

GRADE 12 ENGLISH FAL

REJECTION

by Mariama Bâ

SHORT STORY REVISION

When betrayal becomes a turning point.



♥ Miss Queenie ♥

REJECTION

AUTHOR & STORY OVERVIEW

*Different
Voices
A Brighter
Tomorrow*

ABOUT MARIAMA BÂ



- ♥ Senegalese writer, teacher and women's rights activist, born in 1929.
- ♥ She attended a French primary school and struggled against traditional opposition to girls' education.
- ♥ Her writing explores women's suffering, marriage, inequality and independence.
- ♥ She wrote in French and became active in women's organisations.
- ♥ Her best-known novel is "So Long a Letter", from which "Rejection" is extracted.
- ♥ She died in 1981.

"A woman's story is a powerful story."

STORY OVERVIEW

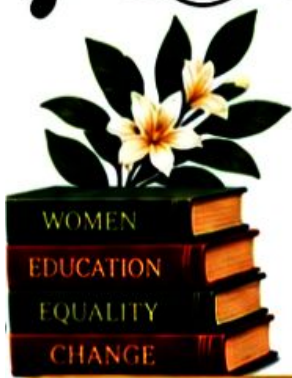


Written as a letter to her friend Aissatou, the story follows a Senegalese narrator whose husband, Modou, secretly marries Binetou — their daughter Daba's young school friend — after twenty-five years of marriage and twelve children. The betrayal leaves the narrator shocked and rejected, but she quietly maintains her dignity. After Modou's death, his brother Tamsir arrogantly announces that he will marry her. This time she breaks thirty years of silence, rejects him and declares that she is a person with a heart and mind, not an object to be passed from man to man.

KEY CONTEXT: The story is set in an Islamic Senegalese society where polygamy is permitted under certain conditions. Mariama Bâ criticises betrayal, greed and the denial of women's freedom of choice.



FORM: Epistolary narrative — a story written in the form of a letter.



REJECTION

PLOT SUMMARY

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EXPOSITION

The narrator has been married to Modou for twenty-five years and has twelve children. Their daughter Daba often brings her school friend Binetou home.



RIISING ACTION

Binetou begins receiving expensive clothes from a mysterious "sugar-daddy". Her poor mother pressures her to accept his marriage proposal in exchange for a villa, money and comfort.



THE BETRAYAL

Tamsir, Mawdo Ba and the Imam visit the narrator. They reveal that Modou has secretly married a second wife. The narrator discovers that the young bride is Binetou — her daughter's school friend.



INNER STRUGGLE

The narrator hides her distress from the visitors. Alone, she reflects on Modou's deception, her years of devotion and whether she should leave after twenty-five years and twelve children.



SECOND CRISIS

After Modou's death, Tamsir visits during the mourning period. He arrogantly announces that he will marry the narrator, as though she has no choice.



CLIMAX & RESOLUTION

After thirty years of silence, the narrator speaks out. She declares that she has a heart and mind, rejects Tamsir's proposal and refuses to be treated as an object.

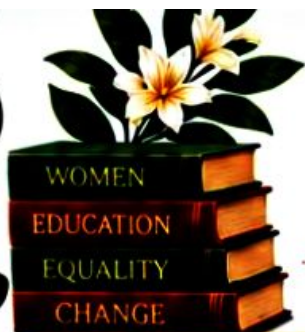


PLOT MOVEMENT: Trust → Betrayal → Pain → Reflection → Resistance → Empowerment



TURNING POINT: The narrator's firm words — "I shall never be your wife."





REJECTION

CHARACTERS & CHARACTERISATION

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1



THE NARRATOR



A Senegalese wife and mother of twelve. After twenty-five years of marriage, Modou betrays and abandons her. She is loving, dignified and reflective, but finally becomes assertive and rejects Tamsir.

DEVOTED • DIGNIFIED • RESILIENT • ASSERTIVE

2



MODOU FALL

The narrator's husband. He secretly marries the much younger Binetou and deceives his family. He is selfish, dishonest and irresponsible.

DECEPTIVE • SELFISH • UNFAITHFUL

3



BINETOU

Daba's young school friend and Modou's second wife. Her mother pressures her to marry for money and comfort. She is vulnerable and becomes a victim of poverty and adult greed.

YOUNG • PRESSURED • VULNERABLE

4



DABA

The narrator's daughter and Binetou's school friend. She is observant, outspoken and fiercely loyal to her mother. She urges her mother to leave Modou.

LOYAL • ANGRY • OUTSPOKEN

5



TAMSIR

Modou's elder brother. Soon after Modou's death, he assumes that the narrator will marry him. He is arrogant, insensitive and controlled by patriarchal ideas.

ARROGANT • INSENSITIVE • PATRIARCHAL



SUPPORTING CHARACTERS



AISSATOU

The narrator's trusted friend and the recipient of her letter; she previously chose independence after a similar betrayal.



MAWDO BA

Aissatou's former husband; he understands the narrator's pain and remains uneasy during the announcements.



THE IMAM

Helps announce Modou's second marriage and later witnesses Tamsir's proposal.



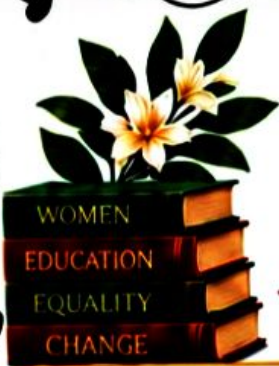
BINETOU'S MOTHER

Pressures her daughter to marry Modou to escape poverty.



IMPORTANT CONTRAST: The narrator grows from controlled silence to a powerful voice, while Tamsir expects women to obey without choosing.





REJECTION

SETTING & CONFLICT

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SETTING

1



SENEGAL

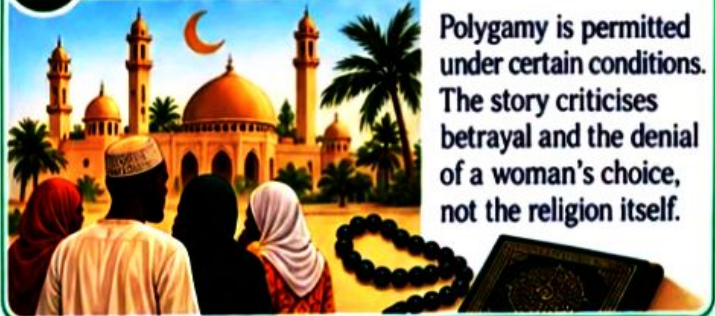


The story takes place in a French-speaking West African country where modern education exists alongside strong family, religious and cultural traditions.

2



AN ISLAMIC COMMUNITY



Polygamy is permitted under certain conditions. The story criticises betrayal and the denial of a woman's choice, not the religion itself.

3



THE NARRATOR'S HOME



The home first represents marriage, devotion and family stability. It later becomes the place where painful news is delivered and where the narrator finally speaks out.

4



A SOCIETY OF INEQUALITY



Poverty pressures Binetou into marriage, while patriarchal customs allow men to make decisions that deeply affect women.

CONFLICT

1

PERSON vs PERSON



The narrator is betrayed by Modou and later confronts Tamsir when he assumes that she will marry him.

2

PERSON vs SOCIETY



She resists customs and attitudes that treat women as possessions rather than people with freedom of choice.

3

PERSON vs SELF



She struggles with shock, grief, love, rejection and the difficult question of whether to leave her marriage.

4

POVERTY vs CHOICE



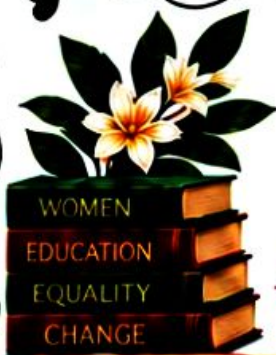
Binetou's mother pressures her to sacrifice education and youth for financial security.



CENTRAL CONFLICT: A woman's dignity and freedom struggle against betrayal, greed and patriarchal control.

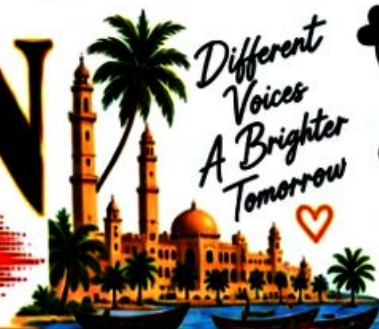


Stories Inspire Change



REJECTION

KEY THEMES



1 ♥ BETRAYAL & REJECTION ♥



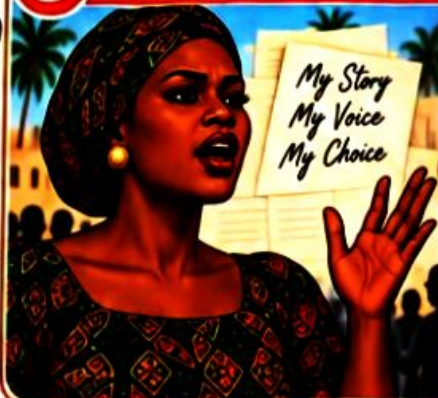
Modou betrays his devoted wife by secretly marrying Binetou. The narrator experiences emotional rejection, but later reverses the power by rejecting Tamsir.

2 ♥ GENDER INEQUALITY ♥



Men make life-changing decisions while expecting women to accept them silently. The narrator challenges the belief that women are possessions.

3 ♥ VOICE & EMPOWERMENT ♥



After thirty years of silence, the narrator speaks openly and firmly. Her rejection of Tamsir becomes an act of self-respect and independence.

4 ♥ POVERTY & MATERIALISM ♥



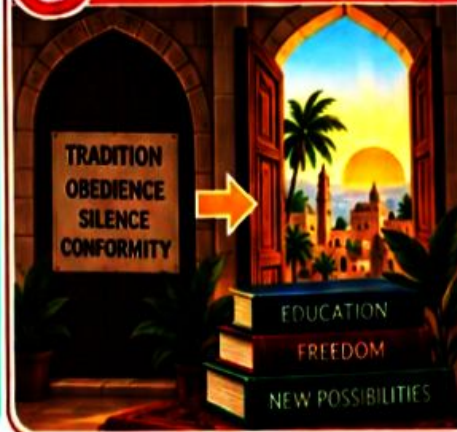
Binetou's mother values the villa, money and social advancement more than her daughter's education and youth. Poverty limits Binetou's freedom to choose.

5 ♥ MARRIAGE, LOVE & CHOICE ♥



The narrator believes marriage should be an act of faith and love between two people who choose each other. Modou and Tamsir ignore this ideal.

6 ♥ TRADITION vs CHANGE ♥



Traditional expectations demand obedience, but educated women such as the narrator, Aissatou and Daba question unfair customs and seek greater freedom.



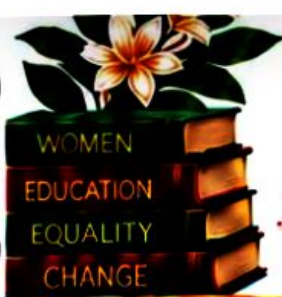
IMPORTANT MESSAGE:

A woman has a heart, a mind and the right to choose her own future. ♥



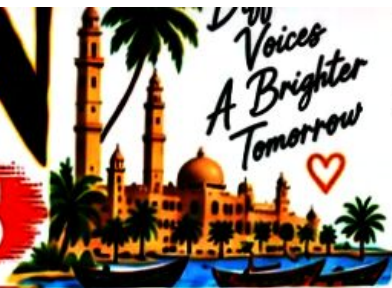
EXAM TIP:

Name the theme, explain it and support it with a specific event or quotation from the story. 



REJECTION

LITERARY DEVICES



1 FIRST-PERSON NARRATION

EXAMPLE:

"My own crisis came three years after your own."

EFFECT:

The use of 'I' and 'my' makes the narrator's pain personal, honest and emotionally immediate.



2 EPISTOLARY FORM

EXAMPLE:

The narrator tells her story as a letter to her trusted friend, Aissatou.

EFFECT:

The letter creates an intimate, confessional tone and allows her to reflect freely on marriage and society.



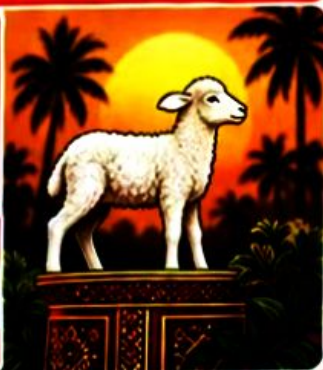
3 METAPHOR

EXAMPLE:

Binetou was 'a lamb slaughtered on the altar of affluence'.

EFFECT:

Binetou is presented as an innocent sacrifice whose youth and education are exchanged for wealth.



4 SIMILE

EXAMPLE:

The narrator asks about Modou 'with the cry of a hunted beast'.

EFFECT:

The comparison shows her sudden terror, helplessness and emotional shock.



5 IRONY

EXAMPLE:

Tamsir criticised Modou's second marriage, yet soon after Modou's death he expects the narrator to become another one of his wives.

EFFECT:

This exposes Tamsir's hypocrisy, selfishness and lack of respect for women.



6 RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

EXAMPLE:

"Leave? Start again at zero?" and "Why did Modou detach himself?"

EFFECT:

The unanswered questions reveal the narrator's confusion, pain and inner struggle.



BONUS DEVICE – CONTRAST:

The narrator's controlled silence when Modou remarries contrasts with her powerful outburst when Tamsir proposes. This shows her growth.

26

EXAM FORMULA: Identify the device + give the example + explain its effect in the story

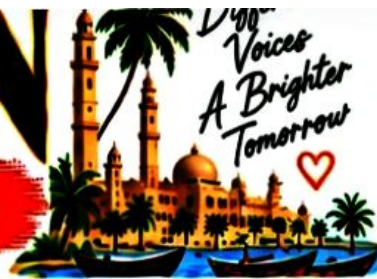
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REJECTION

TONE & MOOD



TONE = the writer's or narrator's attitude

MOOD = the feeling created in the reader

TONE

MOOD

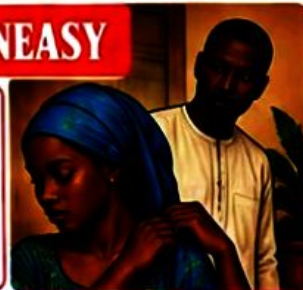
1 REFLECTIVE

The narrator looks back on twenty-five years of marriage, examines her own actions and tries to understand why Modou betrayed her.



1 CALM BUT UNEASY

Binetou's changing clothes and Modou's growing interest create suspicion beneath ordinary family life.



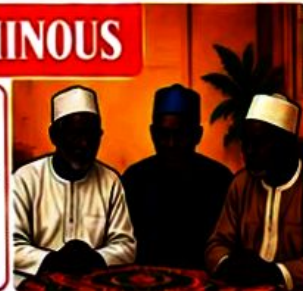
2 PAINED & SORROWFUL

Her description of betrayal, rejection and a wound that 'continues to bleed' reveals deep emotional suffering.



2 TENSE & OMINOUS

The solemn visitors, their careful words and the narrator's questions suggest that painful news is coming.



3 CRITICAL

The story challenges greed, gender inequality and customs that allow women to be treated as possessions.



3 SHOCKING & HEARTBREAKING

The revelation that Modou has married Binetou creates betrayal, humiliation and distress.



4 SARCASTIC & DEFIANT

When Tamsir proposes, the narrator mocks his selfish plans and firmly declares that she will never be his wife.



4 POWERFUL & TRIUMPHANT

The narrator finally speaks out, rejects Tamsir and takes control of her own future.



MOOD MOVEMENT IN THE STORY:

Suspicion → Tension → Shock → Grief → Anger → Empowerment

EXAM TIP:

Name the tone or mood, then support it with the narrator's words, thoughts or actions.

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REJECTION

IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS

Do Your
Voices
A Brighter
Tomorrow

1

"None of that is worth the capital of youth."

VOICE: The narrator

MEANING:

Youth and education are more valuable than money, gifts or social status. The narrator believes Binetou should refuse the marriage.



2

"Binetou, like many others, was a lamb slaughtered on the altar of affluence."

VOICE: The narrator

MEANING:

The metaphor presents Binetou as an innocent victim sacrificed for her family's desire for wealth.



3

"But the final decision lay with me."

VOICE: The narrator

MEANING:

Although society places pressure on her, she recognises that she has the power to choose her response and future.



4

"Mine continues to bleed."

VOICE: The narrator

MEANING:

Her emotional wound remains painful. The metaphor shows that betrayal has lasting effects.



5

"You forget that I have a heart, a mind, that I am not an object to be passed from hand to hand."

SPEAKER: The narrator to Tamsir

MEANING:

She demands recognition as a complete human being with feelings, intelligence and freedom of choice.



6

"I shall never be your wife."

SPEAKER: The narrator to Tamsir

MEANING:

Her direct refusal is the climax of the story and shows courage, self-respect and empowerment.



QUOTES TO REMEMBER: YOUTH • SACRIFICE • CHOICE • PAIN • DIGNITY • EMPOWERMENT

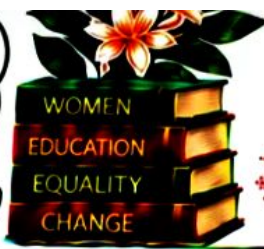


EXAM TIP:

Introduce the quote, explain its context and connect it to a character or theme.

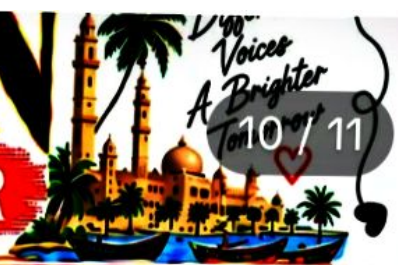


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REJECTION

VOCABULARY BUILDER



1 BACCALAURÉAT

MEANING:

A final school qualification in French-speaking countries, similar to a matric certificate needed for university study.



2 METAMORPHOSIS

MEANING:

A major change or transformation in appearance or character.



3 AFFLUENCE

MEANING:

The state of having a great deal of money, comfort and possessions.



4 ACQUIESCED

MEANING:

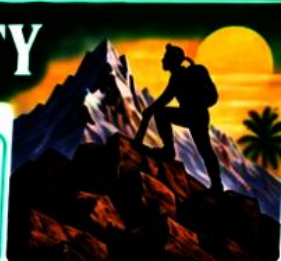
Accepted or agreed to something quietly, without protesting.



5 TENACITY

MEANING:

Determination and persistence; refusing to give up.



6 FICKLE

MEANING:

Likely to change feelings or loyalty suddenly and often.



7 CONDESCENSION

MEANING:

Behaviour that shows one believes one is better or more important than others.



8 FLOUTED

MEANING:

Openly disobeyed or showed no respect for a rule or accepted standard.



9 APLOMB

MEANING:

Great confidence and calmness, especially in a difficult situation.



10 PROFANE

MEANING:

Not respectful of religion or something considered sacred.



USEFUL STORY TERMS:

POLYGAMY

— a marriage system in which a person may have more than one spouse.

EPISTOLARY

— written in the form of letters.

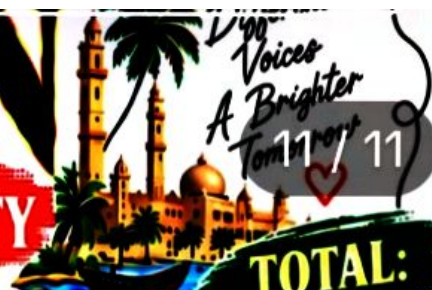
CAN YOU USE IT?

The narrator speaks with aplomb and rejects Tamsir's condescending proposal.



REJECTION

NSC-STYLE REVISION ACTIVITY



**TOTAL:
18 MARKS**



Read the short extract and answer ALL the questions.
Number your answers correctly and use full sentences where required.



TAMSIR: When you have 'come out' of mourning, I shall marry you. You suit me as a wife.

NARRATOR: You forget that I have a heart, a mind, that I am not an object to be passed from hand to hand. ... I shall never be your wife.

- | | | |
|-------------|---|-----|
| 1.1 | Whose death is the narrator mourning? | (1) |
| 1.2 | Why does Tamsir believe that he may marry the narrator?
A She has already accepted him
B Custom allows a male relative to inherit a widow
C Daba asks him to marry her
D Modou requested it in a letter | (1) |
| 1.3 | Identify the narrator's tone in the words, "I shall never be your wife." | (1) |
| 1.4 | Give TWO reasons why Tamsir's proposal is insensitive. | (2) |
| 1.5 | State ONE character trait shown by Tamsir in this extract. Support your answer. | (2) |
| 1.6 | Explain the meaning and effect of the metaphor, "an object to be passed from hand to hand". | (2) |
| 1.7 | Explain the irony in Tamsir's criticism of Modou's second marriage. | (2) |
| 1.8 | How has the narrator changed from the day Modou's second marriage was announced to this confrontation with Tamsir? | (2) |
| 1.9 | Discuss why the title "Rejection" is suitable. Refer to TWO forms of rejection in the story. | (2) |
| 1.10 | The narrator's rejection of Tamsir is an act of empowerment. Do you agree? Substantiate your answer. | (2) |



REMEMBER:

One mark usually requires one clear fact. Support longer answers with evidence from the story.

