not stop to prove her point. (1)

- 7.3 Refer to line 3 ('a child's spirit mother, an accident happens,')

Choose the correct answer from those given below. Write down only the letter (A – D) next to the question number (7.3 (a)) and the answer in the ANSWER BOOK.

The word 'accident' in this context means...

- A a collision.
 - B a solution.
 - C a mistake.
 - D a fortune.
- (1)

- 7.4 Refer to line 5-7 ('But if any ... well be legs.')

(a) Identify a figure of speech in these lines. (1)

(b) Explain the meaning in this figure of speech. (2)

- 7.5 Refer to lines 9-10 ('Not that it... always surprise me')
What do these lines reveal about Nana's character?
Substantiate your answer. (2)
- 7.7 One of the themes in this story is gender stereotype.
Discuss this theme. (3)
- 7.9 Do you think Nana is cruel towards Adjao?
Substantiate your view. (3)

CLASS ACTIVITY 7.2. THE GIRL WHO CAN

FEBRUARY 2023

1. What made Adjao into a quiet girl? (2)
2. What is the issue about Adjao's legs? (1)
3. What sort of legs would Nana have liked Adjao to have? (2)
4. Despite being minor characters, do either Maami or Nana change as the story progresses? (3)
5. Describe the different attitudes to Adjao's attending school that the two women have. (4)
6. Why was Adjao's school uniform so well washed in the story? (2)
7. In the second last paragraph, the speaker says "It's much better this way. Acted it out. To show them." Explain what she means by this. (4)
8. Did the speaker plan to show the women? Explain your answer.
9. Do other women sometimes keep girls from expressing their potential? Discuss. (5)

Class Act by Namhla Tshisana

I hate high school. Really, I do. And I haven't even been there a week but already I can't wait until I get out.

It's not only because everyone expects me to be able to speak Afrikaans, but I hate everything about the school. It's worse now that my classmates have started calling me Sister Mary Clarence.

Just the other day Aunt Connie came to visit after her check-up at the hospital. I had not seen her since I was small because she had lived in Jo'burg and had come home only a few times -first for Makhulu's funeral, and then for Malum' Enoch's when I was in Standard 2.

Sitting on my sister's bed in our room, Aunt Connie asked: "Ukwateleni?" Obviously, I didn't know what she was talking about. "What do you mean, aunty?"

"You're starting at a coloured school next week but you can't speak Afrikaans? Uqumbele ntoni ke? Why do you look so upset?" "I am not angry. I'm just quiet, that's all."

I didn't understand why she didn't say that in the first place because no one here speaks like that. Maybe that's how they speak in Jo'burg. "Ukwatele" the word didn't even sound like Afrikaans to me. It only clicked later that the Afrikaans word she was talking about was "kwaad".

Still in her uniform, a maroon skirt and white blouse, Mama came in and sat on my bed, facing Aunt Connie.

"Your aunt says she was a fashion designer eRhawutini.' Why don't you ask her to fix your uniform? I have to work this weekend so I won't be able to do it."

Since my Aunt Connie came back from Jo'burg she has been taking measurements and material from my other aunts and some of Mama's friends to turn them into curtains, suits and dresses in her flat in King The room where she supposedly works from - and where the sewing machine allegedly is - is always locked. It has been months since she came back and her tummy has grown bigger-I keep thinking it is going to hit the floor - but not a single dress or a drop of curtain has come out of her design studio.

As usual when Aunt Connie visits, Mama has taken out more material from her Kist. Some of the material is bright and colourful and was brought from Nigeria by my Aunt Nozi on her yearly trip to visit her husband. I last saw my Uncle George the year I turned nine. That was three years ago. I wonder if he still has an Afro? He used to wear long dresses and gold rings on three of his fingers on each hand. I wonder why he hasn't come to visit my aunt in so many years. He didn't even come when my aunt had a big operation and couldn't go to work.

Mama takes the material out of the Kist in May when she airs the blankets just before it gets cold. She lays the material on the bed. "This would make a nice suit. I don't have anything to wear at funerals these days," she says, or "Maybe I'll keep this for you when you get older.

You need a beautiful dress for church and special occasions." After the show, she then folds them again and puts a mothball on each of the four corners of the Kist, though the white balls always make her sneeze. She used to collect patterns for dresses, skirts and blouses from Living and Loving but these line the bottom of the Kist now. She hardly takes them out. I sometimes think she has forgotten about them.

My uniform had been on the floor of Mama's wardrobe in the black plastic bag from Ciskei Uniforms for a week. The navy-blue V-neck jersey, shirts, socks and tie had already been washed except for the powder blue tunic. Mama always insists we wash new clothes first before wearing them for the first time. "It takes out the new smell, besides, you never know where they have been," she always says. "You can't wash the tunic until I have fixed the hem. You said you wanted it shorter, nhe? Then I'll iron it so it looks straight."

That was a week ago. I wanted a skirt instead of a tunic, and then Mama insisted on one that was one size too big.

"You are still growing. I don't want to have to buy another tunic when you're in Standard 7 or 8. Uniforms are too expensive these days. You are still going to grow breasts."

"Let me see the uniform. And bring cotton and a needle," Aunt Connie says. She shifted uncomfortably on the bed. "It's good that she wears long dresses. I get embarrassed when she sits with her legs open and she does it all the time." I rummage for the tools amid surgical blades, bandages, cotton wool and boxes of Elastoplast in Mama's dressing table drawer.

Sitting on Mama's bed, facing the light from the window, I put the end of thread in my mouth to wet it. I squint my eyes while pushing the end into the hook of the needle, waiting for it to go through. I try at least three times before it catches, sliding through the eye of the needle. Aunt Connie has to see how much cotton she is going to need before putting the cotton between her teeth to break it. Because Mama wears spectacles I have done this many times so that she could sew loose buttons on Tata's shirts.

"Here it is," I say, laying out the blue tunic on my chest.

"It looks long. Put it on so I can see how it looks on you. I need to know exactly how short you want it to be. Did you bring the needle and thread?"

I takes out the needle and thread from my shorts' pocket and give them to Aunt Connie before putting on the tunic.

"Why did you bring white cotton? Don't you have cotton the same colour as the tunic?"

"There is only white and black."

"I can't do it if you don't have cotton that's the same colour. The white is going to stick out if I do it by hand."

I could have asked my sister Ayanda but she was in Alice for the weekend. She had to submit her application at the university because she applied late. And Mama had to work.

I've had a terrible time at school this week. My classmates are rude and make a lot of noise. Dino brought a small battery-operated radio to school and played it in class. Our English teacher, Mr Sauls, couldn't get the class to keep quiet during the last period so he took his briefcase from the cupboard, put it on his desk and laid his head on it.

There are at least ten repeaters in class. Some, like Renato, have failed Standard 6 three times. He made us - the freshers - stand in front of the blackboard while he surveyed our uniforms. "The tunic should be a respectable length. At least three fingers above the knee," he said pacing up and down, all the while pinching his nose. With a piece of chalk in his hand he turned, and pointed at me. "Tell me, tell us, Sister Mary Clarence, what's your excuse? This is not a convent."

The class's laughter sounded like thunder in my ears and I could feel my head spinning. I looked at myself in the mirror when I got home. Indeed, I looked like the nuns in the film *Sister Act*.

I asked Mama again but she said she was busy and would fix it over the weekend.

Ayanda is back from Alie. She's lucky she has finished school. No one wears uniform at university. I told her how embarrassed I was and about my classmates' taunts, I also told her that Aunt Connie had refused to fix it with white cotton.

Ok, I'll try but don't come crying to me if the white cotton show I left her to it, made a sandwich and started working on my math homework. An hour later she was done and had washed the tunic. "It'll be dry by the time we have supper. I'll even iron it for you."

I put on my tunic this morning determined not to look like a nun. Ayanda had altered the tunic to look shorter even than Renato's three fingers' length. "You look nice, even if I say so myself," said Ayanda admiring her handiwork. I got gooseflesh on my thighs the moment I stepped out of the house into the morning chill. Flip, I could see my thighs and knock-knees - and so could everyone else!

"Whoa, Sister Mary has undergone a makeover! Who knew she had nice legs," said Renato behind me while we were changing periods on our way to Mr Patel's class for geography. Next thing I know, I catch him below the staircase looking under my skirt as I was going up the stairs. "Nice yellow bloomers," he hissed as we left Mr Patel's class. "You're still Sister Mary under all that."

"Girl, umgobo ongaka? Why the big hem? Irhali emhlophe ke yona iyaphi? Where do all the white tracks lead?" said snooty Khanyisa Peter when I bumped into her at break, breaking into a fit of laughter. "Amadolo amnyama ke wona asisathethi ngawo. I won't even mention the black knees. Your mama must invest in a mop."

I have never been so humiliated in my life. All in one day! The boys make fun of me, and so do the girls. I don't think the school would even allow me to wear the same grey pants as the boys. Besides, my mother will freak. She made it clear she won't spend more money on my uniform. Maybe I should just accept that I am Sister Mary Clarence. At least no one cared what colour panties she wore.

ACTIVITY 1

Questions for group discussion, or for written work.

1. What does the speaker wish for in this story? (2)
2. What problems are there to prevent her from getting what she wants? (2)
3. How does she try to deal with these problems? (2)
4. Is she successful in dealing with them?
5. What, in the character of Aunt Connie, prevents her from solving the problem? (2)
6. Her sister, Ayanda, solves the problem, but creates a new one: explain. (2)
7. How does the narrator deal with her situation at the end of the story? (3)
8. Discuss bullying, and why it can be dangerous or harmful. (5)

[18]

Class Act

by Namhla Tshisana

Namhla Tshisana was born in Mdantsane (East London) in 1984. She worked for the Sowetan for five years before joining the Masters programme in Creative Writing.



1. Summary

This story is set in the Eastern Cape in the early 1990s. It is narrated in the first person by a young girl who has just started high school. She is subjected to teasing because of her appearance. She also hates Afrikaans, which is one of the languages at school. The pressure she feels makes her to hate school. She is too young to defend herself. She, under the circumstances, tries to adapt in order to survive and get by.

The narrator is alienated from schoolmates and finds it difficult to make friends. Mr. Sauls, her English teacher, cannot control his own class and that gives Renato, who has failed Standard 6 three times, an opportunity to bully new learners. He makes them stand in front of class to inspect their uniforms. He then calls the narrator *Sister Mary Clarence* because of her long uniform. Sister Mary Clarence is one of the nuns in the movie *Sister Act*.

She does not report the 'bullying' to her mother and her aunt, but she fights the demons alone and all by herself. She looks up to her elder sister, Ayanda, who has just finished school. Unfortunately, her sister is not always there to fight for her.

The adults contribute to her suffering by ignoring her requests to have the tunic shortened. Firstly, it is her aunt who cannot do it because there is no cotton thread matching the tunic. Then it is her mother, who cannot find time to do it.

The narrator is 12 years old and not involved in decision making. Her aunt indicates she prefers to keep the uniform long. Her mother bought her a jersey that was a size too big (because she is still growing).

The narrator finally tells her sister about the taunts. The tunic is adjusted or shortened, but she is then teased for the thick hem and white cotton thread. She is further ridiculed because of the colour of her underwear as well as her black knees. The renewed bullying makes her feel she is better off called Sister Mary Clarence because nobody knows what colour underwear the nuns wear.

2.Title

The phrase 'class act' refers to an excellent performance, or someone whose performance is extra-ordinary or excellent.

The phrase also refers to someone who is generally well-mannered. Looking at the narrator's life and experiences she does not lose her temper or even talk back when ridiculed, but instead acts cool (nonchalantly) throughout the story.

The title is, in a way, linked to the movie, **Sister Act**, because of the long tunic the narrator wears at school. She (the narrator) is likened to one of the nuns, Sister Mary Clarence, portrayed by Whoopi Goldberg in the movie. The narrator is ridiculed and even called by the nun's name.

3.Themes

3.1 Bullying

The story explores bullying. The narrator is continuously teased by her schoolmates. Her bullying is not physical, but it kills her spirit. She now hates school. A class repeater, Renato, starts this bullying by making her stand in front of the class. She is then called names. Teasing spirals out of control. Even girls laugh at her.

3.2 Identity, Acceptance & Appearance

The narrator faces a difficult time because of her *appearance*. She does not feel *accepted* by other learners at school. She accepts the *identity* given to her and does not challenge it. She is only 12 years old and too young to challenge some of her older classmates.

3.3 Conflict

There are two identifiable forms of conflict in this story. The first one is internal. The narrator has to go to school when school is not favourable to her. She must spend time in the place she hates. She has to find her way around that unconducive situation and environment. The narrator has confused or *conflicted* feelings.

The second conflict, which is external, is about incompatibility that makes it difficult for characters to co-exist. The narrator has a problem of being teased by other learners. There are two learners who make life difficult for her. A girl who looks down upon her and a boy who constantly teases her about everything.

3.4 Helplessness

The narrator is bullied at school and is too young to fight back. She is bullied by a boy who has failed one grade three times. The narrator cannot report her problems to her mother who is always busy.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story is set in a homeland called Ciskei (which is now part of the Eastern Cape). It takes place in the early nineties. The story shifts between school and the narrator's home.

4.2 Structure and Plot Development

Exposition

The narrator is introduced as a young girl (about 12 years) who has just started high school. She has two main challenges at school, i.e. she hates Afrikaans and she is teased by other learners.

The narrator is at home with her mother and her aunt and they prepare her new uniform.

Rising Action

Mr Sauls, who is one of the teachers, cannot control his class and learners do as they like in his presence. Renato makes the new learners in the institution (freshers) to stand in front of the class so he can inspect their uniform. The narrator's uniform is long and goes below her knees. Renato then calls her Sister Mary Clarence. Sister Mary Clarence is a nun in two 1990s movies, *Sister Act* and its follow up *Sister Act 2*.



Climax

The climax is reached when the narrator tells her sister, Ayanda, about teasing. Ayanda offers to adjust the tunic and decides to use the only available cotton thread. Unfortunately it is white, and the tunic is blue. When the narrator wears the tunic, she also realises that it was shorter than she had requested and it will make other learners see her thighs and her knock knees.

She is then teased by the other learners because of the white thread and her black knees. Some even commented about her yellow panties.

Resolution

She resolves that she was better off as Sister Mary Clarence, wearing a long tunic, because people would not know about her panties (and even her knock knees and black knees as well).



4.3 Characterisation

The narrator	• She is a 12 year old who cannot fit in a high school because of the length of her tunic. • She struggles with bullying coming from her fellow schoolmates. • She does not have a voice at home and they decide what is good for her.
Ayanda	• She is friendly to her sister. • She understands her sister's problems and assists in trying to solve them. She fixes the tunic but unwittingly adds to the narrator's problems
Mr Sauls	• He is a new English teacher • He cannot control his class. He lets people do as they like in class.
Aunt Connie	• She accuses the narrator of being angry when she is not. She seems to push her around the house.
Khanyisa	• She is a pompous girl who looks down upon the narrator.
Renato	• He is a bully who does not care about the narrator's feelings. He says anything to spite the narrator. • He always taunts her by calling her names.

4.4 Narrator's point of view

The story is narrated in the first person with the narrator as the main character. It is told from the narrator's point of view. As a young girl, the narrator suffers because of a lack of self-confidence. A young girl tells a story about how she is teased at school because of another learner's comment about the length of her tunic. She fights this demon alone and without the help from adults. Her mother does not have time to fix her uniform or to find out if she was adapting to the new school environment. She reports the taunts to her sister who can only assist by adjusting the length of the tunic. The adjustment causes more damage, leading to the narrator preferring the previous taunts to the new ones.

4.5 Style

The story uses an informal register which is appropriate to the narrator's age and grade level. This is evident in the use of contractions like didn't, you're, can't, etc.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

The author effectively uses vernacular phrases in some of the statements to show context in which words were used. Aunt Connie uses township slang (*Ukwateleni*) to ask her why she was angry. That confuses the narrator a bit because the isiXhosa version (Uqumbeleni) is not very close in sound to the Afrikaans version (kwaad).

The black boy comments about her black knees implying that the young girl kneels down when cleaning the floor. This is a sign of undermining her blackness and also her financial status. This is confirmed by the use of 'snooty' to describe Khanyisa, one of the girls.

There are elements of allusion in the story. Calling the narrator Sister Mary Clarence means she looks like a nun. This makes reference to the movies titled '*Sister Act*' and '*Sister Act 2*', here one of the nuns is Mary Clarence.

Following are some of the literary devices used:

HYPERBOLE (EXAGGERATION)

I keep thinking it is going to hit the floor (page 83). This is a reference to Aunt Connie's tummy which has grown bigger.

IRONY

'You're starting a coloured school next week but you can't speak Afrikaans?' (page 82). It is ironic that the narrator does not speak Afrikaans when the population of the school speaks Afrikaans.

SIMILE

'The class's *laughter sounded like thunder* in my ears...' (page 84). The narrator compares the laughter of the class to thunder.

4.7 Tone and Mood

Tone:

- A gloomy and depressed tone.
- The narrator begins the story with a strong word depressing statement ('I hate high school'). She uses a powerful word like 'hate' in describing her feelings about school. She emphasises that fact by using, 'Really, I do.'

Mood:

- sad, emotional

Activity 5.1

'Class Act'

Read the following extract and answer questions which follow:

Still in her uniform, a maroon skirt and white blouse, Mama came in and sat on my bed, facing Aunt Connie.

'Your aunt says she was a fashion designer eRhawutini. Why don't you ask her to fix your uniform? I have to work this weekend so I won't be able to do it.'

Since my Aunt Connie came back from Jo'burg she has been taking measurements and material from my other aunts and some of Mama's friends to turn them into curtains, suits and dresses in her flat in King. The room where she supposedly works from — and where the sewing machine allegedly is — is always locked. It has been months since she came back and her tummy has grown bigger — I keep thinking it is going to hit the floor — but not a single dress or a drop of curtains has come out of her design studio. 5 10

As usual when Aunt Connie visits, Mama has taken out more material from her kist. Some of the material is bright and colourful and was brought from Nigeria by my Aunt Nozi on her yearly trip to visit her husband. I last saw my Uncle George the year I turned nine. That was three years ago. I wonder if he still has an Afro? He used to wear long dresses and gold rings on three of his fingers on each hand. 15

- 5.1.1 Describe the setting in this extract. (2)
- 5.1.2 What does this extract reveal by aunt Connie?
Substantiate your answer. (2)
- 5.1.3 Explain why the following statement is TRUE.
The narrator's mother works as a nurse. (1)
- 5.1.4 Give the official name for eRhawutini. (1)
- 5.1.5 Quote one word from the passage that has the same meaning as stomach. (1)
- 5.1.6 Refer to lines 9-10 ('I keep thinking it is going to hit the floor')
- (a) Identify a figure of speech in these lines. (1)
- (b) Explain this figure of speech as used in the extract. (2)

5.2.7 Choose the correct answer from those given below. Write down only the letter (A – D) next to the question number (5.1.6 (a)) and the answer in the ANSWER BOOK.

The word, kist, refers to a...

- A metal trunk.
- B plastic bag.
- C wooden chest
- D leather suitcase.

(1)

5.1.8 Do you think the narrator is a patient person?

Discuss your view.

(3)

Triumph In The Face Of Adversity By Kedibone Seku

When my father died, I shed no tears for him, but I cried at my mother's funeral, not because losing her saddened me, but because I felt sorry for her after the empty life she had led. Like us, her children, she was a victim, a victim of the man who saw her as an object to be controlled and used as a punching bag depending on the mood he was in. My mother never fought back. Instead she gave up hope, forgot to live her life, and forgot to live for her own children. This affected us badly, especially my young brother and sister who at the time still needed to be loved and nurtured. I as the older sister had to step in and take control.

As I watched her coffin go down, I mourned for the waste of life. Standing there by her grave brought back a lot of grim memories; memories that I swore would never ever resurface in my life, memories that belonged where they had been for the past twelve years.

I was very young when we moved from my grandmother's place to live in Phambili Squatter Camp. The move was rather abrupt, because my grandmother made my mother's life so unbearable that she could not take it anymore.

My grandmother, MaDlamini, was an old-fashioned woman who had grown up in the rural areas of Natal. She believed that the location we lived in did not have a woman who would make a perfect wife for her only son. That is why she was not happy when my father announced that he was not going to look for a bride from her homeland.

"Jabulani, *amantobazana ase goli* do not know anything about respect, culture and most of all they are very lazy," she said to my father in an attempt to discourage him.

"Mother, this girl and I have a child together; do you expect me to abandon her?" my father had asked her.

"All you have to do is pay *inhlawulo*, for the child. Thulisile can come and live with us while we find you a suitable bride. I can help you raise her. *Awuboni ukuthi lentombazana*' is trying to trap you!"

MaDlamini's pleas fell into deaf ears. My parents got married. When my mother, Thembekile, came to assume her duties as *umakoti*, rules were awaiting her. She had wanted to continue with her studies and become an actress, but she was told to bury the dream and concentrate on being a good wife. In addition to the rules, she was **not** supposed to wear trousers or miniskirts. Nobody was supposed to see her legs. She had to keep her head covered all the time as a sign of respect. House duties started at five in the morning. She had to sweep the yard, cook, wash and iron the clothes of the entire household.

Although my mother did as she was told, MaDlamini was never satisfied; she always found something to complain about. She never let my mother have time to herself.

"*Makoti, makoti!*" was all we could hear her say morning, noon and night.

"*Yebo? Ma,*" my mother would say, annoyed and very irritated.

"*Letha amanzi,*" she would say even when she was standing next to the tap.

My mother made a mistake of trying to negotiate with MaDlamini about giving her time to herself.

"I told Jabulani that he was making a mistake marrying you, you are useless to have you around. Our *lobola* has really gone down the drain,

MaDlamini said.

My mother was very angry and she felt insulted; she demanded that my father do something right away.

"I will try to speak to her he had said but she did not believe him. It seemed the only solution was for us to leave MaDlamini and find our own home. Our stay at Phambili squatter Camp was a temporary measure until my father could afford to buy us a proper home. That never happened. In fact things got worse; he lost his job not long after we had moved to Phambili.

Phambili Squatter Camp, like most camps, consisted of tin shanties, built out of flammable materials such as chipboard. The shacks were built so close together that it would have been impossible to prevent a fire from spreading to another shack. Pools of water blocked the narrow passages that divided the shacks. The toilets provided were used by a number of people, and because they were placed at the end of the block it was not safe to use them during the night. There was no electricity and no garbage removal. The smell in the air was that of stale urine and excrement, as most people never got as far as the toilets during the night. It was impossible to get up in the morning and breathe fresh air.

There were two communal taps and they were always in use. The schools were very far and the route was not safe for young children. Yet this was home to a lot of people and to some a beautiful place. The place was never without incidents. One night the sound of people screaming woke us up. When we went out, some of the shacks not very far from us were on fire. We ran to safety. The following day we learnt that my friend Ntombi had been burned in the shack. Although she had survived, it was said that she had sustained severe injuries; even plastic surgery could not help. I never went to see her, I was too afraid. Days later I heard that some family had offered to take care of her. I wished the opportunity had come to her when she could enjoy it.

Somehow I envied her, I wished it was our shack that had burnt down; probably we would have had a chance to live a better life as well.

I also witnessed a man being stoned to death after he had raped a little girl. It turned out that the man had been HIV positive and somehow believed that sleeping with a virgin would cure his **status**.

A belief that cost him his life. There were many strange things happening in that place but not as strange as witnessing my father slowly evolving into something despicable and my mother turn into a hopeless soul. My father's search for a job yielded no results and his frustrations made him aggressive towards us. Every day my mother would try to comfort and console him, but that never worked.

'Jabulani, please be patient. Something will come up," she would say.

"Thembekile, when?" he would say.

I knew that our lives would never be the same again the day he came home late and very drunk. My mother had waited for him but when he didn't arrive on time she decided to lock up. He was very angry when he found that the door was locked. He banged on the door with his fists.

"Open, open up!" he said at the top of his voice.

"There is no need to wake up the neighbours, my mother said opening the door.

"I am still the man in my house, the fact that I am not working does not give you the right to tell me what to do," he said, angry and bitter.

"But Jabulani ..." she said, but before she could not finish what she had to say he slapped her across the face. She went sprawling to the floor. He continued to beat her up even though he could see that she was defenceless. No amount of screaming from me made him stop. It was the first time he ever laid his hand on her, but it certainly was not the last. That is the day my mother changed. Her beautiful smile was replaced by fear.

When my brother Bongani and sister Zanele were born my father was a complete monster. They were constantly beaten, for no reason.

My mother knew better than to try and stop him, because she knew that she would be next on his list. I could not understand why we had to continue to stay with him. My mother's parents were alive and they begged her over and over again to come back home, but she refused. Ultimately we stopped visiting my grandparents because my mother said she could not stand the way they looked at her. She said the sadness in their eyes tormented her.

Food was hard to come by and we had to depend on the generosity of our neighbours. My friend Nthabiseng always brought enough lunch to school for the both of us, but I never ate because I saved it for my brother and sister. We were trapped in poverty and constant abuse and we could not do anything about it, I blamed my mother. Hopelessness and helplessness became the order of the day. My performance at school was dropping dramatically.

One day, one of my teachers called me to the staff room. He was very concerned and angry with me because I had failed my class test again and he knew that I had lots of potential to do better.

"Thulisile, you really can't continue like this! What is going on? Have you forgotten that getting an education is the most important thing in life?" the teacher said.

"Sir I... I..." I said sheepishly.

"Don't give me that, I want to know what is going on and I want to know now," he said.

So, I told him, I expected him to feel sorry for me and offer his help but instead he said:

"You cannot allow your home situation to control you. You have to control your situation." I was very angry. How could he say that? It was so easy for him to judge me when he lived in a nice house, drove a nice car and didn't worry about where his next meal was going to come from.

"But how?" was all I could manage to say to him. "Focus," he said, and that drove me up the wall.

"Sir I really think that I should leave now; it is one thing to act concerned but making a mockery of me is more that I am willing to take, I said and walked towards the door.

"Thulisilewait ..." he said, **but I kept on walking**. The following day I did not go to school, and I told myself that I was never going back. I knew that Mr Nkwane would tell **everybody** about my situation and the last thing I wanted from them was their pity, because it was not going to feed me, put clothes on my back or even help me in getting my school work on track. Besides the fact that I was poor didn't mean that I didn't have pride.

I had to swallow my pride when my brother and sister came back from school later that day. They were upset to find that the usual bread that they got was not there.

"Thuli I am very hungry," my younger sister Zanele said.

"I know, but don't worry, I will make a plan."

"Where are you going?" my brother Bongani asked as I walked towards the door.

"Don't worry I will be back in a little while, I said reassuringly.

A little while turned to hours as I went from house to house asking people if they didn't want me to do anything for them in exchange of bread. People were not very helpful because they did not want strangers in their homes. The place was crime ridden and nobody knew whether I was really in need of help or whether I just wanted to look at their houses and then alert my criminal friends about what was inside. I finally found help at the far end of the location. The owner of the house, Mme Sadike was an old lady who lived in a very neat house. Everything in the house was in perfect order. I was even afraid to enter the house thinking that I would dirty it. She was very gracious and let me in. She even allowed me to sit on her very expensive couches. I was uncomfortable but she made me feel at ease. She told me who she was, and asked for my name.

"Thulisile, but my friends call me Thuli," I said.

"That is a very beautiful name. So what should I call you?" she asked. "Thuli," I said almost whispering.

"Where do you stay?" she asked, and I told her that I was from the nearby squatter camp.

"Are you in school?" she asked.

"Yes, but I did not attend today because I was too embarrassed." "Embarrassed by what?" I broke down and told her the whole story.

She held me in her arms. For the first time I let it all out, the anger, the pain, the frustration, everything.

"There is no need for you to feel that way, many people go through that in life, you just have to make sure that you rise above odds, she said after I had calmed down. "That is exactly what my teacher said to me but I do not really know how am I going to be able to do that."

"There are a lot of options; you can either go to a social worker or the police and tell them your story."

"Will they be able to assist me?"

"Of course they will, but it will help if you take your mother along," she said.

When I left her house I had a loaf of bread and a lot of hope.

When I got home I told my mother about either consulting the social workers or the police but she refused and told me that she did not want anybody knowing our business. I was even admonished for talking about our life with a stranger. It was clear that our home life embarrassed her; she thought her silence would remedy it but it made it worse. Although I was very disappointed by my mother's reaction, my determination for a better life was not shaken. I spent the whole night thinking. I knew that I could not allow things to continue the same way, something had to be done and

soon. I had to stop being a charity case. The following morning I had a plan. I went to visit my grandparents house on my mother's side.

My grandmother was slightly worried to see me that early in the morning.

"Is everything okay, why aren't you at school? Where is your mom?" That was my grandmother's question before I could sit down. "Everything is okay and mom is at home. I need a little favour from you," I said, trying to stop her from asking me a lot of questions about our home life. Talking about it would have spoiled my plans completely.

"What do you need my child? You know I will do anything for you," she said.

"Granny, I need to borrow some money, I promise I will pay you back, but you can never tell mom, I said.

"You don't have to pay me back. As for your mother she doesn't come here and she has stopped us from having any contact with you, so when will I tell her? So how much do you need?" I could hear a tint of sadness in her voice.

"Thirty rand," I said, hesitant.

"What can you possibly do with thirty rand?" she asked, amazed.

"A lot, I am not going to tell you now, but I need you to trust me," I said excitedly.

"I trust you, and I will loan you the money, but I need some assurance that you are not going to do something illegal."

My grandmother was right, there was no way she could just give me the money without asking questions, so I relented and told her. When she gave me the money, I could not stop myself from smiling, it was the first time that I had ever held so much money on my hands.

My business of selling sweets to the students was doing really well. I managed to pay my grandmother back. She was very delighted, although she did not want to take the money.

I decided to expand my business at home. That was a bad idea. One day I came back from school, my money was missing and my mother didn't know anything about it. It became clear where my money had gone when my father came home stone drunk. He got very angry when I asked him whether he had seen the money. "Are you accusing me of stealing?" he said.

"I want to know what happened to my money," I said.

"I don't know, perhaps you better start taking care of where you put your money because I won't be questioned by you in my house."

"I want my money," I said choking on my tears. I never forgave him. How could he have shattered my dreams like that? It's hard to say what I felt about my mother at that time; she just sat there and did nothing. Yes, my father beat her up, but she could have reported him to the police. Having him locked up would have done us a lot of good. The reasons that kept her in the relationship were beyond me. It couldn't have been love. I could swear I saw hate in her eyes whenever she looked at him; however, she stayed and we suffered.

I was afraid to go back to my grandmother to ask for help. Instead, I went to look for a job at the nearby fish & chips shop. At first the owner, Mr Rathebe, was very reluctant to employ a fifteen-year-old girl, but after I told him my story he agreed. I ended up with a job as a cleaner after school and over the weekends. The job did not pay much, but it was enough to look after Bongani, Zanele and me. My parents also benefited in some ways, but that was only because we stayed in the same house, otherwise they wouldn't have mattered. The other thing that was good was that Mr Rathebe allowed me to take leftovers home. At last we did not have to worry about where food was coming from and for the first time I was able to help some of our neighbours. Mr Nkwane helped me to open up a post bank account, because I could not imagine the possibility of having my money stolen ever again.

My dream of having my own business had not died. After a while I started my business again and things went really well. My father would constantly be scratching in the shack for money but there was none to be found. Desperation got the better of him. He went to Mr Rathebe and told him that I said he could get money from my wage as we had an emergency at home. I did not find out about this until the end of the month.

"Mr Rathebe don't you think you have short-paid me this month?" I asked.

He reminded me that I had sent my father to him.

"Oh, how stupid of me to forget," I said forcing a smile and wishing that I could disappear.

I was very disturbed because it seemed my father was unstoppable. I was sick and tired of fighting a battle where I was the loser all the time.

I felt I was stuck in my situation forever. I stopped talking to him. I told my mother what happened and she told me to forget it.

"You really don't want to upset your father, she said, and it was clear that she did not want any discussions about it.

"Upset him! What about me? What about how I feel?" My questions were never answered.

There I was, trying to save my family but my efforts were not appreciated. The path ahead seemed very bleak. I hated feeling like a victim. That night I cried but in the morning I had calmed down.

My friend Nthabiseng showed me an advert in the paper during lunch break.

"I don't understand, what has this got to do with me?" I said.

"Do I have to spell it out? You should try it out, it will be perfect!" "I do not think so, besides ..." I said and grimaced.

"Besides what?"

"I don't have anything to wear."

"Phone them and make an appointment," she said.

"I don't have a telephone number, how will they get to me?" "Excuses and more excuses, you are getting to be really boring. The contact number can be anybody's number we will give them my home number and when they phone I will give you the message. was not the last. That is the day my mother changed. Her beautiful smile was replaced by fear. "I don't think that is going to work," I said, but Nthabiseng went ahead and made the appointment.

The local TV station was looking for presenters for their new kids programme and my good friend thought of me. I was called in for an audition, it went well and I got the job. That was a life-changing moment. I was swept from the life of poverty to the glamorous world of television.

When I managed to find a proper house that I wanted to buy in nearby location my father was not at all impressed. I needed him or my mother to sign for me as I was not allowed to purchase property at my age. He told my mother that they were not going to sign anything. "Just because you are now a hot shot TV star, it does not mean that you can come and tell us what to do," he said.

"Mom, what do you think?" I asked hoping that she would see reason. As usual she said nothing and I was very frustrated. I threatened to move out and go live with my grandparents on my mother's side. I was told that I could go but Bongani and Zanele were remaining behind. I couldn't stand the thought of leaving them alone so I stayed until I was old enough to sign on my own.

When I finally got the house my father told my mother that they were not going to move in with me. This time I refused to leave without

Bongani and Zanele; lucky for me he didn't give me much of a fight. "Mom, can't you see this is our chance to live in a house that we've

always dreamt of?" I said desperately.

"I have to stay with your father," she said. "But, why?"

"He is my husband," she said. I guess there was nothing I could really do or say; she had after all pledged to stick with him for better or worse.

At the time of his death my father and I treated each other like strangers. I would go home to give them groceries but my mother was the only person that I spoke to. Every time I would beg and plead with her to come with me and she refused. The only time she came to stay with us was after his funeral. She was very sick and fragile; no amount of care and doctor's visits made her better. It was clear that she was not even attempting to fight back. Before we had a chance to make amends she died. Instead of feeling my grief I let anger get in the way. It was at her funeral that I realised that she was also an injured party. The man who had made endless promises to her of a happy life had in fact let her down, and instead of getting herself out of the situation she decided to stay, because she did not want to appear a failure. That was a costly mistake, an error that nearly scarred us for life.

As I poured soil into her grave I decided it was time to heal, bury the past and open a door to the future. It is true that I had a difficult life but I survived and came out the stronger woman that I am today. I am also thankful that I came across people who had faith in me and gave me

the strength to rise above the odds. The future looks bright; a dark cloud of uncertainty that has been hanging around us has disappeared. What remains is endless possibilities.

I am now living my mother's dream of fame and this has made it possible for me to pursue my business aspirations. It is too bad that

the only exposure she got is a snippet of her picture in the local paper indicating when she was going to be buried.

Triumph in the face of adversity

by Kedibone Seku

Kedibone Seku was born in Pimville, Soweto in 1974. She became an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) specialist. She also worked as a teacher for English and History at White City Jabavu Community College. The story, 'Triumph in the face of adversity' was published after Seku attended a workshop that was associated with the Caine Prize for African Writing.



Kedibone Seku

1. Summary

The story is about a young lady, Thulisile who is the narrator and the main character. She appears at her mother's graveside and a flashback of events unfolds.

She tells a sad story about her mother's marriage to her father that was not approved by her paternal grandmother. Her mother is treated like a slave and no matter how hard she works, the mother-in-law does not appreciate her.

The suffering leads to the narrator's family moving out of the main house/home to a squatter camp. Unfortunately, the father loses his work and becomes abusive to the mother, the narrator and her siblings when he is drunk.

The narrator works hard to change the situation around by selling some sweets, getting help from friends and neighbours. She eventually gets employed as a TV presenter and can afford to buy a house. She only moves into that house later since her parents refuse to sign for her. Her father dies and only then does her mother move in with her in a proper house. Sadly, her mother is too weak to survive and she dies.



2. Title

The title, Triumph in the face of adversity, is the title which is suited to the story. The long list of incidents faced by the narrator, her mother and her family does not stop the narrator from reaching her goal of making her own money and improve her life and her siblings' life.

Though she does not get to improve her mother's life, she still succeeds in getting a better life for her and her siblings.

3. Themes

3.1 Prejudice/Intolerance

Thulisile's grandmother does not approve of her son (Thulisile's father) marrying a 'girl' from Johannesburg (egoli). She has nothing against Thembekile as such but she despises her because of where she comes from. MaDlamini wants her son to marry someone who grew up in Natal (currently known as KwaZulu-Natal).

3.2 Mother-in-law and 'makoti' conflict

MaDlamini continues to torture Thembekile even after she gets married to the narrator's father. She makes her wake up earlier than everyone. She is not allowed to wear trousers, short skirts and she must cover her head all the time.

3.3 Poverty

The life at Phambili Squatter Camp is characterised by tin shanties, commune toilets, overpopulation and poverty. The narrator's household also suffers when the father loses his job and cannot provide food and other necessities. It is because of poverty that the narrator's family stays in the squatter camp longer than it had been planned (to be a temporary home).

3.4 Unemployment

Thulisile's father loses his job and no matter how much he looks, he does not find work. It seems that most people in Phambili Squatter Camp are also unemployed.

3.5 Gender Based Violence

The father finds an escape in liquor. When he is drunk, he beats Thuli's mother for no apparent reason.

3.6 Child Abuse

When Bongani and Zanele are born, their father beats them up for no reason. Thuli works hard but her father steals her money and uses it to buy alcohol. He even goes to her employer and takes part of her salary without her consent.

3.7 Child labour

Thuli who is literally a child, is forced to go find employment in order to feed the family. She sells sweets and eventually gets employed by Mr Rathebe who owns a fish & chips shop. At fifteen, she works as a cleaner after school and on weekends.

3.8 Loyalty

At the beginning of the story, Jabulani stays loyal to Thembekile by loving her and marrying her despite his mother's disapproval of her. Later in the story, Thembekile refuses to leave Jabulani even though he abuses her. She stays loyal to her marriage despite several attempts by her parents to make her leave the abusive marriage. Instead she stops visiting or talking to her parents. She also continues to stay loyal by not standing up to her husband when he steals her daughter's money. She does not sign the documents that needed to be signed when Thuli wanted to buy a house. She even stays behind when she is offered to move into a better house. All because of her loyalty to her husband.

3.9. Fear

Thembekile stays in constant fear from when she is introduced to the family as a young bride and later when she is abused by her husband. She fears even to protect her children when their father beats them.

3.10. Ambition

Thulisile is an ambitious young girl who has a drive to be successful. No matter how many times her attempts fail, she keeps on trying until she is successful and manages to have a proper house.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story takes place South Africa, Johannesburg. It further develops to Phambili Squatter Camp where the family spends most of their time.

4.2 Structure and Plot Development

Exposition

Thulisile, the narrator is standing by her mother's grave when she thinks of how much her mother's death affected her emotionally. She starts comparing the pain she felt when her mother died compared to when her father had died.

Rising Action

The narrator takes the reader through the beginning of her mother's suffering in the hands of her grandmother, MaDlamini. MaDlamini does not approve of her becoming Jabulani's wife because she is from Johannesburg. The suffering escalates further when the narrator's parents move to Phambili Squatter Camp. The narrator's father loses his job, drowns his sorrows in liquor and becomes abusive to his wife and children.

Climax

The narrator's ambition of becoming a better person is fulfilled when she gets employed as a TV presenter for a kid's programme. Her work makes her afford to buy a proper house and move her family from the shanty. Her mother and father stay behind.

Resolution

After her father's death, the narrator manages to move in with her mother in her proper house. Unfortunately, the mother's health condition has deteriorated that she eventually dies.

4.3 Characterisation

Thulisile	• She is the narrator and the main character in the story. • She is the eldest of three children. • Her parents get married after she is born. • She witnesses her mother being verbally abused by MaDlamini, the narrator's paternal grandmother. • She witnesses her mother being physically abused by Jabulani, the narrator's father. • She witnesses her father beating her siblings. • She experiences hardship and poverty her family and their neighbours suffer in the squatter camp. • She makes attempts to earn money to feed her family. • She gets food from a friend from school so that her siblings can have some food. • She borrows thirty rands from her maternal grandmother in order to start her business of selling sweets. • She gets in an argument with her father after he steals her savings to buy liquor. • She gets a part-time employment at Mr Rathebe's fish & chips shop. • She is employed at a TV station as a presenter for a kid's programme. • She affords to buy a proper house but her plans are delayed by her being under-age. Both her parents refuse to sign for it. • She only manages to buy a house later. • She does not cry much when her father dies. • She cries more when her mother dies.
Thembekile	• Thembekile is the narrator's mother and Jabulani's wife. • She is given rules by her mother-in-law when she marries Jabulani. • She is made to wake up early and work in the house throughout each day. • She manages to move her family to a squatter camp as a temporary arrangement. • She suffers abuse in a form of beatings by her husband. • She stays loyal to her marriage and does not want to leave her husband despite the abuse. • She takes her husband's side instead of her own parents. • She does not fight her husband back. • She only joins her children in a proper house after her husband dies. • She is very ill when she moves to stay with her children. • She also dies.

MaDlamini	• MaDlamini is the narrator's grandmother. • She does not approve that her son, Jabulani marries Thembekile. • She makes rules for Thembekile when she is married. • She treats Thembekile like a slave in her household.
Jabulani	• Jabulani is the narrator's father. • He marries Thembekile despite his mother's disapproval. • He loses his job. • He drowns his sorrows in getting drunk. • He beats up his wife for no particular reason. • He also emotionally and physically abuses his children.
Ntombi	• She is the narrator's friend from the squatter camp. • She is badly burned when her shirt catches fire. • She survives and some family member takes her to stay with them.
Bongani	• He is the narrator's younger brother. • He suffers beatings from his father. • He moves to the new house with the narrator.
Zanele	• She is the narrator's younger sister. • She suffers beatings from her father. • She moves to the new house with the narrator.
Nthabiseng	• She is the narrator's friend from school. • She brings lunch to share with Thuli at school. • She assists Thuli to get her employment at the TV station.
Mr Nkwane	• Mr Nkwane is the narrator's teacher. • He realises that the narrator is not doing well in her studies. • He tries to talk with the narrator but their talk leads to the narrator stopping school for a while.
Mme Sedike	• She is an old lady. • She has a beautiful house. • She trusts the narrator's story that she gives her bread to share with her family. • She advises Thuli to speak with a social worker or the police.
Mr Rathebe	• He owns a fish & chips shop. • He employs the narrator to do cleaning in the shop during weekends and after school. • He gives part of Thuli's salary to her father when he comes asking for it.

4.4 Narrator's point of view

The story is narrated from the first-person view. The narrator tells the story about her mother's suffering from her (narrator) perspective. The plot develops with her telling the story while at the same time she is fully involved. Her suffering and experiences are told from a first-hand experience view.

4.5 Style

The story is told using an informal register which is suited for a young girl. The use of direct speech seeks to capture the actions and attitude of the different characters the narrator comes across in her life. The author uses a number of 'IsiZulu' phrases, which emphasises the background of most characters in the story.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

- The writer used **idiomatic expressions** in order to emphasise meaning:
 - 'pleas fell into deaf ears.' (page 155)
 - 'used as a punching bag depending on the mood'(page 155)
 - 'I had to swallow my pride.' (page 159)
 - 'make sure that you rise above odds,' (page 159)
- Some examples of **figures of speech** in the story include:

METAPHOR:

- 'the empty life she had led.'(page 155)
- 'my father was a complete monster' (page 158)
- 'The evening deepened in the avenue' (page 63)
- 'she would be next on his list'(page 158)
- 'we were trapped in poverty and constant abuse'(page 158)
- 'I could hear a tint of sadness in a voice.'(page 160)
- 'I said chocking on my tears.' (page 161)
- 'shattered my dreams like that?' (page 161)
- 'constantly scratching in the shack' (page 161)
- 'I was swept from the life of poverty' (page 162)
- 'the dark cloud...hanging around us' (page 163)

PERSONIFICATION:

- 'rules were awaiting her.'(page 155)
- 'the sadness in their eyes tormented her' (page 158)
- 'was their pity, because it was not going to feed me,'(page 159)
- 'My dream of having my own business had not died.'(page 161)
- 'bury the past and open a door to the future.'(page 163)

4.7 Tone and Mood

Tone:

- A depressed tone
 - The narrator uses this tone at the beginning of the story and throughout her mother's ordeal and her own experiences.
- A mean tone.
 - MaDlamini uses this tone when she disapproves of Thembekile's marriage to her son. She continues using the same tone even when the couple is married.
- A defensive tone
 - Thembekile uses this tone when she defends her husband's behaviour.

Mood:

- sad, emotional
- optimistic

Activity 8

'Triumph in the face of adversity'

Read the following extract and answer questions which follow:

She even allowed me to sit on her very expensive couches. I was uncomfortable but she made me feel at ease. She told me who she was and asked for my name.

'Thulisile, but my friends call me Thuli,' I said.

'That is a very beautiful name. So what should I call you?' she asked.

'Thuli,' I said almost whispering.

'Where do you stay?' she asked, and I told her that I was from the nearby squatter camp.

'Are you in school?' she asked.

'Yes, but I did not attend today because I was too embarrassed.'

'Embarrassed by what?' I broke down and told her the whole story. She held me in her arms. For the first time I let it all out, the anger, the pain, the frustration, everything.

'There is no need for you to feel that way, many people go through that in life, you just have to make sure that you rise above the odds,' she said after I had calmed down.

'That is exactly what my teacher said to me but I really do not know how I am going to be able to do that.'

'There are a lot of options; you can either go to a social worker or the police and tell them your story.'

'Will they be able to assist me?'

5

10

15

- 8.1 Choose a description from COLUMN B that matches the name in COLUMN A. Write only the letter (A–D) next to the question number (8.1(a) – 8.1(d)) in the ANSWER BOOK.

COLUMN A	COLUMN B
(a) Mr Nkwane	A Thulisile's father
(b) Bongani	B Thulisile's cousin
(c) Jabulani	C Thulisile's brother
(d) Mr Rathebe	D Thulisile's teacher
	E Thulisile's employer

(4 x 1) (4)

- 8.2 Describe the setting in this extract. (2)

- 8.3 Refer to line 3 'Thulisile, but my friends call me Thuli)

Choose the correct answer from those given below. Write down only the letter (A – D) next to the question number (8.3 (a)) and the answer in the ANSWER BOOK.

The tone that Thuli would use when saying these words is a/an.... tone.

- A honest
- B gloomy
- C nervous
- D anxious

(1)

- (b) Why would Thuli use this tone? (2)
- 8.5 Explain why the following statement is FALSE:
Thulisile's home is very far from Mme Sedike's house. (1)
- 8.6 Refer to line 10 ('I broke down and told her the whole story.')
- (a) Identify a figure of speech in this line. (1)
- (b) Explain the meaning of this figure of speech. (2)
- 8.7 What does this extract reveal about Mme Sadike's character?
Substantiate your answer. (2)
- 8.8 One of the themes in this short story is poverty.
Discuss this theme in relation to this extract. (3)
- 8.9 Mme Sadike changes Thuli's view about school.
Discuss your view. (3)
- 8.10 Do you think Thuli's decision to tell her mother about the idea of contacting a social worker is a wise one?
Discuss your view. (3)

A BAG OF SWEETS By Agnes Sam

You would have thought the past three years had never happened, the way my sister Khadija breezed into the family shop and stood beaming at me, radiating that glow that comes from knowing someone is surprised and overjoyed to see you.

Like a good Muslim woman, her hair was tucked under a blue chiffon' scarf, she wore a delicate peach lipstick but her legs were bare. She had discarded the traditional trousers Muslim women wear with a dress.

Looking at her, standing there not attempting to hide her delight at surprising me, nor her own joy at seeing me, I marvelled at all she had forgotten.

After several minutes delighting in the joy of that meeting, her voice burst from her, as if a hand clamped over her mouth the past three years had just been removed. 'Kal-tour!' she said, stepping forward to embrace me.

Without thinking, I side stepped, moving out of her reach. She knew I was never any good at pretending to be civil or courteous. Social niceties were never important to me. Khadija knew that. Safely behind the counter I made a pretext of flipping idly through a magazine, the way I would have done if there was no-one in the shop with me.

I have to say this for Khadija, she was blessed with humility.' She stepped up to the counter, folded her arms across the top, and began speaking spontaneously about how wonderful a man her husband was, how beautiful their baby looked, how homesick she was for us

New Year's picnic at the beach, how she missed the things we took for granted, and how she missed me more than anyone else. It failed to move me.

I felt as cold towards her as the last kiss I gave to anyone. Her hands resting easily on the cold glass counter were like a bird's wings, relaxed, yet with the potential for unimaginable flight. I could see those hands running across the keyboard, typing, playing the piano. Those hands had given her freedom. In doing so they destroyed the people we loved.

These feelings Khadija seemed not to share. She was insensible to the hurt I felt. She rambled on. The details of what she said I do not even recall. I was determined to meet her lack of sensitivity with a show of disinterest. Out of boredom I repeatedly glanced at my watch. This did not ruffle her. Finally, I turned my back on her and began weighing out bags of sugar.

Our shop was small. There was one door, just one glass display case and standing all-round the floor space were sacks of rice, sugar and flour, propped up against drums of spices.

Without asking, Khadija came around the counter and began to help me, still talking without interruption.

I could not tolerate the natural way she did this; as if she still belonged with us; as if she had done nothing to hurt us; as if her bid for freedom had not destroyed our family.

So, I pushed her away. I pushed her away, without malice, without calculation, without thought of the consequences. It was like spontaneous movement to brush aside the horror of one's other self.

It was as I pushed violently away and she reached out to stop herself falling, that I noticed how much she resembled our dead mother. For a second, I thought it was my mother I had struck.

Khadija had finally stopped speaking. She was looking at me with a kind of waiting apprehension on her face, as if she expected me to follow through with a slap to the face. But the shock of seeing the resemblance unnerved me. We only stared at each other. She had no way of knowing what I was thinking.

I expected her, then, to draw herself up and walk out of the shop ... perhaps forever ... the way she had walked out of our home three years ago. But three years ago, there was no cause for pride. Three years ago, I had wanted her to go, for the disgrace she was bringing to our family. Yet I begged her not to go, thinking we could avert the gossip and shame.

But now, I did not want her to go. I wanted to stand looking at her face, noting the eyes, the brow, the mouth that was so much like our mother's. And it seemed ironic that of all of us, she should be the one to remind me of our mother.

Instead of saying that to her, instead of reaching out to hold her, of sharing my grief with her, I reached up and pulled down the blinds in the windows, switched off the lights and moved to the door with the keys in my hand.

Love is a funny thing. Khadija, her face softened, smiling and vulnerable, said, 'I'll visit you again, Kaltoum,' then she left.

Over the past year she had been calling at our home daily without fail, knocking at our door, waiting like a stranger for someone to answer, smiling sweetly at whoever opened the door, asking if she could visit us now. Now our parents were dead. Just the way a stranger would have done. And throughout that year we had quietly shut the door in her face. As if we were strangers. Each of us, her brothers and sisters.

It was the most natural thing we ever did. The family had not discussed any plan of action. Each of us, when faced with Khadija standing at the door, felt we could do no more than shut it in her face. It was not that we could not forgive her for wanting the right to choose whom she should marry; it was the consequences of that freedom we could not forget. Our parents died within months of each other.

Give Khadija her due - she was an intelligent woman. It seemed a shrewd thing for her to turn from visiting our home to visiting the family shop. And to her credit she made no pretext of having come to buy anything.

The family still refused to speak to her, some of us showing more hostility than others. Undaunted, she would stand alongside the counter, chatting to whoever was on duty in the shop, taking no offence that no-one ever replied to anything she said.

Instead, she conversed with herself, replying to the questions she posed and the remarks she made, and the conversation developed a style of its own.

I had been closest to her and I was now the obstacle to the rest of the family forgiving her. If I relented, Khadija must have known, the rest of the family would welcome her home, since I was the eldest. Believing this, she concentrated on visiting the family shop when I was there. This happened to be on Fridays. Our brothers were at prayer. When I realised that she was coming regularly to the shop while I was on duty, I in turn developed my own style of defence. With meticulous attention to detail I dusted the counter; swept the floor; polished the

glass case; weighed out bags of sugar, rice and flour; while she conversed out loud with herself in her light-hearted, superbly acted way.

I ignored her for varying moments of time until I reached for the window blinds, the light switch and the keys. At this stage I would lock up the shop. But one day, as if in a trance, I reached for a fistful of sweets, placed it in a paper bag and shoved it into her arms as they lay folded across the counter. Khadija stopped speaking. Her face softened. Quietly she closed her hands around the bag of sweets and left the shop.

It was several weeks before I could bring myself to tell the family.

They were astonished, my brother Abdul especially.

'A bag of sweets?' they asked incredulously.

'Cheap sweets!' I replied in an off-hand way, my voice sounding flat, final, while I was cruelly delighting in the effect I was having on the others

The questioned me, registering their disbelief.

'Yet she comes back?'

'Every Friday!' I said emphatically.

They did not know how to interpret this turn of events and I the beginning of a sense of wrong among some of them. Whereat before they were angry with her for what she had done three years and the effects of it - now they turned to criticising her for persist coming to us when we were rejecting her, and forcing us into wrong.

'She shouldn't come on Fridays,' they agreed.

'That makes me really sore,' my brother said. 'She is a Muslim girl

She knows it's our custom to pray at the Mosque on Fridays.'

But Khadija was married into a Christian family that was involved in voluntary work, fasting during Lent, eating fish on Fridays and everything else Christian. My Christian friends said that on Fridays we should be more forgiving! That was why she was

coming on Fridays. Abdul would not believe me. 'A bag of sweets?' he kept repeating. 'You're sure about that, Kaltoum? A bag of sweets?'

'Sure, I'm sure. Cheap sweets!'

'You're pulling a fast one on me. Why a bag of sweets? Why not fruit?

Or sugar? Flour? If you're weighing the stuff?'

'It's what you'd do to a child, isn't it? To get rid of it? You give it a bag of sweets.

'She would leave in time,' he said.

I knew he would have forgiven Khadija the very day she ran away to marry the Christian boy. But he had to take his cue from our parents.

'It's like you would insult someone. Listen. You know that rich family who live in the valley? They're very generous to everyone, aren't they? But do you know what they do to someone who has spoken ill of them and then has the cheek to visit?'

He did not know. 'They dish up some food in a bowl, wrap it in a cloth, and give it to the visitor.'

'What does that mean?'

'It's to say we will not eat with you. Eating with people is a big thing with us. The visitor goes soon after.'

'I can see you want to make Khadija feel cheap! But why does she come back?

'She doesn't take the insult. She knows I want to make her not to come back. But she wants to come back. Like a woman when she loves a man who beats her up. After each beating, they make up. She forgives him. She makes excuses for why he beats her up. She says he is possessive. She says it's because he loves her but can't control his jealousy!' We sat pensively for a while.

'Perhaps it's guilt,' he whispered.

'Guilt?' I asked angrily. 'Whose guilt? My guilt? It's got nothing to do with me. I'm only a sister. It's what it did to ... '

'With her being the youngest sister. You were close to her.'

'You think I was jealous?'

'No. But she might have told you. Instead of you finding out with all the rest. You were hurt.'

'Maybe so.'

'You must've been terribly hurt.' I was silent.

'It isn't as if she turned Christian. She just married one.'

'It might have been better if she had,' he said.

'Turned Christian? I think turning is worse. Much worse. Think how you'd feel.' 'Poor Khadija,' he said.

'Yes. Now they don't want her and we don't want her.'

'She should've turned Christian,' he said.

'You think if she turned, they will treat her any different? Christians are funny people.'

'If you throw your lot in with someone, it's no good keeping something back. She should've turned,' he said.

'No, then we could never forgive her.'

'She'll stop someday,' he said.

'Yes, one day she won't feel to come. Still, I wouldn't come Fridays.'

'I wouldn't come at all. But a bag of sweets, Kaltoum?'

'Cheap sweets!'

I can still see her face when I close my eyes, her lips softened, just for a second, before she regained control. One Friday Khadija did not come in to the shop, although I waited for her past closing time.

ACTIVITY 1

Questions for group discussion, or for written work.

1. When the story opens, the speaker, Kaltoum, mentions "the past three years".
What has happened in these three years? (2)
2. Describe the key setting for the story, saying why the sisters meet in this place. (2)
3. Why does Kaltoum not want to forgive her sister? (2)
4. In the beginning of the story, how does the sister approach Kaltoum? (3)
5. Why is the bag of sweets significant in the story? (3)
6. Does Kaltoum ever show signs of softening towards her sister? (2)
7. What is sad about the ending of the story? (2)

A bag of sweets

by Agnes Sam



Agnes Sam is a descendant from an Indian great-grandfather who was brought to Durban in 1860 as an **indentured** labourer. Sam was thus born into an Indian family in Port Elizabeth, and grew up there, near the family business. She was educated at a Roman Catholic school in Port Elizabeth, where the Indian experience was never mentioned in history lessons. She explained that meant very little information about how the largest group of Indians outside the subcontinent came to be in South Africa was never accounted for

Sam went on to study Zoology and Psychology at the National University of Lesotho and trained as a teacher in Zimbabwe. After briefly teaching science in Zambia, she went into exile in 1973 in England, bringing up three children there while also attempting to take a further degree. Most of the stories in Sam's debut collection, 'Jesus is Indian', are set in Port Elizabeth. She returned to South Africa in 1993.



Agnes Sam

Indentured labour was **a system where labourers**, receiving a meagre pay, were recruited to work on sugar, cotton and tea plantations and rail construction projects in British colonies in West Indies, Africa and Southeast Asia. It differed from slavery in that the family members of the labourers were not automatically roped into the system.

1.Summary

A young Muslim woman called Kaltoum assists in the family shop on Fridays when her brothers attend prayers at the Mosque. One day, she is surprised to see her estranged sister, Kadidja, entering the shop. Khadidja left the family three years before to marry a Christian man. She has been calling at the family home daily after the passing away of their parents, hoping for a reconciliation. The family refuses her entry and ignores her time and time again. She then decides to change track and meet the eldest sister at the shop on Fridays. Kaltoum continues to ignore the advances of her sister even though she knows that as the eldest, she had the ability to change the mind of her family members. On a whim, she gives her sister a bag of sweets but continues to ignore her, until finally Khadidja does not come back on a Friday.

In the Muslim culture, men attend Mosque every Friday between 12h00 and 14h00.

2.Title

Muslims regard giving gifts is one of the good manners that maintains and strengthens relations between the giver and the recipient. This explains why Khadija hopes for reconciliation and continues to come to the shop after her sister gives her the bag of sweets. It furthermore explains why the brothers endlessly look for an explanation for the bag of sweets Kadidja gives her sister, despite the fact that she does not want to relent and forgive her sister.

3.Themes

3.1 Lack of tolerance

The theme of intolerance is noted throughout the short story. The family is unable to forgive Khadija for leaving them to marry into a Christian family. It is ironic, however, that Kaltoum mentions her own Christian friends, but she shows no tolerance and acceptance of her sister's choice in life.

3.2 Forgiveness

The family blames Khadija for the death of their parents and despite being practising Muslims, they cannot find it in their hearts to forgive her. On the other hand it appears as if Khadija has forgiven her family for shunning her all these years.

3.3 Pretence

Kaltoum is adept at keeping up pretences. She feels herself softening towards her sister when she realises that Khadija resembles their mother the closest, but she pretends that she feels nothing for her.

3.4 Expectations vs reality

Khadija hopes that by showing up regularly and being herself, that her family will relent and welcome her back into the inner circle. In reality it is Kaltoum's stubborn refusal to accept her sister into their midst that prevents the reconciliation.

4.How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story is set in the family shop of a Muslim family and in their house. There is no clear indication of the location of the shop.

4.2 Structure and Plot Development

Exposition

At the beginning of the short story, the reader is exposed to two sisters, Kaltoum and Khadija. It is clear from the start that there is tension between the two sisters, because Kaltoum ignores her sister even though she carries on talking. The eldest, Kaltoum, manages the family shop on Fridays when the brothers attend prayers at the Mosque and this is the only time Khadija comes to the shop.

Rising Action

We realise that there are past events that influenced Kaltoum's attitude. Khadija leaves her Muslim family and marries a Christian with whom she has a baby. After the death of her parents, Khadija pays daily visits to her family home in the hope of reconciliation, but she is turned away at the door. She then starts visiting the store when she knows she will find her sister, Kaltoum on her own in the hope that her sister, to whom she used to be very close, will relent and welcome her back in the family, but to no avail.

Climax

Kltoum gives Khadija a bag of sweets (cheap sweets). Khadija might take it as a sign of reconciliation, but Kaltoum's intentions are not reconciliation as she carries on ignoring her sister. It does, however, make her brothers think that she could be ready to forgive her which would allow for her return to the family. Kaltoum one day realises that her sister has the closest resemblance to their mother. At that moment she does not want Khadija to leave because she realises that Khadija is still related by blood to them, but despite this fact she allows her lack of tolerance and inability to forgive to allow her to relentlessly ignore her sister.

Resolution

Khadija finally stops coming to the family shop. It seems that Kaltoum regrets her harsh treatment of her sister. Kaltoum waits for her sister – even past the shop's closing time which shows that she hopes for Khadija to visit again.

Exposition:

It is the **background information on the characters and setting explained at the beginning of the story**. The exposition will often have information about events that happened before the story began. The exposition is often the very first part of the PLOT.

4.3 Characterisation

The narrator Kaltoum	• She is a young woman who heads her family after the death of her parents due to her status as the eldest child. • She is a round character, she experiences both inner conflict and outer conflict. • She is cold-hearted and holds grudges, not only because she was hurt that her youngest sister did not share her secret with her, but also for the betrayal of the family. • She is stubborn because she struggles to forgive her sister for leaving the family and she believes her leaving was a betrayal causing the death of their parents.
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Khadija	• She is principled because she marries a Christian man even though she knows it will cause a rift between her and the family. She, however, stays true to her Muslim religion and is motivated by love. • She is unwavering in her pursuit of an improved relationship between her and her family members. • She is kind and always smiling. • She is forthcoming because she expresses her emotions clearly and openly declares that she misses their family traditions and especially her eldest sister. • She is loving because she expresses her love for her Christian husband and her baby.
Abdul	• He is the eldest brother. • He follows the example set by Kaltoum and does not speak to Khadija.

4.4 Narrator's point of view

The story is narrated in the first person and the narrator is the main character. She is a young woman who is the eldest child in an orphaned family. She expresses her negative sentiments towards her sister by ignoring her and despite the fact that she realises her sister resembles their mother the most, she does not allow her heart to soften. She tells the story of how her sister betrayed the family by her 'bid for freedom' and only at the end after the visits stop do we get an indication that she waited for her to return.

4.5 Style

A formal style was used throughout the story but there contractions are used in dialogues. The style is appropriate for a person who deemed herself to be superior to her sister. It also mirrors the age of the woman.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

Some examples of **figures of speech** in the story include:

SIMILE:

The narrator compares her feelings towards her sister 'as cold ...**as** the last kiss I gave to anyone.' p 67.

It is a comparison, using 'like' or 'as'. For example, 'He is as brave as a lion.'

The narrator says Khadija's 'hands resting easily on the cold glass counter were **like** a bird's wings, relaxed, yet with the potential for unimaginable flight.' p 67

METAPHOR:

The narrator describes how 'one day as in a trance, I reached for a fistful of sweets' p 69 to explain she was not fully aware of the reasons for the action. **Note:** the 'as' is used in the subjunctive mood and not comparing two things.

It is a direct comparison without 'as' or 'like'. For example, 'He is a lion.'

PERSONIFICATION:

'I could see those hands running across the keyboard' p 67. Her hands moved so fast it resembled a person running.

PERSONIFICATION is a figure of speech in which a non-living object is given the characteristics of a person.

IRONY:

- A bag of sweets is supposed to be a treat and bring joy to the receiver but in this story, it is used as a form of insult to the one who receives it. Khadija is disrespected and she was treated like a child.
- It is ironical that Kaltoum never speaks to her sister and tells her brothers she wishes that she would come calling at the shop. Yet when Khadija one day does not come, Kaltoum waits for her until after closing time.

The definition of irony is the use of words where the meaning is the opposite of their usual meaning or what is expected to happen

4.7 Tone and Mood

Tone:

The tone is gloomy because Kaltoum only expresses negative thoughts.

Mood:

Angry and upset

ACTIVITY 4

A Bag Of Sweets

Read the following extract and answer the questions which follow:

Khaltoum and her brother discuss Khadija's situation

I knew he would have forgiven Khadija the very day she ran away to marry the Christian boy. But he had to take his cue from our parents.	
'It's like you would insult someone? Listen. You know that rich family who live in the valley? They're very generous to everyone, aren't they? But do you know what they do to someone who has spoken ill of them and then has the cheek to visit? '	5
He did not know. 'They dish up food in a bowl, wrap it in a cloth, and give it to the visitor.'	
'What does that mean?'	
'It's to say we will not eat with you. Eating with people is a big thing with us. The visitor goes soon after.'	10
'I can see you want to make Khadija feel cheap! But why does she come back?'	
'She doesn't take the insult. She knows I want to make her not to come back. But she wants to come back. Like a woman when she loves a man who beats her up. After each beating they make up. She forgives him. She makes excuses for why he beats her up. She says he is possessive. She says it's because he loves her but can't control his jealousy!' We sat pensively for a while.	15
'Perhaps it's guilt,' he whispered.	20

- 4.1. Refer to 1–2 ('I knew he would ... the Christian boy').
Show the differences in behaviour in the attitudes of the brother and Kaltoum in these lines (2)
- 4.2. Explain the implication of 'But he had to take his cue from our parents.' In relation to the story as a whole. (2)
- 4.3. Refer to line 12 ('I can see you want to make Khadija feel cheap!')
- 4.3.1 What did Kaltoun do to make Khadija feel cheap? (1)
- 4.3.2 Explain if her deed had the necessary effect? (1)
- 4.3.3 Explain the figurative meaning of Kaltoun's deed with reference to the title. (3)
- 4.4 Refer to line 15 -16 ('But she wants... beats her up.').
- 4.4.1 Identify the figure of speech in this line. (1)
- 4.4.2 Explain why this figure of speech is relevant to the short story. (2)

- 4.5 Refer to line 20 ('Perhaps it's guilt'.)
- 4.5.1 What tone would the speaker use in these lines? (1)
- 4.5.2 Why would the speaker use this tone in these lines? (2)
- 4.5 Khatija can be admired. Discuss your view. (3)

FORBIDDEN LOVE By Can Themba

Dora Randolph was now running in the dark, down the road that dipped into the hollow of the bridge spanning the stream that separated Noordgesig from the Western areas. From the bridge the road climbed the hillock and sailed away to Newclare, Western Township and Sophiatown.

He must have seen her for his dark form swam toward her, and caught her in his strong arms.

'Not here, darling,' he said hastily, 'some car-lights may strike upon us.' He led her higher up the road into the tall grass. Suddenly she caught his coat lapels and dragged him down so that no one could see them.

He clambered towards her and curled her into his arms. His lips thrilled upon hers, burningly sweet, and with digging fingertips she tried to find the source of his fire in his spinal column.

Then the flames went out of them, settling into a low glow. She broke away with a sigh. She caught a stalk, put it in her mouth, and turned to look at the scattered lights of Noordgesig.

'They were at it again, Sweetie,' she said between her teeth, 'and what makes me mad is that I cannot fight back anymore.'

'What did they say now?' Mike asked, a little worried.

'Mr Van Vuuren was at our place again. It looked almost as if Dad had called him in to preach to us. He spoke about how terribly important it is that we keep away from the 'Natives', otherwise we would be associated with them. And his voice had a trick of making that word 'associated' sound horrible. But what made me hate him was the way he stared at Louisa as he spoke. I-

'Louisa is that sister of yours who is dark, isn't she?' Michael Chabakeng asked. He had seen her once at the Rhythmic Cinema with Dora, and he remembered how she was darker even than he, and that she had woolly, kinky hair like his.

Dora went on: 'Yes, the dark one, and I feel like giving back to them all the hurt that they make little Louisa suffer. Why wasn't it I, Mike? Why wasn't I dark, instead of fair? Then you might not have been so afraid of my love?'

'Huh?' Michael was so taken aback by the sudden tenseness in her tone that he did not quite know what to say.

She turned her head and placed her chin on to his chest. 'Somehow, Mike,' she tried to explain, softened again now. 'I feel trapped by a doubly guilty shame. I am ashamed that it is my people who are in the forefront of every move against your people - ashamed of my father whom I love but who is violent in his hatred of Africans; ashamed of my sister Louisa, who ought to feel nearer your people, but hates them so unreasonably; ashamed of brother's shame for having been classified African; ashamed of my mother's silence when I suspect (I know it!) that she disapproves of their attitudes. And then, Sweetie, sometimes when I listen to them all, I - I - I am ashamed, in a queer way that I hate, of this secret love of ours. Oh!'

Michael drew her close, and then his voice came, softly as if it came out of the grass: 'I don't know if I can make you understand this. But, darling, everybody's trouble is that he is afraid. Everybody! Even you and I.'

'Your father, and that ... that Mr Van Vuuren are afraid their old world is turning over and they will now have to fight for things. And they are not used to fighting. They have too long... too long...' he searched frantically for words that would not hurt her, and at last said weakly, 'too long not fought.'

'Yes. Mike,' she said.

'Your sister, Louisa, is afraid because of this thing that might tear her away from you - all who she loves, and from the comparative safety of your way of life; this thing, this business of becoming an African is nearest to her, seems would soonest catch her in its cruel fingers. More than the fear of your father and Mr Van Vuuren, hers is most likely to become cruel.'

Michael thought about what he was saying for a moment. The significance of his own words was only just becoming clear even to himself.

'But my mother, Mike, I can't understand her silence.'

'I'm not sure I can understand everybody's fear,' Michael said after a moment, 'but, tell me, haven't you ever felt that your mother chooses silence because she doesn't want to say anything that might influence her children?'

'I see, Mike,' Dora said, feeling with her fingers for the hard swelling on his biceps. And my fear is that I know I'm doing just the thing that my mother fears her words might influence us into doing.'

Partly. But, my dear, let's forget all the world's fear. Let's forget even your fear and mine. Between you and I, there is, lying side by side with the fear, a faith. Let's feed the faith. Let's talk of love.

'No, Sweetie, let's not talk of love, let's just lie still in each other's arms, and feel it.'

After a long while he released her, raised her to her feet. 'Tomorrow, three o'clock show at the Rhythmic. Here's your ticket.' He kissed her again.

The headlights of a car on a bend higher up shone on them for a moment. A ghost-like shadow flew out to Noordgesig like a tongue flicked out of a mouth mockingly.

As the driver of the car dipped into the bowl toward the river and the bridge, he said to his companions: 'That guy sure must have a dangerous weapon.'

In their two-room apartment in Sophiatown Michael was again nagging his sister about the one thing that was eating into his peace of mind.

'You keep stalling, dodging me, but do you think it is really in the best interests of the child that you hide its name? After all, I've been thinking of getting married myself...sometime soon...' and his voice trailed off.

'Don't you worry, Mike,' Salome said. 'I've the child's true interest at heart. But there are times when there is good reason for not doing the obvious thing. I assure you the child's father is an honourable man. That is all I can say for the moment. You must trust me.'

Michael looked into the fire in the stove, his mouth twisted into a strained grimace of concentrated thinking.

'I still don't like it,' he said at length. 'What about you, what about your future? However romantic, I don't like the picture of a man who will not stand up to his responsibilities.'

'You don't understand.' And she began to hum one of those catchy songs that fill the streets of Sophiatow now and then for a brief spell.

Michael felt beaten again. He was always beaten in this game. The trouble was that he had full confidence in his sister's intelligence. But this, she was right, he could not understand. He remembered something he had heard somewhere: 'A woman in love is operating at the lowest level of the intellect. He went out.

Meneer Carelse, of the Noordgesig Primary School, leaned over the gate of the school yard and looked for the small group of coloured boys who would be sitting in a circle in a corner of the yard. He called one of them.

'Take my bag and put it into the History classroom,' he said to the sandy-haired, smart-looking youngster who came up to him. He looked at the circle of boys wistfully. He knew what they were doing now during these precious few minutes before lessons started. They were teasing each other in the age-old school tradition.' Probably vulgar, the naughty little scamps, he thought tolerantly as his mind went back to his own school days as a youngster. Then he hurried away to Aunt Sannie's house for that daily cup of coffee.

Meanwhile Freddie Williams, the sandy-haired, smart-looking youngster, sped across the playground to the History classroom. Freddie was not going to miss that morning's session of their little tease-club. But gee! they got Bobby Randolph at last. Freddie had met Dick Peters that morning on their way to school, and that eternal victim of Bobby Randolph's tease-tongue had intimated to Freddie that he had a bombshell with which he was going to blow Bobby to bits and blazers. That is why, as he went flying over the playground, Freddie had shouted to the gang already assembled, 'Wait for me!'

Dick Peters did wait for Freddie. He wanted a full audience, and he wanted to make sure that his friend Freddie was present in case of any fighting.

Freddie was still gasping for breath when Dick stood up, faced Bobby, and exploded his bombshell without finesse or ceremony.

'Your sissy goes with a Naytif!

'You lie!'

'Yes, it's true. I seen her by the bioscope on Saturday. Your sissy goes with a Naytif!'

The gang burst into laughter. Bobby broke loose with such a fierce barrage of blows upon Dick that they both tumbled over onto the ground. Dick did not stand a chance. Bobby's arms were flailing into his face and the blood was spurting out. Dick yelled out with sudden fear and pain.

Meneer Carelse had to push aside the cheering youngsters before he could get at the rolling fighters. He pulled Bobby off and held the two apart.

'What're you fighting for?'

'He hit me first,' Dick said, inconsequently.

'Why did you hit him, Bobby?'

'He says my sister goes with a Naytif.'

'It's true,' Dick shouted. 'I seen them myself on Saturday by the bioscope.'
For a moment Meneer Carelse was stunned by the news. Through his mind rushed with painful vividness the picture of his proposal of marriage to Dora Randolph and the disdainful rejection she had given him. He could see again her lip curling up in contempt. He knew ... he had always known, that she rejected him because of his drinking habits that were notorious in the township but he felt too deeply hurt to admit his weakness.

Suddenly his own lip curled up as a malicious thought darted through his mind. 'To the head you go, both of you,' he said as he dragged them away. After Mr Phillips had taken in the whole story he sent the youngsters off, asking them to report back to him at half-past one when the school dismissed. He told Meneer Carelse to wait a moment as he wanted to talk to him.

'Meneer,' began the head with a pained expression in his eyes, 'it is our duty to hush up the whole cruel affair. You know, we could handle the youngsters, and the matter need not go further than this school.'

'But ... but '

'Yes?'

'But, I think we owe it to the girl's family to tell them of the danger their daughter is putting them in.' Meneer Carelse was most sanctimonious.

Mr Phillips stared at the lean man before him long and hard before he spoke.

'Of course, our interest is just for the good and safety of the family. We do not have,' - with deep emphasis - 'any desire to do them harm. It would not somehow mysteriously happen to be that the whole world knows of it.'

'Really, I must say!' was all Meneer Carelse could manage. Then both men stared silently out of the window. It was a long minute before Mr Phillips could say, 'That will be all, Meneer.'

But it did somehow mysteriously happen that the whole world came to know of it. Dora's disgrace was on everyone's lips. To everybody, except to Dora herself, this was disaster. She decided that it was release from the long months of stolen, forbidden love. And felt a thrill in defiance.

This of course gave added fuel to the wagging tongues. On the bus, within earshot of her father,' one man was heard to remark, 'I learn the brazen hussy doesn't care at all. It just goes to show the government isn't exactly wrong in all cases that it reclassifies back to kaffir.

Old man Randolph winced.

To restore some of the Randolph family honour Dora's brother, Davie, got together a few of his friends who solemnly pledged to put matters right: 'Just wait till we catch him.'

If Michael had seen the group of young coloured lads near the doorway of the Rhythmic Cinema that Saturday, he would not have suspected a thing.

He had decided to take it easy with Dora since he had received her hurriedly scribbled note that the whole thing had cracked, despite her insistence that she 'didn't care a damn.' He had written her that, for some time at least, if they wanted to go to the cinema that they would have to go on separate occasions.

But this was a great picture, he had read about it in the papers and just had to see it. He knew that Dora was going to be there, but he hoped she would understand. At the cinema he saw a group of African fellows gesticulating and arguing heatedly with the manager. He went up to them and found to his annoyance that the film was banned for 'Children under twelve and Natives'.

Suddenly he heard a voice shouting, 'Aw, beat up the blurrie kaffrs!'

As he swung round a coloured chap caught him by the shoulder and hit him on the mouth, cutting his upper lip.

'Davie don't!' came Dora's shriek from somewhere and Michael knew that he had had it.

She appeared before him and faced her brother.

His eyes opened wide. 'So, this is the blurrie bastard! Hey, boys, this is Dora's kaffir!'

They ignored the other Africans who scampered away in all directions, and crowded in on Michael and Dora. Dora turned to Michael and in a fierce but reassuring whisper said, 'I'm with you in this to the end.'

As they closed in, Michael pushed Dora behind him, and faced Davie.

'Look, Davie boy,' he said tersely, 'take my advice and don't do it. I'm not scared of being beaten up; I'm scared of what this will mean. Take my advice, and don't do it.'

'Yefies!' said Davie, 'what does he think he can do - nothing!'

In a flash he kicked Michael in the stomach so that he doubled up.

Someone caught hold of Dora and held her fast. The others jumped upon Michael and rained blows on him in a mad fury. He made no attempt to fight back. Only instinctively he protected his face as best he could. Someone blew a police whistle and the attackers dashed into the maze of byways and alleys of Fordsburg. Michael was out cold.

When he came to, Dora was weeping over him. He tried to lift himself but could not. She helped him up, still crying bitterly. Together they staggered to the bus-stop, off to Sophiatown.

At home Michael fainted again. So, Dora had to explain to his sister what had happened. She introduced herself and began to relate the events exactly as they had happened.

A queer look of amusement came into Salome's face.

'Randolph? Randolph? Randolph you say? And your brother's name is Davie? David Randolph. I've got an idea. You stay here and as soon as Mike is well enough, we'll go and see old Davie, n~?'

For days Salome did not speak about the matter. The two women who loved Michael so much looked after him, nursed him back to health.

Then one Sunday morning Salome said suddenly, 'Look, you two, I think it's time we went to see old Davie. I want a little word with him.'

'Aw, cut it out, I don't want any more trouble,' said Michael.

'Oh, no, there won't be trouble at all. Just a little talk,' Salome said mysteriously.

Dora accompanied them to her home, her heart beating wildly.

They found the whole family at lunch. Even Mr Van Vuuren was there philosophizing expansively.

Davie went pale when he saw the threesome walk in.

Before they could say anything, Salome took over.

'Hello, Davie,' she began. 'Remember me? You beat up my brother because he is in love with your sister. Okay, now I've brought my brother to beat you up because you were in love with his sister. Fair enough?'

'You lie!' Davie said hoarsely.

'I thought you'd say that, so I brought some proof. Where do you suppose I got this handsome picture of yours, Davie? And just in case you deny that one too, I'd like your father to read these flaming letters you once wrote to me.'

She pushed a neatly-tied bundle of letters to the old man, saying tartly, 'And to think I treasured these letters because they came from the only man I ever loved.'

The old man seemed only then to be suddenly galvanized into life.

'Get out! Get out of my house!' he shrieked. Salome kept cool.

'Oh no, you don't. If you get tough, I'll take your son to court for not supporting his child for the last three years.' She turned to her brother. 'Mike, you've been asking me all the time who the father of my child was and I've been silent. I told you it's a man I love, a man who would come into the open if he could but that his circumstances were exceptional. You thought it was a married man. Well, that is the man!' -she pointed a trembling finger at Davie.

The family was stunned. Salome was now heaving with emotion.

The old man grabbed the packet of letters and said, 'You can't prove it.'

Salome laughed out, a hard, cruel laugh.

'There's one letter at home, the one in which your son begged me not to expose him.'

Then Dora's mother spoke out. 'My grandchild! I've got a grandchild!

My God, I must see that child.'

Something in the old lady's voice calmed Salome.

'Yes, mother,' she said softly.

Michael and Dora walked out quietly. She looked into his eyes and said: 'Somehow I think the fear will fade away now.'

Activity 1

Questions for group discussion, or for written work.

1. Why do you think the two lovers are meeting out of town, in the tall grass? (2)
2. In the opening love scenes, does the reader know which race group the two lovers belong to? (1)
3. Why do you think Themba does not reveal the race of the lovers immediately? (3)
4. What does the following quotation tell us about what Dora "wants" in the story, as well as a "problem" in the way of her desires?

- 'They were at it again, Sweetie,' she said between her teeth, 'and what makes me mad is that I cannot fight back anymore.' (4)
5. Dora talks of the same members of her family feel, and Michael talks of fear: what causes these emotions in the story? (3)
6. Identify two words in the extract below that indicate that bullying was accepted at the school: They were teasing each other in the age-old school tradition. Probably vulgar, the naughty little scamps, he thought tolerantly as his mind went back to his own school-days as a youngster. (2)
7. Describe another incident of bullying in the story. (4)
8. What makes Dora's mother finally speak up? (2)
9. Which character's values do you think Themba most admires in this story? (2)
10. Describe the values of the character you mentioned in your answer to Question 9. (4)
11. Do you think bullying should be tolerated in schools? How can it best be prevented? (This question can be done in group discussion). (5)

Forbidden Love

by Can Themba

Can Themba was born on 21 June 1924 in Marabastad, Pretoria, into a family of four. He won a scholarship to study at Fort Hare College, where he received an English degree in 1947. He later obtained a teacher's diploma and taught in Johannesburg's western township areas. In 1960 he started working for *Golden City Post*. He went into voluntary exile in Swaziland in 1963 and in 1966 his writing was banned in South Africa. He died in 1968, in Swaziland.



Can Themba

1. Summary

The story is about two people who loved each other deeply and had to hide their feelings. Michael is black and Dora is coloured. The two lovers are eventually exposed when Dora's little brother, Bobby, is told at his school that his sister is in a relationship with a native. A fight follows and Meneer Carelse (school teacher), who is in love with Dora, finds out. He tries to convince the Principal that her family must be told, and much against the Principal's wishes, he goes to tell the whole community about what they considered a 'scandal'. The irony in the story lies in the fact that Davie (Dora's brother) has had a relationship with Salome (Mike's sister) from which a child was conceived.

2. Title

Forbidden Love refers to a romantic relationship between two individuals which is not approved because of **among others**, religious, cultural, political differences. In this instance it refers to a romantic relationship between Dora and Michael, which is highly discouraged by the 'coloured people' of Noordgesig.

3. Themes

3.1 Fear

The theme of fear is woven throughout the story. Dora's family lives their life in fear, as they feel that they do not want to have any involvement with black people. Their peers' actions and beliefs that make them think that black South Africans are beneath them or are less human than they are.

3.2 Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is when one claims to have certain high standards or beliefs than is the case or doing the opposite of what you say or believe. In the case of this story, Davie had a relationship with Salome (a black woman) and a child was born. Ironically, Davie still considers it appropriate to beat Mike up due to him having a relationship with Dora. This may leave some readers to suggest that Davie, like many other racist people at the time, is a hypocrite.

3.3 Apartheid

Apartheid ('apartness' in the language of Afrikaans) was a system of legislation that upheld segregationist policies against non-white citizens of South Africa. Racism is influenced by the idea that one race is superior to another. Like in the story, the people of Noordgesig (coloureds), referred to black people as 'natives', which is very derogatory. The author also uses the fact that black people are not allowed to attend the cinema for the film that is being shown as yet another example of apartheid.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The setting is during the height of apartheid, in the Western townships of Johannesburg, Sophiatown; the Noordgesig area. The story is told from an omniscient narrator's point of view of his personal experience with apartheid laws.

4.2 Structure and Plot Development

Exposition

The narrator introduces us to the story through two lovers from different racial backgrounds who have to hide in 'tall grass' due to prohibitions on mixed relationships.

Rising Action:

Dora's brother, Davie, with a few of his coloured friends go out looking for Michael. They meet him at the Rhythmic Cinema and beat him. Dora tries to stop them but they are determined to beat him. The other African boys run away and Michael and Dora are left by themselves with the angry crowd of coloured boys.

Climax:

After learning about the story of Michael's beating by Davie and his friends, Salome has an idea of how to end the whole issue. When Michael has healed, Salome exposes the truth that Davie, Dora's brother, is actually the father of her child. Salome even presents evidence in the form of love letters that Davie has written to her. Both families are shocked.

Resolution:

Michael and Dora are no longer living under fear anymore. There is a feeling that the rivalry and the fighting has subsided forever.

4.3 Characterisation

Dora Randolph	• She is loving and caring: • She is overprotective of her younger sister, Louisa. • She loves Michael very deeply. • She takes care of Michael when he was beaten by the young coloured lads (gang). • She is ashamed of how her community treats their black counterparts. • She does not give up on her relationship with Michael.
Michael Chabakeng	• He is considerate: He chooses his words carefully when talking to Dora about her family. • He is very concerned about the identity of his sister, Salome's child. • He is humble and his love for Dora is evident in how he treats her and her family.
Mr Van Vuuren	• He is a racist: He hates black people with a passion.
Louisa	• She is Dora's younger sister. She is a bit darker in complexion than the others. • She does not want to be associated with black people.
Meneer Carelse	• He is bitter: he is driven by bitterness. (an outside influence in the story) • Meneer Carelse tells others that Dora is in a mixed race relationship.
Davie	• He is a hypocrite. • He shares a child with Salome. • He lives in fear that he will be exposed by Salome that he is the father of her child. • He still considers it appropriate to beat Michael up due to him having a relationship with Dora (his sister).
Salome	• She is brave and strong. • She is Michael's sister. • She exposes her relationship with Davie to his family despite their race issues.

4.4 Narrator's point of view

The story is narrated in the third person, by an unnamed narrator. The narrator tells a story using a bird's eye/ omniscient view. This means that the narrator knows everything about the actions, attitude, secrets and even thoughts of all characters. The narrator helps us to understand how fear and shame are relentlessly part of a community that seeks to prove that black people are beneath them in all areas of their being.

4.5 Style

An easy flowing literary style has been used throughout the story. This is maybe, due to the fact that the narrator wants to demonstrate apartheid norms as lived by different racial groups in the townships. This narrative explores deeply into the practices of the apartheid system and its cruel tendencies.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

- The writer uses **idiomatic expressions** in order to emphasise meaning:
e.g. 'This business of becoming an African is nearest to her, seems would soonest catch her in its cruel fingers.'(p11)
The cruelty of the system of apartheid and its separation laws are compared to a cruel monster threatening to catch Louisa.

Some examples of **figures of speech** in the story include:

- **SIMILE:**
 - 'A ghost-like shadow flew out to Noordgesig like a tongue flicked out of a mouth mockingly.'(p12)
Mike slips away in the darkness like a ghost, and the fact that the two lovers met in secret is like a taunting flucking of the tongue to the authorities who prohibit a relationship between them.
- **METAPHOR/ ALLUSION:**
 - He must have seen her for his dark form swam towards her.'(p10)
The movement of the man is slow and flowing like a person swimming.
 - 'Between you and I, there is, lying side by side with the fear, a faith. Let's feed the faith. Let's talk of love.'(p11)
Fear and faith are compared to animals lying side by side. It reminds of the biblical image of the lamb and the lion lying side by side.
 - 'He had a bombshell ...' (p13)
The news Dick Peters has, will have as much shock power to cause pain and destruction, as a bombshell would have if it exploded.
- **PERSONIFICATION:**
 - 'From the bridge the road climbed the hillock and sailed away to Newclare.' (P10)

The road is given human qualities by stating that it wilfully climbs a hill and then goes sailing.

- **IRONY:**

It is ironic that Davie, who has a baby with a black girl, beats up a black boy for having a relationship with his sister.

4.7 Tone and Mood

Tone:

- **Secretive:** there are secrets not told by Salome about the identity of her child's father.
- **Tension:** the community lives in a tense or rather fearful environment whereby black people are treated as inferior to coloureds. and this separated them most of the time. The fact that Dora and Mike having to hide in the bushes for them to be together and being fearful of what the people in the community will say, is gross.

Mood:

- Shame
- Hopelessness
- Fearful
- Optimistic

Activity 1

‘Forbidden Love’

Read the following extract and answer questions which follow:

‘Not here, darling,’ he said hastily, ‘some car-lights may strike upon us.’ He led her higher up the road into the tall grass. Suddenly she caught his coat lapels and dragged him down so that no one could see them. He clambered towards her and curled her into his arms. His lips thrilled upon hers, burningly sweet, and with digging fingertips she tried to find the source of his fire in his spinal column.

Then the flames went out of them, settling into a low glow. She broke away with a sigh. She caught a stalk, put it in her mouth, and turned to look at the scattered lights of Noordgesig.

‘They were at it again, Sweetie,’ she said between her teeth,’ and what makes me mad is that I cannot fight back anymore.’

‘What did they say now?’ Mike asked, a little worried.

‘Mr Van Vuuren was at our place again. It looked almost as if Dad had called him in to preach to us. He spoke about how terribly important it is that we keep away from the ‘Natives’, otherwise we would be associated with them. And his voice had a trick of making that word ‘associated’ sound horrible. But what made me hate him was the way he stared at Louisa as he spoke. I–’

5

10

15

1.1 Choose a description from COLUMN B that matches the name in COLUMN A. Write only the letter (A–D) next to the question number (1.1(a) – 1.1(d)) in the ANSWER BOOK.

COLUMN A	COLUMN B
(a) Mike	A Dora's brother
(b) Davie	B Mike's sister
(c) Salome	C Dora's sister
(d) Louisa	D Dora's boyfriend
	E Mike's brother

(4 x 1) (4)

1.2 Describe the setting of this story. (2)

1.3 Refer to lines 3-4 ‘He clambered towards... curled her into his arms.’

(a) Identify the figure of speech used in these lines. (1)

(b) Explain the meaning of this figure of speech. (2)

1.4 Quote a single word which proves that Dora takes a deep breath. (1)

1.5 Refer to lines 4-5 'His lips thrilled ... his spinal column.'

Choose the correct answer from those given below. Write down only the letter (A – D) next to the question number (1.4 (a)) and the answer in the ANSWER BOOK.

The phrase 'burningly sweet' in this context is an example of...

- A hyperbole.
- B metonymy.
- C oxymoron.
- D sarcasm.

(1)

1.6 What does this extract reveal about Mike's character?

Substantiate your answer.

(2)

1.7 One of the themes in this short story is fear.

Discuss this theme.

(3)

1.8 Davie is a hypocrite.

Discuss your view.

(3)

Can Themba: Forbidden love

1. They were loving in secret because their love was "forbidden".

It was not accepted in Dora's family. (2)

2. No, their race is not mentioned. (1)

3. He wants the reader to get to know them as ordinary human beings, as ordinary lovers. He does not want the reader to bring any stereotypes into the story. (3)

4. She wants her love to be accepted by her family. "They were at it again" suggests that her family is always talking about race, and "I cannot fight back anymore" indicates that she is getting tired of the situation and feels defeated. (4)

5. Shame and fear are both brought about by the race situation, and the legal or social restrictions placed on the lovers being together. (3)

6. "tradition" and "tolerantly" (2)

7. The incident at the bioscope, where Michael, being black, is beaten up by a group of boys for loving Davie's sister (who is coloured) is another incident of bullying. (4)

8. The realisation that she has a grandchild makes Dora's mother finally speak up. (2)

9. These could be Michael, Dora, Salome, or the mother. (2)

10. The core reason in each case would be similar, that is they do not see race as an obstacle to love. (4)

11. This question asks for the opinion of learners. Values of tolerance, diversity, kindness and understanding can all be mentioned, as well as the need for education and communication. (5)

[32]

Mariama Ba: Rejection

1. She wants to study and complete her bac which would allow her to go to university. (2)

2. Her mother is poor, and wants her to marry Modou to "escape from mediocrity", and get a "proper house", a trip to Mecca and wealth. (2)

3. Binetou was a beautiful young adolescent schoolgirl, shy and frail, with faded but clean clothes. She was shy because the family had more wealth than her own family. Afterwards she started to get new and modern clothes, bought by her sugar-daddy (Daba's father). (4)

4. She remains faithful to the love of her youth. If she left him she would have to "start again at zero". (2)

5. In the first visit, they bring the news of the marriage to the narrator, and tell her it is God's will, she can do nothing about it. In the second, she rejects Tamsir's proposal, and emphasizes the importance of choice. After many years of silence, she speaks out. (4)

6. Many points may be raised, of which a few are mentioned. Their role in society; their powerlessness; the power of men, the fact that they have little choice, and that men decide most issues; their need to be home makers; their being led astray by poverty (and being tempted to marry a sugar-daddy). (4)

7. She finally speaks to the men, and tells them her mind. She rejects the marriage proposal, and gives them a talk. (2)

[20]

James Joyce: Eveline

1. In the first three paragraphs of the story Eveline looks out of the window as she remembers her childhood. It is like a window into her past. She remembers the field, and the other children she used to play with, and her father coming to call them. Inside the room she sees the objects she used to dust once a week when she was older, including the photograph of a priest who had left for Australia. She is remembering different times of her life. (4)

2. While she does remember some fun times, a lot of her life has been hard, with work both at home and at the store. She doesn't like working at the store. She has lived in fear of her father's violence, and he seems to have grown increasingly difficult. Her mother's illness and mental problems also trouble her. She has had to look after the two young children after her mother died. (3)

3. Eveline's father has been a cross man, "going for" his sons - probably with physical or verbal violence. He used to carry a blackthorn stick. Now Eveline feels in danger of his violence. He drinks, especially on a Saturday night. He squabbles about money, and was often unreasonable, complaining about Italians, and about sailors. (3)

4. Eveline's new home would include marriage, and the respect that was likely to bring. Frank had a home waiting for her. She thought Frank would save her. Perhaps love her. He would fold her in his arms. Thus, her thoughts about her new home were romantic, and an attempt to escape. (3)

5. The Italian tune reminds her of the last night her mother was alive, and the promise she made to her mother to keep the home together. It reminds her of her mother's life and death. (2)

6. The life of her mother is very influential on Eveline's thinking. Her mother had had no respect, and Eveline wants to be respected. Also the "pitiful vision of her mother's life", and the sacrifices her mother made, frighten her. Her mother's life ended in craziness. Eveline wants to avoid having the life her mother had. By contrast, she wants to live, and be happy. (3)

7. There is no real evidence of strong love in the text. First she was glad to have a boyfriend then she started to "like" him. Later she thinks "He would give her life, perhaps love", and finally when she does not board the ship she gives him no sign of love. Thus her relationship is not based on love. (3)

8. She is supposed to steam across the sea with Frank, but the inner seas tumble about her heart, as though there is a storm or tempest there. She feels as if Frank would drown her, and she cries from "Amid the seas". Thus, the seas become an internal barrier she cannot cross. (4)

[25]

Agnes Sam: A bag of sweets

1. Khadija, from an Islamic family, has married a Christian man, although she has not herself converted. (2)

2. Most of the story is set in the family shop, because Khadija does not go to the home. She comes when the brothers go to mosque on Fridays. (2)

3. The marriage has been against their religion, and without the approval of the parents, who would not forgive the daughter. The parents have since died. (2)

4. She enters the shop and speaks as if there is no problem. She behaves as if nothing happened, and -- when the sister ignores her -- she simply carries on speaking. (3)

5. It is an insult: the cheap sweets can signify that the giver wants to make the receiver feel cheap. In this way, she won't come back. (3)

6. No; or not outwardly. She does not show any signs of softening. (2)

7. She actually waits for her sister. This shows she is conflicted, and might be softening. However, this might be too late, as the sister does not come back. (2)

[16]

Namhla Tshisana: Class act

1. She feels uncomfortable at school because she cannot speak Afrikaans and because other learners tease her about her clothes. She wants to feel comfortable, or she wants to be finished with school. (2)

2. She cannot be out of school because of her age; and her tunic does not fit well because her mother bought a size bigger than she needs, making her embarrassed. (2)

3. She wants her mother to get her a skirt instead of a tunic; her mother and her aunt consider adjusting the hem of the tunic, and she brings cotton, but can only find white cotton. (2)

4. No, her aunt won't use white cotton; her sister is away. When her sister returns, she makes the tunic very short, and then people laugh at her for that. She feels humiliated. (2)

5. She doesn't really get things done, and she is a bit too fussy to do the hemming with white cotton. (2)

6. Ayanda makes the tunic very short, and she is laughed at for that. (2)

7. She thinks she should accept being teased. The resolution is not one of change, therefore, but rather an acceptance of the situation. (3)

8. This discussion can be an extension activity. In this discussion, focus,

perhaps, on the harm done to the victim, and what can be done to make learners who are bullies more aware of the harm that bullying can cause. (5)

[20]

Bessie Head: The wind and a boy

1. Men become dull and ordinary; they drank beer and "made babies". (2)
2. The wind is free, and like magic. It is linked to the freedom of their young lives. (2)
3. Her children were grown and married, and Friedman was the son of an unmarried daughter. Friedman was the last child she would nurse, she is old: he is a "gift to keep her heart warm". (3)
4. Your opinion: perhaps she wants him to be happy, well and successful; helpful to the community. Discuss and share opinions. (3)
5. He has some naughtiness that the other children see, but that the adults did not always see. (2)
6. The story of Robinson Crusoe that his grandmother told him inspired him to want to help the community. (2)
7. The grandmother made it up. (1)
8. The turning point is when Friedman is killed. (1)
9. She is hospitalized and becomes incoherent: she soon dies. (1)
10. The new civil-servants who wanted cars to match their status did not usually drive well, and there were more of them coming due to the country's independence, so they expected more accidents. (3)

[20]

Ama Ata Aidoo: The girl who can

1. She became quiet because her mother and grandmother used to laugh at things she said, or tell her never to say them again. (2)
2. Her legs were considered to be too long and too thin. (1)
3. Nana thought her legs should be solid enough, and with such hips, that she could bear children. (2)
4. Yes, they both became very proud of Adjoa's running successes, and start to admire her legs(3)
5. Nana did not see the point of school. However, Maami had not been to school herself, but thought it might help Adjoa. She herself felt she was "in darkness" and that she might have been able to marry if she had been to school. (4)
6. The grandmother was proud of her, so she began to wash and starch the uniform herself. (2)
7. She did not try to explain her running. They laughed when she tried to explain things, so she felt better with it happening in action: that she could show them her success. (4)

8. No, she did not plan to show them. It had just happened.

9. Discussion topic.

(5)

[24]

Kedibone Sek: Triumph in the face of adversity

1. "Empty" is a metaphor for the disappointment and pointlessness she found in her life: all her dreams had to be put aside, and she suffered.

She became a victim of her husband, and a "punching bag". (2)

2. Her mother had wanted to continue with her studies and become an actress. (1)

3. She had to bury her dreams and become a "good wife", dressing conservatively and doing housework. (2)

4. They moved to the squatter camp to get away from MaDlamini, the mother-in-law, who was very intolerant. It was supposed to be a temporary move, but they stayed there. (2)

5. The squatter camp had terrible living conditions, with communal toilets and water standing between the houses. There was no garbage removal, and no electricity. (3)

6. The father became frustrated because he could not get work, and he started to beat the mother. Her smile disappeared, and her cheerfulness was replaced by fear. (3)

7. She felt that the teacher was making a mockery of her. Whether it was right or not is a matter for discussion, but it should be noted that he was trying to help, and that the woman who did help her, Mme Sadike, told her the same thing. It is probable that the author wishes us to see that it was an over-reaction. (3)

8. Her father kept stealing her money. (1)

9. She opened a post bank account to keep her money in. (1)

10. The narrator returns to the graveside at the end of the story because the main part of the story is all a flashback. It brings us up to date. Also, it contrasts the mother's situation with her own, her empty life and death are contrasted with the daughter's life and opportunity. (2)

[20]