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CAPS

Mind the Gap!

English First Additional Language Paper 2: Literature

A Grain of Wheat

Study Guide

Grade 12

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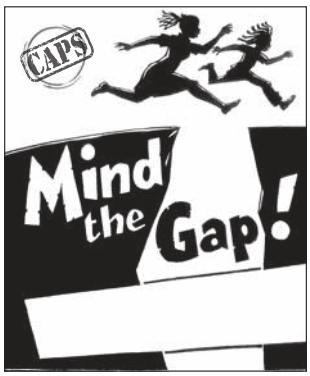

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Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) Grade 12 English First Additional Language Mind the Gap study guide for the novel *A Grain of Wheat* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o
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The first edition of the series published in 2012 for the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) Grade 12 Mind the Gap study guides for Accounting, Economics, Geography and Life Sciences; the second edition of the series, published in 2014, aligned these titles to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and added more titles to the series, including the CAPS Grade 12 English First Additional Language **Mind the Gap study guide for the novel *A Grain of Wheat* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o**.

Acknowledgements

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Ministerial foreword

Matsie Angelina Motshekga, MP
Minister of Basic Education

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has pleasure in releasing the second edition of the Mind the Gap study guides for Grade 12 learners. These study guides continue the innovative and committed attempt by the DBE to improve the academic performance of Grade 12 candidates in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination.

The study guides have been written by teams of exerts comprising teachers, examiners, moderators, subject advisors and coordinators. Research, which began in 2012, has shown that the *Mind the Gap* series has, without doubt, had a positive impact on grades. It is my fervent wish that the *Mind the Gap* study guides take us all closer to ensuring that no learner is left behind, especially as we celebrate 20 years of democracy.

The second edition of *Mind the Gap* is aligned to the 2014 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This means that the writers have considered the National Policy pertaining to the programme, promotion requirements and protocols for assessment of the National Curriculum Statement for Grade 12 in 2014.

The *Mind the Gap* CAPS study guides take their brief in part from the 2013 National Diagnostic report on learner performance and draw on the Grade 12 Examination Guidelines. Each of the *Mind the Gap* study guides defines key terminology and offers simple explanations and examples of the types of questions learners can expect to be asked in an exam. Marking memoranda are included to assist learners to build their understanding. Learners are also referred to specific questions from past national exam papers and examination memos that are available on the Department's website – www.education.gov.za.

The CAPS editions include Accounting, Economics, Geography, Life Sciences, Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy and Physical Sciences. The series is produced in both English and Afrikaans. There are also nine English First Additional Language (EFAL) study guides. These include EFAL Paper 1 (Language in Context); EFAL Paper 3 (Writing) and a guide for each of the Grade 12 prescribed literature set works included in Paper 2. These are Short Stories, Poetry, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *A Grain of Wheat*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Nothing but the Truth* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Please remember when preparing for Paper 2 that you need only study the set works you did in your EFAL class at school.

The study guides have been designed to assist those learners who have been underperforming due to a lack of exposure to the content requirements of the curriculum and aim to mind-the-gap between failing and passing, by bridging the gap in learners' understanding of commonly tested concepts, thus helping candidates to pass.

All that is now required is for our Grade 12 learners to put in the hours required to prepare for the examinations. Learners, make us proud – study hard. We wish each and every one of you good luck for your Grade 12 examinations.

Matsie Angelina Motshekga, MP
Minister of Basic Education
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Dear Grade 12 learner

This *Mind the Gap* study guide helps you to prepare for the end-of-year Grade 12 English First Additional Language (EFAL) Literature exam.

There are three exams for EFAL: Paper 1: Language in Context; Paper 2: Literature; and Paper 3: Writing.

There are nine great EFAL *Mind the Gap* study guides which cover Papers 1, 2 and 3.

Paper 2: Literature includes the study of novels, drama, short stories and poetry. A *Mind the Gap* study guide is available for each of the prescribed literature titles. Choose the study guide for the set works you studied in your EFAL class at school.

This study guide focuses on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel *A Grain of Wheat*, one of the set works in Paper 2: Literature.

How to use this study guide

In the introduction to the guide (pages 1 to 18), you find out about the author and the current events that influenced him. There is also an overview of how the story is told.

From page 19 to 92, you can work through each chapter in the novel understanding:

- The characters;
- The themes;
- The symbols; and
- Diction and figurative language used to tell the story.

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

NB	Pay special attention	e.g.	Worked examples
hint	Hints to help you remember a concept or guide you in solving problems		Activities with questions for you to answer

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Top 7 study tips

1. Break your learning up into manageable sections. This will help your brain to focus. Take short breaks between studying one section and going onto the next.

2. Have all your materials ready before you begin studying a section – pencils, pens, highlighters, paper, glass of water, etc.

3. Be positive. It helps your brain hold on to the information.

4. Your brain learns well with colours and pictures. Try to use them whenever you can.

5. Repetition is the key to remembering information you have to learn. Keep going over the work until you can recall it with ease.

6. Teach what you are learning to anyone who will listen. It is definitely worth reading your revision notes aloud.

7. Sleeping for at least eight hours every night, eating healthy food and drinking plenty of water are all important things you need to do for your brain. Studying for exams is like exercise, so you must be prepared physically as well as mentally.

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On the exam day

1. Make sure you bring pens that work, sharp pencils, a rubber and a sharpener. Make sure you bring your ID document and examination admission letter. Arrive at the exam venue at least an hour before the start of the exam.

2. Go to the toilet before entering the exam room. You don't want to waste valuable time going to the toilet during the exam.

3. You must know at the start of the exam which two out of the four sections of the Paper 2 Literature exam you will be answering. Use the 10 minutes' reading time to read the instructions carefully.

4. Break each question down to make sure you understand what is being asked. If you don't answer the question properly you won't get any marks for it. Look for the key words in the question to know how to answer it. You will find a list of question words on page xiv of this study guide.

5. Manage your time carefully. Start with the question you think is the easiest. Check how many marks are allocated to each question so you give the right amount of information in your answer.

6. Remain calm, even if the question seems difficult at first. It will be linked with something you have covered. If you feel stuck, move on and come back if time allows. Do try and answer as many questions as possible.

7. Take care to write neatly so the examiners can read your answers easily.

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Overview of the English First Additional Language Paper 2: Literature Exam

In the **Paper 2 Literature** exam, you need to answer questions from two sections. Choose the two sections that you know best:

- Section A: Novel
- Section B: Drama
- Section C: Short stories
- Section D: Poetry

A total of **70 marks** is allocated for Paper 2, which means **35 marks for each section you choose**.

You will have **two hours** for this exam.

Here is a summary of the Paper 2 Literature exam paper:

Question number	Title of novel	Type of question	Number of marks
Section A: Novel *If you choose Section A, answer ONE question. Choose the question for the book you have learnt.*			
1	*To Kill a Mockingbird*	Contextual	35
2	*Lord of the Flies*	Contextual	35
3	*A Grain of Wheat*	Contextual	35
Section B: Drama *If you choose Section B, answer ONE question. Choose the question for the play you have learnt.*			
4	*Romeo and Juliet*	Contextual	35
5	*Nothing but the Truth*	Contextual	35
Section C: Short stories *If you choose Section C, answer BOTH questions. You will not know exactly which short stories are included until the exam. TWO stories will be set. Answer the questions set on BOTH short stories.*			
6.1	Short story	Contextual	17 or 18
6.2	Short story	Contextual	17 or 18
Section D: Poetry *If you choose Section D, answer BOTH questions. You will not know exactly which poems are included until the exam. TWO poems will be set. Answer the questions set on BOTH poems.*			
7.1	Poem 1	Contextual	17 or 18
7.2	Poem 2	Contextual	17 or 18

NB

- You don't have to answer all the sections in Paper 2.
- Before the exam starts you must know which two sections you are going to answer.
- When the exam starts, find your two chosen sections.
- Make sure to number your answers correctly – according to the numbering system used in the exam paper – for the two sections you've chosen.
- Start each section on a new page.

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What is a contextual question?

In a contextual question, you are given an extract (about 25–30 lines) from the novel. You then have to answer questions based on the extract. Some answers you can find in the extract. Other questions will test your understanding of other parts of the novel: its story, characters, symbols and themes. Some questions ask for your own opinion about the novel.

What are the examiners looking for?

Examiners will assess your answers to the contextual questions based on:

- Your understanding of the **literal** meaning of the novel. You need to identify information that is clearly given in the novel.
- Your ability to **reorganise** information in the novel. For example, you may be asked to summarise key points, or state the similarities or differences between two characters.
- Your ability to provide information that may not be clearly stated in the text, using what you already know about the novel. This process is called **inference**. This may include explaining how a figure of speech affects your understanding of the novel, explaining themes or comparing the actions of different characters.
- Your ability to make judgements about aspects of the novel, and make your own opinions based on information given in the novel. This process is called **evaluation**. For example, you may be asked if you agree with a statement, or to discuss a character's motive for doing something.
- Your ability to respond to the characters in the novel and how it is written on an emotional level. This is called **appreciation**. For example, you may be asked how you think a certain character feels, or what you would have done if you were in their situation. You may be asked to discuss how the writer's style helps to describe what a character is feeling.

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Question words

Here are examples of question types found in the exam.

Question type	What you need to do
Literal: *Questions about information that is clearly given in the text or extract from the text*	
Name characters/places/things ...	Write the specific names of characters, places, etc.
State the facts/reasons/ideas ...	Write down the information without any discussion or comments.
Give two reasons for/why ...	Write two reasons (this means the same as 'state').
Identify the character/reasons/theme ...	Write down the character's name, state the reasons.
Describe the place/character/what happens when ...	Write the main characteristics of something, for example: What does a place look/feel/smell like? Is a particular character kind/rude/aggressive ...
What does character x do when ...	Write what happened – what the character did.
Why did character x do ...	Given reasons for the character's action according to your knowledge of the plot.
Who is/did ...	Write the name of the character.
To whom does xx refer ...	Write the name of the relevant character/person.
Reorganisation: *Questions that need you to bring together different pieces of information in an organised way.*	
Summarise the main points/ideas ...	Write the main points, without a lot of detail.
Group the common elements ...	Join the same things together.
Give an outline of	Write the main points, without a lot of detail.
Inference *Questions that need you to* ***interpret*** *(make meaning of) the text using information that may not be clearly stated. This process involves thinking about what happened in different parts of the text; looking for clues that tell you more about a character, theme or symbol; and using your own knowledge to help you understand the text.*	
Explain how this idea links with the theme x ...	Identify the links to the theme.
Compare the attitudes/actions of character x with character y ...	Point out the similarities and differences.
What do the words ... suggest/reveal about /what does this situation tell you about ...	State what you think the meaning is, based on your understanding of the text.
How does character x react when .... **Describe how** something affected ... **State how** you know that character x is ...	Write down the character's reaction/what the character did/felt.
What did character x mean by the expression ...	Explain why the character used those particular words.
Is the following statement **true or false**?	Write 'true' or 'false' next to the question number. You must give a reason for your answer.
Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence (multiple choice question).	A list of answers is given, labelled A–D. Write only the letter (A, B, C or D) next to the question number.
Complete the following sentence by filling in the missing words ...	Write the missing word next to the question number.
Quote a line from the extract to prove your answer.	Write the relevant line of text using the same words and punctuation you see in the extract. Put quotation marks (" " inverted commas) around the quote.

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Evaluation *Questions that require you to make a judgement based on your knowledge and understanding of the text and your own experience.*	
Discuss your view/a character's feelings/a theme ...	Consider all the information and reach a conclusion.
Do you think that ...	There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer to these questions, but you must give a reason for your opinion based on information given in the text.
Do you agree with ...	
In your opinion, what ...	
Give your views on ...	
Appreciation *Questions that ask about your emotional response to what happens, the characters and how it is written.*	
How would you feel if you were character x when ...	There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer to these questions, but you must give a reason for your opinion based on information given in the text.
Discuss your response to ...	
Do you feel sorry for ...	
Discuss the use of the writer's style, diction and figurative language, dialogue ...	To answer this type of question, ask yourself: Does the style help me to feel/imagine what is happening/what a character is feeling? Why/why not? Give a reason for your answer.

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Vocabulary for *A Grain of Wheat*

Kenyan words and phrases

There are many Kenyan words and phrases in the novel. Here is a list with their meanings in English.

Kenyan words

Agikuyu: an ancient name for Kenya (Chapter 2)

Askari: soldier, or guard (as in security guard) (Chapter 13)

Gakaraku, micege, mikengeria, bangi: Kenyan names for plants (Chapter 1)

Gikuyu: name of a Kenyan tribe (Ngũgĩ belongs to this tribe)

Harambee: unity or working together

Hodi: May I come in? (Chapter 2)

Irimu: evil spirit (Chapter 9)

Jembe: a gardening tool for digging (Chapter 1)

Masai: name of a Kenyan tribe (Chapter 3)

Mbwa kali: a vicious dog (Chapter 12)

Miengu: leather skirts (Chapter 14)

Mithuru: long skirts (Chapter 14)

Mwenanyaga: a bright one (a name for God) (Chapter 3)

Muthuo, Mucung'wa, Ndumo: names for Kenyan dances (Chapter 14)

Panga: a tool for cutting plants (Chapter 1)

Pyrethrum: a flower used for making insecticide (Chapter 8)

Shamba: a small piece of land (Chapter 1)

Shauri: argument (Chapter 4)

Sufuria: a cooking pot (Chapter 1)

Tanganyika: name for Tanzania during the colonial era (Chapter 11)

Uhuru: freedom, independence (Chapter 1)

Thingira: hut (Chapter 4)

Wiyathi: freedom (Chapter 3)

Kenyan sayings

Agu and agu: from the time of our ancestors (Chapter 6)

Aspro ni dawa Kweli: Aspro is real medicine (Chapter 12)

Gikuyu na Mumbi...Nikihiu ngwatiro: the woman who founded Kenya (Chapter 6)

Kamwene Kabagio ira: put yourself first (Chapter 12)

Kikulacho Kimo nguoni mwako: that which bites you is in your clothes (Chapter 2)

Pole mama: sorry, mother (Chapter 2)

Thai Thathaiya Ngai, Thaai: Praise God, peace be with you (Mau Mau and Gikuyu prayers would end with this phrase) (Chapter 3)

Uhuru na Kazi: freedom and work (Chapter 1)

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Vocabulary from the novel by chapter

These are the words from the novel you need to know. Learn them well!

Chapter	Words & phrases	Meaning
intro	**contemporary**	modern
1	**diffused**	spread out
1	**encounter**	meeting
1	**deference**	respect
1	**antics**	strange behaviour
1	**cowering**	hiding
1	**harridan**	witch
1	**distilled**	purified
1	**animosity**	enmity, unfriendliness
2	**scalded**	burnt
2	**benevolence**	goodness
2	**imperceptibly**	in a way that is so small you can almost cannot see it
2	**denounced**	spoke against somebody, accused someone of doing something wrong
2	**ovation**	enthusiastic applause
2	**indolence**	laziness
3	**hearthplace**	fireplace
3	**imminence**	being about to happen
3	**turmoil**	chaos
3	**resolutely**	with mind made up
4	**meteorological**	about the weather
4	**mania**	madness
4	**triviality**	something that is not important (unimportant)
4	**winced**	made a movement that showed the person felt pain
5	**coincidence**	things happening together by chance
5	**indispensable**	absolutely necessary
5	**inscrutable**	mysterious
5	**exhilarating**	exciting
5	**vigour**	strength
6	**reticence**	keeping quiet, not taking part in things
7	**martyrdom**	great suffering
7	**Revivalist Movement**	movement which promotes the revival of Christianity
9	**exhort**	persuade strongly
9	**deference**	respect
9	**resilient**	strong
9	**tremor**	shaking
9	**submissive**	weak, willing to serve
9	**intermittent**	does not happen regularly/often; only happening from time to time
9	**ignominy**	public shame; disgrace
9	**contemptible**	hateful
10	**compel**	force

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Chapter	Words & phrases	Meaning
10	**probing**	digging into
10	**prelude**	introduction
10	**conspire**	plot
10	**hermit**	a person who lives alone away from society
11	**deprecating**	expressing ideas against something
11	**imminent**	happening soon, about to happen
11	**unkempt**	untidy or uncared for
12	**unscathed**	unhurt
12	**irrevocably**	in a way that cannot be changed
12	**furtively**	secretively
12	**extricated**	removed from
12	**Aspro**	common brand of aspirin
13	**impromptu**	not planned
13	**indecisive**	not sure of what to do
13	**debauched**	corrupted
13	**epitome**	a perfect example
13	**resumed**	started again
13	**discerned**	became aware of something
13	**sordid**	dirty, shameful
14	**lurked**	hid
14	**tumult**	loud noise
14	**pandemonium**	confusion; uproar
14	**vacuum**	emptiness
14	**silhouette**	dark shape of someone or something against a brighter background
14	**dilemma**	situation where you have to make difficult choices
14	**reliance**	dependency
14	**ungainly**	clumsy
14	**delirious**	wildly excited
14	**premonition**	forewarning
14	**inevitable**	unavoidable
14	**gesticulated**	used gestures and body movements
14	**revere**	honour
Karanja	**wizened**	old and wrinkled; dried up
Mugo	**contradict**	disagree with; say the opposite
Warui, Wambui	**cryptic**	mysterious
Warui, Wambui	**rejoinder**	answer
Warui, Wambui	**retained**	kept
Harambee	**motif**	artistic design

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Introduction

This novel by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, one of Africa's greatest living authors, is about Kenya's fight for independence. The book tells the story of the Mau Mau, which was a political movement fighting for Kenya's freedom from British colonial rule. Kenya won its independence in 1963.

He chooses a typical Kenyan village, which he calls Thabai, for his story. The story is about what happens in this village, and in the lives of characters living there, in the five days leading up to the Independence Day celebrations (**Uhuru** day). The story of Kenya's independence is told through the combined stories of the characters.

The main story takes place from 8 to 12 December 1963, but there are many shifts in time. The novel uses the technique of "flashbacks" to tell stories that happened in the past.

vocab

Uhuru: A Kiswahili word meaning 'freedom'.

1. The author

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was born in 1938 in Kenya, when the country was under British colonial rule. He was educated at a mission school, at Makerere University in Uganda, and then later at the University of Leeds in England.

Since 2002 he has been Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine, in the United States of America.

He began his writing career in 1962 with a play written to celebrate the Independence of Uganda. *A Grain of Wheat* was first published in 1967 and is his third novel. It is also the last novel he wrote in English. After this, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o wrote in Gikuyu, his home language. During his career as a teacher of literature he has fought hard for African literature to have as much status and value as English literature.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o experienced the Mau Mau rebellion against the British. One of his brothers was a member of the Mau Mau group of freedom fighters who fought for Kenya's independence. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's later political views were often very critical of the Kenyan government, when Daniel arap Moi was the president.

In the late 1970s, after a performance of his play *I Will Marry When I Want*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was arrested and detained in prison without a trial. He was in prison for a year. After his release from prison, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o left Kenya and, since 1982, he has lived much of his life in exile.

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2. Background

This section provides some background information about the social and political system of colonialism, and the independence movement in Kenya at the time that the novel is set in (the 1950s and early 1960s).

2.1 Colonialism

Colonialism is the domination by one country and its people over another. Between about 1500 and the early 1900s, many European countries looked beyond Europe for resources that they could control and trade in. They took over many parts of the world as "colonies" and introduced their own systems of government, economic organisation, religion and education.

By the 1900s, the British Empire ruled over colonies in North America, Australia, India and Africa. Over time, resistance to the control of the colonial powers grew, as people felt the colonial system exploited them and took away their political, social and economic freedom. Movements fighting for independence from colonial rule developed.

John Thompson, a British character in *A Grain of Wheat*, believes that:

> the growth of the British Empire was the development of a great moral idea: it must surely lead to the creation of one British nation, embracing peoples of all colours and creeds, based on the just proposition that all men were created equal. (Chapter 5)

Ironically, colonialism was not based on the idea of all men being created equal at all. Unfortunately, men like Thompson did not understand the injustice of trying to "reorientate people into this way of life by altering their social and cultural environment". (Chapter 5)

2.2 The Mau Mau

The Mau Mau was a movement that fought for independence from British rule in Kenya. The Mau Mau (also called the Movement) started in 1947 by taking revenge on "loyalists" – Africans who worked for or supported the British. In 1952, violence and opposition to the British had grown so great that the British governor in Kenya declared a State of Emergency and requested more troops from Britain.

During the State of Emergency, the British arrested thousands of Kenyans and detained them in detention camps. All over Kenya, people were forced to leave their land and their villages were placed under military guard. In Chapter 1 of *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o describes this: "One day people in Thabai and Rung'ei woke up to find themselves ringed round with black and white soldiers carrying guns, and tanks." (Chapter 1)

Britain accused the local political leaders of supporting the freedom fighters and causing the people to rebel. Many leaders, including Jomo Kenyatta, were arrested and sent to hard labour camps for several years.

Chapter 2 tells the history of the Mau Mau. "Its origins can, so the people say, be traced to the day the whiteman came to the country, clutching the book of God in both hands."

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2.3 The home guard

The home guard was organised by the British colonial government to protect the villages and fight against the Mau Mau. In the districts, the home guard was led by white officers and local officials, such as chiefs and headmen, who were given uniforms and armed with shotguns. Many considered Kenyans in the home guard to be traitors because they worked for the British.

2.4 Independence/Uhuru

In 1962, Jomo Kenyatta was released from prison. He became the Prime Minister of an independent Kenya on 12 December 1963. This day is still celebrated as Independence Day in Kenya, the day of 'uhuru' or freedom.

2.5 Neo-colonialism

"Neo" means "new", so "neo-colonialism" means a new kind of colonialism, which started after independence in Kenya. Some African leaders abused their power and behaved no better than the colonial rulers. In the novel, such abuse of power is seen in the way in which the Member of Parliament (MP) cheats Gikonyo out of buying a farm. Towards the end of the novel Lieutenant Koina warns the people at the Independence celebrations that they must be careful:

> "The Party must never betray the Movement. The Party must never betray Uhuru. It must never sell Kenya back to the Enemy! Tomorrow we shall ask: where is the land? Where is the food? Where are the schools?" (Chapter 14)

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3. Title

The words "a grain of wheat" in the title express an important theme in the novel. This is the idea that, before a seed can grow into a new plant, it must first dry out and sacrifice its own life.

Grains of wheat are therefore a symbol for the people who started the Kenyan independence movement – those who sacrificed their lives so that others would live free from colonial rule.

Waiyaki, a warrior-leader who fought the British, was one of those people. It is said that he was buried alive with his head facing towards the centre of the earth. He symbolises the first seed that grows into the freedom movement. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o compares him to a "seed, a grain, which gave birth to a movement whose strength thereafter sprang from a bond with the soil". (Chapter 2)

In the novel, Kihika is the hero of the freedom movement and he can be seen as the second seed (he is executed at Rung'ei market). Kihika believed that Kenyans had to sacrifice their lives for Kenya's independence.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o takes the idea for the title from this quotation in the Bible:

> But someone may ask "What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first. And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting." (1 Corinthians 15:36 Holy Bible New Living Translation)

Before a seed can grow into a new plant, it must first die itself. "Some other grain" suggests different kinds of sacrifices that may lead to transformation and new life. In the novel the Kenyans must change from their colonial habits and work together to build their future.

4. How the story is told

This section outlines the different elements in the novel that the writer uses to tell the story.

4.1 Setting

- The story takes place in Kenya, mostly in and around a typical Kenyan village, which the writer calls Thabai.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o writes about past and present events. The events that make up the main story of the novel take place in present time, during the five days leading up to the country's first Independence Day celebrations – 8 to 12 December 1963.
- The stories about what happened to the characters in the past are told as flashbacks, or memories. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o also tells the reader about the history of Kenya's fight for freedom.

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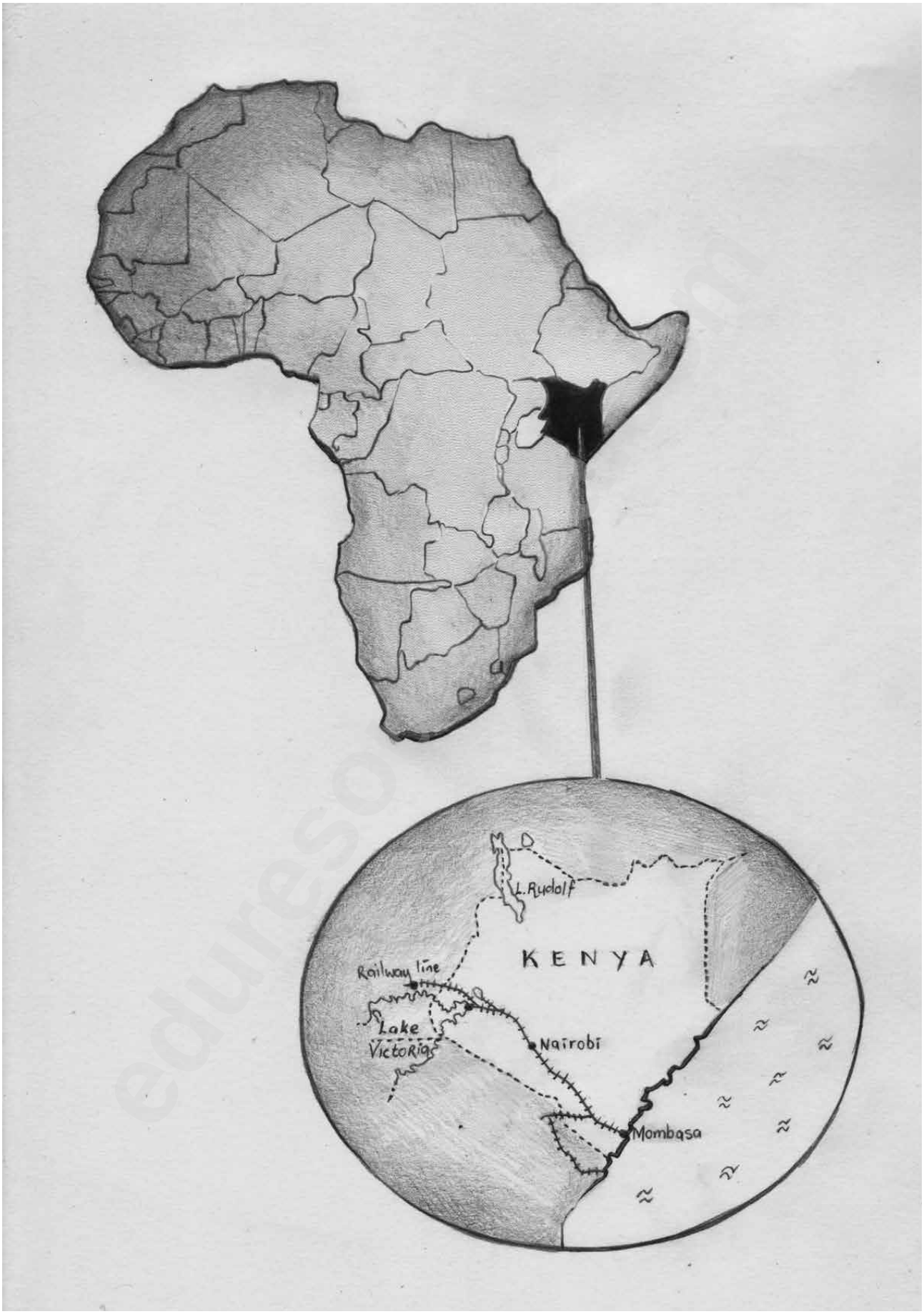

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4.2 Characters

- The central character in a story is called the **protagonist**. In *A Grain of Wheat*, Mugo is a protagonist.
- The **antagonist** is a character who opposes, or is in conflict with, the protagonist. In *A Grain of Wheat*, Kihika is an antagonist. There are different ways in which Mugo may be seen to be in conflict with Kihika. For example, Kihika tries to involve Mugo in the independence struggle, but Mugo wants to be left alone.

notes

Characterisation is the way in which the author reveals characters' personalities. This is by describing their thoughts, feelings, expressions and actions. As you read the novel, look for evidence that shows the characters' personalities and emotions, and how they change during the story.

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Main characters

The main characters are the most important for the development of the story. This section only gives an outline of the main characters in *A Grain of Wheat*. Some more information is given in the chapter by chapter section of the guide.

Mugo

Mugo grew up in Thabai village where he lived with his cruel, abusive aunt, Waitherero. His unhappy childhood caused him to become anti-social and isolated from the community. After his aunt died he wanted to be left alone so that he could tend his **shamba**. However, he becomes involved in events that he feels he cannot control. He betrays Kihika.

vocab

Shamba: A Kiswahili word meaning "vegetable garden" or "small farm".

Gikonyo

In his youth Gikonyo was friends with Kihika, Mumbi and Karanja. He was a carpenter. He loved Mumbi and they were married. He was sent to the detention camps. He was released after he confessed to being a member of the Movement. After he returned from the camps he became a wealthy, successful businessman.

Karanja

In his youth, Karanja was friends with Kihika, Mumbi and Gikonyo. Karanja lived with his mother, Wairimu. He also loves Mumbi, and he and Gikonyo are rivals. To avoid being arrested, and thinking of his own welfare, he confessed to being a member of the Movement. He worked for the British in the home guard and later became a Chief. He also worked in the library at the Githima Forestry and Agricultural Research Station.

Kihika

Kihika is Mumbi's brother and a hero of the struggle. Someone in the village betrayed him to the British and he was hanged, so he sacrificed his life for Kenya's freedom.

Mumbi

Mumbi is a beautiful, strong woman who grew up in Thabai. She is Kihika's sister, and Gikonyo's wife. She looked after her family during the State of Emergency, which shows she is caring and responsible. She is also compassionate and does not want to take revenge for her brother's death.

General R

A leader of a Mau Mau group and friend of Kihika, he wants to find the traitor who betrayed Kihika.

Lieutenant Koina

Also a friend of Kihika, he is second in command in the group to General R.

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Minor characters

People in Thabai

- **Mbugua** and **Wanjiku:** Mumbi and Kihika's mother and father, with whom they lived happily during their childhood and youth
- **Kariuki:** Mumbi and Kihika's younger brother
- **Wambuku:** Kihika's girlfriend; during the State of Emergency Mugo tries to save her from being beaten by a home guard; but she later dies.
- **Njeri:** Mumbi's friend, who is in love with Kihika; she joins him to fight and is also shot and killed
- **Mwaura:** A colleague of Karanja's at the research station, and a spy for General R
- **Warui:** A village elder
- **Wambui:** An old woman who was a political activist during the struggle
- **Waitherero:** Mugo's aunt who brought him up after his parents died; she treated him cruelly and she died of age and drink
- **Githua:** A villager who says that he lost his leg fighting in the struggle, but in fact he lost it in an accident
- **Gitogo:** A deaf and dumb young man who was thought to be a terrorist, and so was shot by the British
- **The Reverend Jackson Kigondu:** A Christian preacher who was brutally killed by the Mau Mau

British characters

- **John Thompson:** The head of Rira detention camp during the Mau Mau campaign, who later became a home guard District Officer. When the main story begins just before Uhuru he is retiring from being the Administrative Secretary (head) of Githima Forestry and Agricultural Research Station.
- **Margery Thompson:** John Thompson's wife
- **Dr Henry Van Dyke:** A meteorologist at Githima who was in love with Margery; he was killed by a train before the main story begins.
- **District Officer Tom Robson:** A British official who was shot by Kihika
- **Mrs Dickinson:** The librarian at Githima Forestry and Agricultural Research Station
- **Dr Lynd:** A researcher at Githima Forestry and Agricultural Research Station. She owns an aggressive dog.
- **Mr Rogers:** An agricultural officer who had the idea of building a research station at Githima

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4.3 Structure and plot development

The main story in *A Grain of Wheat* focuses on what happens in the few days that lead up to the Independence Day celebrations – the present time.

There are also a number of sub-plots, which are minor stories told alongside the main plot.

The stories the characters remember about what happened in the past (flashbacks) help us to understand the characters and their behaviour in the present time.

Summary of events leading up to Independence Day

The present tense events of the novel happen between Sunday 8 December 1963 and Thursday 12 December 1963, which is the date of the country's first Independence Day.

Day 1: Sunday 8 December 1963 (Chapters 1 – 3)

This is the plot's **exposition** and **rising action:**

- Mugo is living a lonely life in Thabai village.
- On Sunday evening, Gikonyo, Warui and Wambui, former freedom fighters, visit Mugo to ask him to speak in honour of Kihika at the Independence Day celebrations.
- General R and Lieutenant Koina, two Mau Mau representatives and former comrades of Kihika, also arrive. They have returned to Thabai to find out who betrayed Kihika. They believe the traitor is Karanja and hope that Mugo will help them to prove it.

Day 2: Monday 9 December 1963 (Chapters 4 – 8)

This contains **sub-plots** of the story, which are stories told alongside the main plot.

- Karanja is working at the Githima Forestry station. He is very worried because he thinks that his boss, Thompson, is going to leave Kenya, and so he will lose his position. Thompson really is planning to leave Kenya to return to Britain.
- Gikonyo goes to Nairobi to ask his parliamentary representative (MP) to give him a loan so that he can buy a farm. He wants to expand his business interests. Later, when Gikonyo returns to Thabai, he visits Mugo and tells him how he found everything had changed when he got home from detention. Mumbi had had Karanja's child.

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Day 3: Tuesday, 10 December 1963 (Chapters 9 – 12)

- Mugo meets Mumbi, who tells him about her life during the State of Emergency and about betraying Gikonyo with Karanja. General R comes back to speak to Mugo again, but Mugo is scared and rushes away.
- Thompson tells Karanja that he is leaving. That evening Thompson and his wife Margery go to a farewell party that the British community have arranged for them. This is also one of the **sub-plots**.
- Gikonyo arrives home in a bad mood because he has lost his chance to buy the farm. He fights with Mumbi, who leaves him. This is another **sub-plot**.
- Gikonyo goes with Warui to Mugo to try again to persuade him to speak at the celebrations.

Day 4: Wednesday, 11 December 1963 (Chapter 13)

- Wambui persuades Mumbi to go to Mugo and ask him to speak at the Independence Day celebrations. Mugo becomes very upset and confesses to her that it was he who had betrayed Kihika.

Day 5: Thursday, 12 December 1963 (Chapter 14 and concluding chapters: Karanja; Mugo; Warui, Wambui; and Harambee)

Did you know?

"Harambee" is the official motto of Kenya. It means "all pull together" in Kiswahili. It refers to living and working together as a community.

At the Independence Day celebrations a race is organised and Gikonyo, Karanja, General R and Lieutenant Koina all take part. During the race, Gikonyo falls and breaks his arm. Mumbi rushes to help him and he is taken to hospital. This is another **sub-plot**.

General R makes the Independence Day speech instead of Mugo, and calls on the person who betrayed Kihika to step forward. General R believes this is Karanja, but Mugo stands up and confesses to the crowd that he was the traitor. This is the **climax** of the plot.

General R goes to Mugo's hut to take him away to be tried (questioned and judged for his betrayal of Kihika). After his trial Mugo is executed.

This is the **falling action** and **resolution** of the plot.

After the celebrations, Karanja tries to persuade Mumbi to let him see his son, but she refuses. That night Karanja tries to leave Thabai, but the train rushes past him and he is left standing alone at the railway crossing. This is another **sub-plot**.

Later Mumbi visits Gikonyo in hospital and the novel ends with them agreeing, at least, to talk about their marriage. This short chapter, Harambee, provides hope at the end of the story that they will work together for their future. This is another **sub-plot**.

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4.4 Themes

This section provides a summary of the themes in *A Grain of Wheat*. More examples are given in the "Chapter by chapter" section of the guide.

Heroism

Heroism involves bravery and courage.

- Kihika is shown as the hero of the struggle. He was committed and strong. He made speeches which inspired the people to join the fight for freedom.
- The people of Thabai also consider Mugo to be a hero, because he was arrested for trying to protect a woman from being whipped by a home guard, and for his behaviour in the detention camps – he never confessed to taking the Mau Mau oath. Ironically, he had never taken the oath and so had nothing to confess. In fact, Mugo may be seen as what is known as an "**anti-hero**" ("anti" means against.) He has heroic qualities, as he was detained and suffered during the State of Emergency, and he shows bravery and concern for others, but he is not a typical hero. He betrayed his community's hero (Kihika), and so caused his death. He is disturbed and feels very guilty. However, he wants to be a hero: "He would lead the people and bury his past in their gratitude." (Chapter 8)

Suffering and sacrifice for freedom

In the novel, winning freedom comes at a price. Many people must make personal sacrifices and suffer for the good of the majority.

- Jomo Kenyatta, a real-life character, is mentioned often. He is seen as an example of a person who made personal sacrifices for his community. Like Mandela and his comrades on Robben Island, Kenyatta spent many years in prison. After Kenyatta was released, he went on to become the leader of his country.
- Kihika is like Kenyatta as he, too, is a great fighter. He is caught and hanged by the British, because Mugo betrays him. Kihika pays for Kenya's freedom with his life.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o also shows how people suffer if their personal relationships are troubled. Both Mumbi and Gikonyo suffer when Gikonyo returns from the camp. With John and Margery Thompson, we are also shown another marriage in which there is a lack of trust and communication between the partners.
- Mugo shows many sides to suffering. We are told about his sufferings from the way his cruel aunt treated him during his childhood. However, he suffers most because he feels guilty about his betrayal of Kihika. Perhaps because of the abuse during his childhood, he cannot get on with people and always feels that he is an outsider. In his confusion, Mugo believed that if he gave up Kihika he would be a hero, like Abraham in the Bible, who was called by God to sacrifice his son

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Betrayal

Betrayal means to do something hurtful against a person who trusts you. In a war or political struggle, betraying someone means that giving up that person to an enemy.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o explores many forms of betrayal. A key theme is political betrayal. Another is betrayal within marriage.

This table summarises the examples of betrayal in the novel.

Political betrayal	Personal betrayal
Mugo betrays Kihika by telling the British where to find him.	Karanja betrays Gikonyo by having sex with Mumbi.
Karanja betrays the freedom movement by working for the British as a home guard and a chief.	Mumbi betrays her husband, Gikonyo, by having sex with Karanja.
Gikonyo betrays his comrades by confessing to the British that he is a member of the freedom movement.	Margery betrays her husband, John Thompson, when she has an affair with Dr Van Dyke.
The MP tricks Gikonyo by taking for himself the farm that Gikonyo wanted to buy.	

Guilt

Guilt is a bad feeling a person gets because he or she has done something wrong, usually something that affects, or harms, another person.

- Mugo feels guilty after he betrays Kihika (for example, in Chapter 8). He feels that he needs to make up for this betrayal.
- Gikonyo feels guilty because, in the detention camp, he confessed to taking the Mau Mau oath. He did this so he could go back home, even though "The detainees had agreed not to confess the oath, or give any details about Mau Mau" (Chapter 7). He feels guilty afterwards that he has betrayed the Movement.
- Yet, ironically, when he gets home to find that in his absence Mumbi has had a child by Karanja, he too feels betrayed, and it is Mumbi who feels guilty.

The power of confession

Confession is when a person admits to something they have done wrong. This often makes the person feel better, as it can reduce their feelings of guilt.

- It seems that Mumbi's confession to Mugo that she betrayed her husband (in Chapter 9) inspires Mugo to tell the truth in public about his betrayal of Kihika.

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- Later, when Mumbi visits him to ask him to speak at the Independence Day celebrations, he breaks down and confesses to her that he betrayed Kihika.
- In Chapter 14, Mugo goes to the Independence Day celebrations. He overcomes the temptation to let Karanja take the blame for the betrayal of Kihika by thinking of Mumbi: "How else could he ever look Mumbi in the face?" Mugo confesses publicly to his betrayal of Kihika, telling the people that "this thing has eaten into my life all these years". (Chapter 14)

Lack of communication

- Mugo's isolation from his community is shown as unnatural. His silence and inability to speak is a main theme in the novel which Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o uses to show how important it is for people to communicate with one another to keep their relationship healthy.
- Mumbi tries to persuade Mugo to speak out to the people, and she tells Gikonyo: "We need to talk, to open our hearts to one another, examine them, and then together plan the future we want." (Harambee)
- The troubled marriages of Gikonyo and Mumbi, and John and Margery Thompson show the problems that come when there is a break in communication.

Community and the collective

Instead of living in isolation and not communicating, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o believes it is better to live and work together.

- The character of Mugo, who always feels cut off from the other villagers, and the image of Karanja alone at the railway crossing at the end of the novel, represent what happens when one abandons and betrays one's community. Karanja has separated himself from the people by collaborating with the British and abusing his power as a chief, Mumbi has rejected him completely, and even the train passes him by: "the train disappeared, the silence around him deepened; the night seemed to have grown darker".
- At the end of the novel Gikonyo realises that he cannot live without Mumbi. When he thinks of carving a wooden stool as a gift for her we understand that he realises that he cannot stay isolated from Mumbi, and that he must forgive and communicate with her once again.

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4.5 Symbols

In *A Grain of Wheat* Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o uses many symbols. Many of the symbols are associated with nature, such as "grains of wheat", "water", and "the forest". The symbols are linked to themes in the novel.

The stool (Gikonyo's carving)

- This carving represents and brings together most of the main ideas of the novel. When Gikonyo was a young man he wanted to make a carved stool for Mumbi as a gift and an expression of his love for her, but he could never think of the right design. At the end of the novel, he begins to make plans again:

  > He would now carve a thin man, with hard lines on the face, shoulders and head bent, supporting the weight. His right hand would stretch to link with that of a woman, also with hard lines on the face. The third figure would be that of a child on whose head or shoulders the other two hands of the man and woman would meet. Into that image would he work the beads on the seat? A field needing clearance and cultivation? A jembe? A bean flower? (Harambee)

  The man and woman with "hard lines" represent the suffering people of Kenya. They also represent Mumbi and Gikonyo's unhappy relationship. The child represents the hope for Kenya's future, and also Gikonyo's acceptance of Mumbi's child and hope for their future together. The stool represents both political and personal **reconciliation**.

vocab

Reconciliation: Restoring friendly relations.

Water

- Water is often a sign of anxiety and despair for Mugo. The novel begins with Mugo waking from a bad dream. He is afraid that a dirty drop of water will fall from the roof of his hut into his eye:

  > The drop grew larger and larger as it drew closer and closer to his eyes. He wanted to cover his eyes with his palms; but his hands, his feet, everything refused to obey his will. (Chapter 1)

  The dirty water represents Mugo's guilt.

- After the Independence Day celebrations when Mugo confesses to betraying Kihika, he walks home in the rain. He sits on his bed as water drips from his hair down his face. However, the rain water does not bother him; it now seems cleansing:

  > A drop was caught in his right eyelashes ... the drop entered his eye, melted inside, and ran down his face like a tear.
  >
  > He did not rub the eye, or do anything. (Mugo)

- For the villagers, the rain on Independence Day is not heavy, but just a drizzle. It symbolises the state of shock the villagers are in after hearing Mugo's confession.

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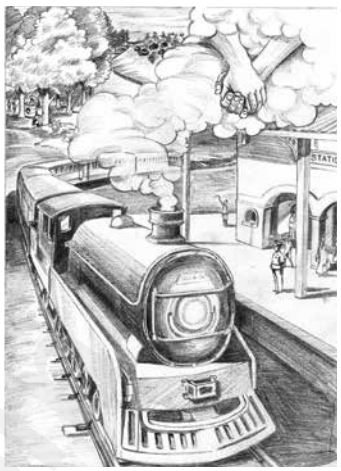
The railway and the train station



- When the British came they brought western technology, such as the railway. Kenyans were suspicious. To them the train looked like an "iron snake" which was going to bring harm to them, as it was "quickly wriggling towards Nairobi for a thorough exploitation of the land". (Chapter 2)
- Near the end of the novel, Karanja tries to get onto the train but cannot. This symbolises the British leaving him behind.
- The train station is used by the Kenyans as a meeting place. This is Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's way of saying that, although the station symbolises British power, it was used by the Kenyans for their own benefit. In other words, he does not believe that modern Kenya should reject everything that was brought there by the British. Read more about this in Chapter 7.

Running races

- When they were young Gikonyo and Karanja ran a race. This symbolises their competition to win Mumbi.
- Near the end of the novel the race at the Independence Day celebrations symbolises the attempts that Gikonyo, Karanja, General R and Koina make to break with the past.
- Although the two races between Karanja and Gikonyo take place at different times, the reader sees how much or how little has changed for everyone involved. Gikonyo loses both races, but he wins Mumbi. It is his fall and broken arm in the second race that brings her back to him at the end of the novel.

Forest

- When Kihika, Gikonyo and Karanja were young they and others would often go to the forest, where dances were held. In this case, the forest represents a place of happiness.
- The forest is also a symbol of the fight for freedom and a place of safety. Many of the fighters, in particular Kihika, fled to the forest, where they trained to fight and also hid from the British.

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5. Style

This section explains some of the features of the way of writing used in the novel.

5.1 The narrator

The stories of many characters are told, at different times, woven together with the story of Kenya's independence.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o uses both **third-person** and **first-person** narration.

- Third-person narration is used when the narrator is not one of the characters in the story, but describes what they do, think and feel. The clue to a third-person narration is when the writer uses the words "he" and "she". For example, the novel begins with this description of Mugo, in the third person: "Mugo felt nervous. He was lying on his back and looking at the roof. Sooty locks hung from the fern and grass thatch and all pointed at his heart." (Chapter 1)
- First-person narration is used when the story is told from the point of view of one of the characters in the story. It is also used when Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o wants the reader to feel part of the community. For example, at the beginning of Chapter 14, "We hoped that Mugo would come out and join us ..."

5.2 Diction and figurative language

- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o gives the language an African flavour by including Kiswahili and Kikuyu words, as well as traditional Kenyan sayings, songs and old stories.
- The language of the Bible is also included in the book – beginning with the title, which is based on a biblical quote. The ideas and language of Christianity were brought to Kenya by white people, and are often used in the book to criticise the unjust colonisers. For example, in Chapter 2, Kihika says:
- "We went to their church ... Mubia said, Let us shut our eyes. We did. You know, his remained open so that he could read the word. When we opened our eyes, our land was gone and the Sword of Flames stood on guard ... he went on reading the word, beseeching us to lay our treasures in heaven where no moth would corrupt them. But he laid his on earth, our earth".
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o uses a lot of imagery and figurative language throughout the book. For example, in a metaphor the train is compared to "an iron snake".
- You will find examples in the next section of this guide (*A Grain of Wheat* – chapter by chapter).

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5.3 Dialogue

- The lack of communication is a strong theme in the novel, and this is shown in the way dialogue is often broken or fails to achieve real communication between the characters. For example, when Mumbi went to Mugo's house to persuade him to speak at the Independence Day celebrations, they had this broken conversation:

  > "You must – all these people are waiting for you. People want you."
  >
  > "No, no."
  >
  > "You must – all these people are waiting for you. People want you."
  >
  > "But – but – I cannot."
  >
  > "They cry for you."
  >
  > "Mumbi, Mumbi," he cried in a tormented voice.
  >
  > "You will, Mugo, you will."
  >
  > "No." (Chapter 13)

- Sometimes the dialogue shows the racist nature of the relationships between black and white characters. For example, when Karanja visits Margery Thompson at her house, Margery leads a conversation with him that shows her racism:

  > "How many wives have you?" she asked …
  >
  > "I am not married."
  >
  > "Not married? I thought you people – Are you going to buy a wife?" (Chapter 4)

5.4 Interior monologue

- Sometimes Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o writes about what a character is thinking as if he or she is talking to him or herself.
- For example, Gikonyo "sat on a chair and bit his lower lip to steady a bitterness close to tears as whispers went, simultaneously, through his head and heart: God was cruel, else, why didn't he spare him this humiliation?" (Chapter 7)

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5.5 Flashbacks

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o uses flashbacks throughout the novel to bring past events into the novel's present events. Bringing these memories and histories into the present helps us to understand better each of the characters and why they respond to the events the way they do.

One example is Mugo's memories of his unhappy childhood, which help us understand why he isolates himself from his community:

> She had a way of getting at him, a question maybe, about his clothes, his face, or hands that made all his pride tumble down. He pretended to ignore her opinions, but how could he shut his eyes to her **oblique** smiles and looks? (Chapter 1)

vocab

Oblique: From the side.

5.6 Myths

- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o often refers to mythical stories of heroism from Kenya's past.
- For example, in chapter 2 the stories of the women "who ruled the land of the Agikuyu" and the last great woman leader "who ruled over a large section in Muranga".

5.7 Tone and mood

- The tone changes throughout the novel. For example, at the start of the Independence Day celebrations the tone is one of excitement and anticipation:

> In our village and despite the drizzling rain, men and women and children, it seemed, had emptied themselves into the streets where they sang and danced in the mud. (Chapter 14)

- This contrasts with the depressed, sad tone two days later, when Warui sits with Wambui in her hut:

> "Such drizzling can go on for many days," she said with a dull voice. They both relapsed into silence, making a picture of bereaved children for whom life has suddenly lost warmth, colour and excitement. (Warui, Wambui)

Mood is the feeling a reader has when reading the novel, such as happiness, sadness, anger or indifference. How did *A Grain of Wheat* make you feel?

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Introduction

This section of the study guide contains:

A summary of what happens and who is involved – the main events and characters in the chapter

The main themes and symbols, and some examples of language use in the chapter

Activities with exam-type questions for you to test yourself, and answers to these activities.

A Grain of Wheat is structured according to the five days that lead up to the Kenyan Independence Day celebrations on 12 December 1963.

The chapters can be grouped according to the day on which the 'present time' events they describe took place:

Chapters 1 to 3 – Day 1, Sunday 8 December

Chapters 4 to 8 – Day 2, Monday 9 December

Chapters 9 to 12 – Day 3, Tuesday 10 December

Chapter 13 – Day 4, Wednesday 11 December

Chapter 14 – Day 5, Thursday 12 December

Chapters 15 to 18: Four of these are named after the main characters and continue their stories – **Karanja**; **Mugo**; and **Warui**, **Wambui**. The final chapter, **Harambee**, continues the story of Mumbi and Gikonyo.

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Chapter 1

A Grain of Wheat

▶ Day 1: Sunday 8 December 1963

1. What happens and who is involved?

- **Mugo** wakes from a dream. He goes to work on his shamba (small farm). He thinks about his unhappy childhood which he spent with a cruel aunt after his parents' death.
- On the way to his shamba, he meets **Warui**, a village elder, and **Githua**, who is famous for his stories about the people of Thabai.
- He passes the house of an old woman whose son, **Gitogo** (who could not hear or speak), was shot by the British. Her loneliness makes Mugo think about his own lonely life.
- In the evening Mugo is visited by Warui, **Wambui** and **Gikonyo**, representatives of the Mau Mau movement.

2. Themes

Suffering and sacrifice

- A description of the village of Thabai refers to the suffering of the villagers during British rule:

  > Some huts had crumbled; a few had been pulled down. Yet the village maintained an unbroken orderliness; from a distance it appeared a huge mass of grass from which smoke rose to the sky as from a burnt sacrifice. (Chapter 1)

  A **simile** is used here to compare the village to a "burnt sacrifice".
- The loss of innocent lives during the State of Emergency is suggested by the description of how Gitogo was shot. He was killed by mistake because the soldier thought he was a Mau Mau terrorist.
- Mugo suffered from the way his cruel aunt treated him: "She had a way of getting at him, a question maybe, about his clothes, his face, or hands that made all his pride tumble down." (Chapter 1)

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3. Symbols

Water

- In his dream, Mugo is afraid that a dirty drop of water will fall from the roof of his hut into his eye.

> The drop fattened and grew dirtier as it absorbed grains of soot. Then it started drawing towards him. He tried to shut his eyes. They would not close. He tried to move his head: it was firmly chained to the bed frame. The drop grew larger and larger as it drew closer and closer to his eyes. He wanted to cover his eyes with his palms; but his hands, his feet, everything refused to obey his will. (Chapter 1)

In this extract the dirty water represents Mugo's guilt. He feels that the growing drop of water is going to harm him. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o says his head is chained to the bed frame. This suggests that Mugo feels like a prisoner. He feels powerless, "everything refused to obey his will".

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Activity 1

Test yourself by answering the questions below.

1 Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below. Write down only the words next to the question number (1(a) –1(d)).

Thabai; Wajir; Uhuru; shamba; Mau Mau; Kikuyu; Gakaraku; Rika

The name of Mugo's village is (a) ... A strip of land where food is grown is called a (b) ... The (c) ... was an armed struggle against British rule. They fought for independence, which was called (d) ... in Kenya. (4)

2. State TWO points about Mugo's childhood. (2)

3. State the names of the people who visit Mugo in Chapter 1. Give the reason for their visit. (4)

4. What is the relationship between Kihika and Gikonyo? (1)

Choose the correct answer and write the letter (A, B, C or D) next to the question number.

A Kihika and Gikonyo are brothers and they are comrades in the struggle for freedom.

B Kihika and Gikonyo are rivals for Mumbi's affections and they are both freedom fighters.

C Kihika is Gikonyo's brother-in-law and they are comrades in the struggle for freedom.

D Kihika and Gikonyo are married to two sisters and they are both freedom fighters.

5. Match the names in COLUMN 1 to the descriptions in COLUMN 2. Write down only the question number (1.5(a) – (c)) and the letter (A – D) of your answer.

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2
(a) Gikonyo	A wants to find the traitor
(b) Kihika	B served as a cook during the war
(c) General R	C a carpenter and clever businessman
	D was betrayed by one of the villagers

(3)

[14]

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Answers to Activity 1

1. (a) Thabai ✓ (1)
   (b) shamba ✓ (1)
   (c) Mau Mau ✓ (1)
   (d) Uhuru ✓ (1)
2. Mugo's parents died when Mugo was a child. ✓ /He was an orphan. ✓
   OR
   When his parents died he lived with his aunt. ✓✓
   OR
   His aunt treated him very badly. ✓✓
   OR
   He was very unhappy and lonely. ✓✓ (2)
3. Wambui, ✓ Warui ✓ and Gikonyo ✓ come to his hut. They want him to speak about the hero Kihika at the Independence Day celebrations. ✓ (4)
4. C ✓ (1)
5. a) C/ a carpenter and clever businessman ✓ (1)
   b) D/ was betrayed by one of the villagers ✓ (1)
   c) A/ wants to find the traitor ✓ (1)

[14]

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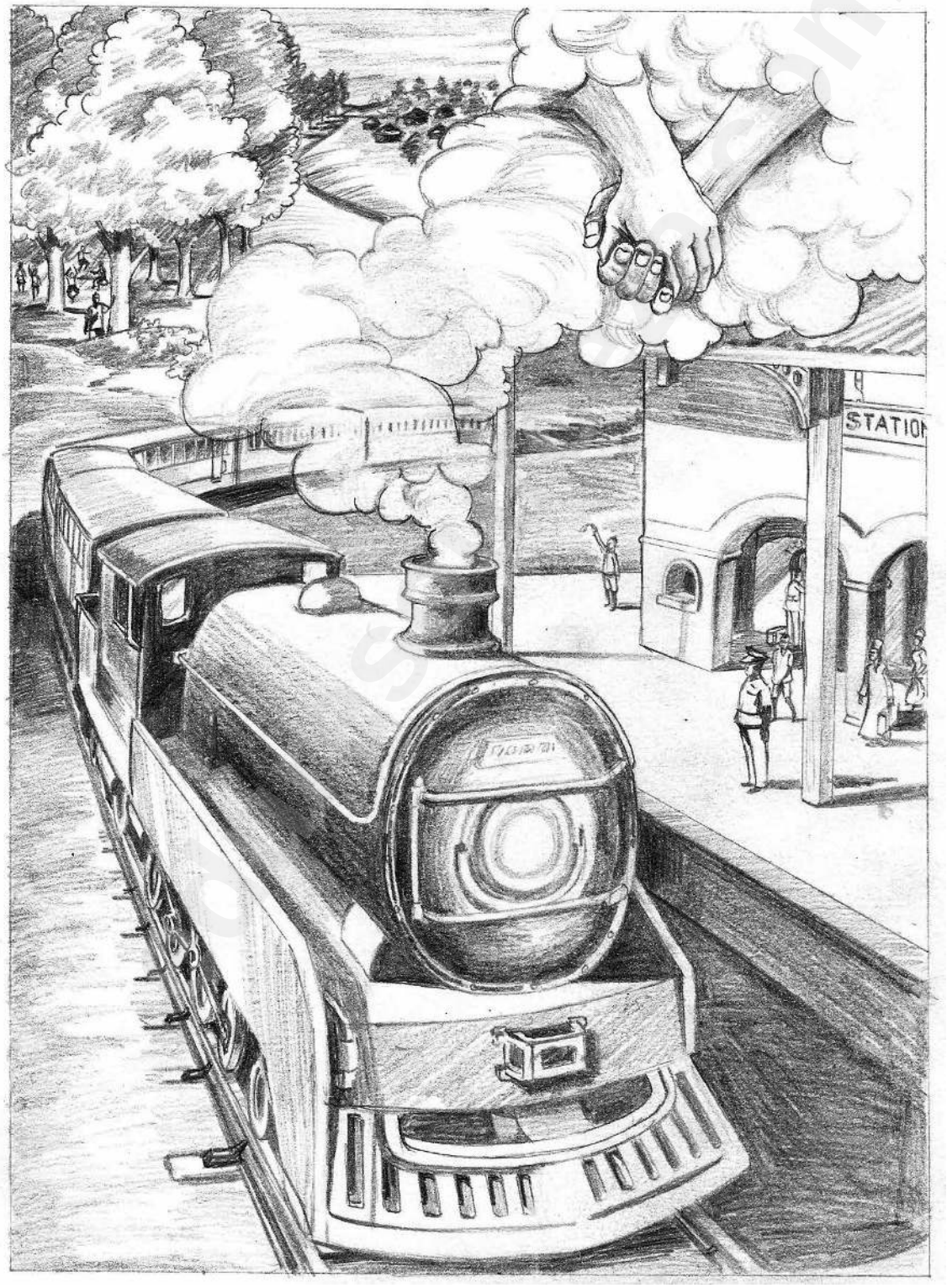
Chapter 2

A Grain of Wheat

▶ Past time



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1. What happens and who is involved?

In this chapter, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o writes about events from Kenya's historical past. For example:

- The arrival of the British in the land of the Agikuyu (the Kikuyu people). When the British came they spoke of their Queen Victoria. For the Agikuyu, this "echoed something in the heart, deep down in their history". (Chapter 2) They thought about the time when the land of the Agikuyu was ruled by women, and about a female leader who, years later, "ruled over a large section in Muranga". (Chapter 2)
- The Kenyans became suspicious of the British, as they saw how much of their land was being taken from them. The Kenyans began to see that the British were their enemies. "They looked beyond the laughing face of the whiteman and suddenly saw a long line of other red strangers who carried, not the Bible, but the sword." (Chapter 2)
- People began to resist the British. Two heroes from the past are mentioned. A warrior, Waiyaki, took up arms against the British but was killed. Harry Thuku, a leader from the 1920s, was arrested.
- The chapter also describes the more recent history of **Kihika**'s role in the struggle. A political meeting at which he gave a speech is described. Mugo, Mumbi and Gikonyo were there. Kihika spoke of the need to fight for independence from the British. He spoke of violence as if it were nothing unusual: "Kihika had spoken of blood as easily as if he was talking of drawing water in a river." (Chapter 2) The talk of violence revolted Mugo, who does not like violence. Mugo also felt jealous of Kihika.
- The story is told of how Kihika and his men attacked Mahee, a police garrison, and freed the prisoners. Kihika became known as "the terror of the whiteman". (Chapter 2) The British offered a large amount of money as a reward to anyone who brought them Kihika, dead or alive. A year later, he was captured, at the edge of the Kinenie Forest. He was hanged in Rung'ei Market.

2. Themes

Suffering and sacrifice

- Kihika, like Waiyaki, sacrificed his life for the Movement. Kihika often spoke of sacrifice in his speeches:

  > "A day comes when brother shall give up brother, a mother her son, when you and I have heard the call of a nation in turmoil." (Chapter 2)
  >
  > Kihika lived the words of sacrifice he had spoken to the multitude. (Chapter 2)

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Heroism

This chapter emphasises the heroic work of people who fought for Kenya's freedom. We are told that Kihika was "a son of the land ... marked out as one of the heroes of deliverance". (Chapter 2)

3. Symbols

Grain of wheat

- "Waiyaki's blood contained within it a seed, a grain, which gave birth to a movement whose main strength thereafter sprang from a bond with the soil." (Chapter 2)
- It is said that Waiyaki was buried alive (like a seed in the ground).
- The grain of wheat is such an important symbol that Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o uses it as the title of the book.

Railway

- For the Kenyans the railway was like an "iron snake". It is a symbol of the arrival of the British and of the effect they had on Kenya.

Activity 2

Read the extract, then answer the questions below.

[Mugo thinks about Kihika's speech.]

"A day comes when brother shall give up brother, a mother her son, when you and I have heard the call of a nation in turmoil."

Mugo felt a constriction in his throat. He could not clap for words that did not touch him. What right had such a boy, probably younger than Mugo, to talk like that?

What arrogance? Kihika had spoken of blood as easily as if he was talking of drawing water in a river, Mugo reflected, a revulsion starting in his stomach at the sight and smell of blood. I hate him, he heard himself say and frightened, he looked at Mumbi, wondering what she was thinking. Her eyes were still fixed on her brother. Everybody's eyes were on the platform. Mugo experienced a twang of jealousy as he too turned and looked at the speaker. At that moment their eyes met, or so Mugo imagined, with guilt. For a split second the crowd and the world at large seemed drenched in silence. Only Kihika and Mugo were left on the stage. Something surged for release in Mugo's heart, something, in fact, which was an intense vibration of terror and hatred.

"Watch ye and pray," Kihika said, calling on his audience to remember the great Swahili proverb: *Kikulacho Kimo nguoni mwako*.

[Chapter 2]

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1. Mugo thinks that Kihika "had spoken of blood as easily as if he was talking of drawing water in a river" (lines 6–7).
   How does Kihika feel about violence? State TWO points. (2)
2. Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Write "true" or "false" and quote ONE word from the extract to prove your answer.
   Mugo hates violence. (2)
3. Quote TWO separate words from this extract to show Mugo's negative feelings towards Kihika. (2)
4. Mugo's and Kihika's characters differ. Write down ONE difference.(2)
5. The Swahili proverb at the end of the passage is: "That which bites you is in your clothes."
   How is this saying proved to be true by the way Kihika is killed? (2)
6. Mugo and Kihika have different views on violence in the revolution. Whose view do you support? Discuss your view. (2)

[12]

Answers to Activity 2

1. Kihika thinks that violence is the only way to fight the British. ✓/ It is something that needs to be done. ✓
   OR
   Kihika feels that violence is usual/everyday/nothing extraordinary. ✓✓ (2)
2. True, ✓ "revulsion" ✓ (2)
3. constriction / arrogance / hate / jealousy / hatred / terror✓ (2)
4. Mugo is reclusive/ prefers to be left alone, while Kihika wants to be involved and do something for his people/ is charismatic/ loves attention/ likes speaking to a crowd of people. ✓✓
   OR
   Mugo does not like violence while Kihika is ruthless and incites others to violence. ✓✓ (2)
5. Kihika trusted Mugo, but Mugo betrays Kihika. ✓✓
   OR
   Kihika believed in violence and he died by violence. ✓ (2)
6. Mugo's view: Violence is never the answer. It leads to loss of life and more violence. ✓✓
   OR
   Kihika's view: Sometimes it is necessary to fight for what you believe in even if you have to sacrifice lives. ✓✓ (2)

[12]

hint There are more than two words in the extract that are relevant. To get 2 marks for question 3, you only need to write TWO of these.

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Chapter 3

A Grain of Wheat

▶ Day 1: Sunday 8 December 1963

1. What happens and who is involved?

- The story returns to the visit by the freedom fighters to Mugo. **General R** and **Lieutenant Koina** arrive after Gikonyo, Warui and Wambui. The three villagers ask Mugo to make a speech at the Independence celebrations in honour of Kihika's memory and sacrifice. General R. wants Mugo to help find out who betrayed Kihika to the British. Gikonyo tells Mugo that after independence they want him to stand for election as a local Chief in their area.
- Mugo seems isolated, he cannot talk to his visitors easily. He thinks: "None of this is real ... I'll soon wake up from the dream ... My hut will be empty and I'll find myself alone as I have always been ..." (Chapter 3)
- Mugo does not give the visitors an answer to their request that he give a speech. He just says: "I do not understand".
- General R. believes that Mugo sheltered Kihika on the night Kihika shot DO (District Officer) Robson. He thinks that is the reason why Mugo was later arrested and sent to detention. He suspects Karanja betrayed Kihika.
- Gikonyo seems very unhappy. He feels he needs to talk to Mugo, and returns to his hut but then he changes his mind and goes home. At home he refuses to eat the food Mumbi has prepared. He will not talk to Mumbi about what troubles him. She wants to talk about the child, but he refuses.

2. Themes

Guilt and betrayal

Mugo is afraid to speak during the visit of General R and Lieutenant Koina: "Mugo's throat was choked; if he spoke, he would cry." (Chapter 3) This may be because of the guilt he feels.

Lack of communication

Gikonyo does not talk to Mumbi about her child.

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Activity 3

Read the extract, then answer the questions below.

[Gikonyo, Warui, Wambui, General R and Lieutenant Koina are visiting Mugo. Gikonyo speaks.]

> "General, you almost made us forget why we came here," he announced, now the voice of a businessman who had no time for rituals. "But I am glad you came for this also concerns you. It is like this. The Movement and leaders of the village have thought it a good idea to honour the dead. On Independence Day we shall remember those from our village and ridges near, who lost their lives in the fight for freedom. We cannot let Kihika's name die. He will live in our memory, and history will carry his name to our children in years to come." He paused and looked straight at Mugo and his next words addressed to Mugo were full of plain admiration. "I don't want to go into details – but we all know the part you played in the movement. Your name and that of Kihika will ever be linked together. As the General here has said, you gave Kihika shelter without fear of danger to your own life. You did for Thabai out here and in detention what Kihika did in the forest. We have therefore thought that on this important day, you should lead in the sacrifice and ceremonies to honour those who died that we might live."
>
> (Chapter 3)

1. Refer to line 7 ("We cannot let Kihika's name die").
   Briefly describe who Kihika was. State TWO points. (2)
2. In the above extract, Mugo receives visitors.
   (a) According to the visitors, what is the reason for this visit? (1)
   (b) What is Mugo's answer to his visitors at this point in the novel? (1)
   (c) Why does Mugo react in this way? State TWO points. (2)
   [6]

Answers to Activity 3

1. He was Mumbi's brother. ✓
   He was a local hero who was hanged/ a freedom fighter/ active member of the Mau Mau movement. ✓
   He was the man who killed the District Officer (Tom Robson).✓ (2)
2. a) They have come to ask Mugo to be the main speaker at the Independence Day celebrations. ✓ (1)
   (b) He does not give them an answer./ He is not sure what they really want from him./ He wants to be left alone. ✓ (1)
   (c) Mugo feels guilty. He is afraid that the General will discover that he is the traitor who betrayed Kihika. ✓✓ (2)
   [6]

hint: Any TWO of these answers will earn you 2 marks.

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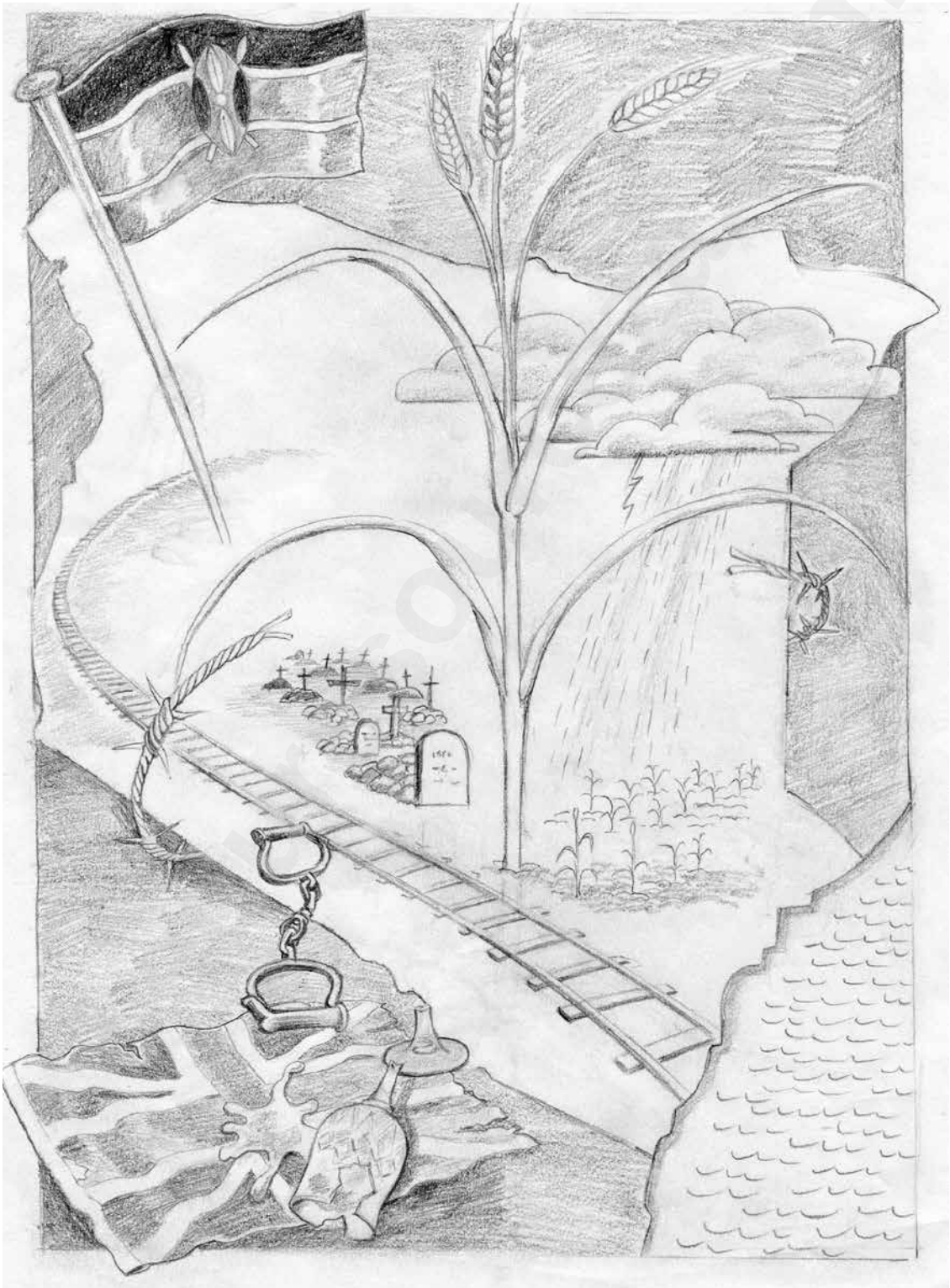
▶ Day 2: Monday 9 December 1963



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1. What happens and who is involved?

- Karanja is working in the library at the Githima Forestry and Agricultural Research Station. **Mwaura** tells Karanja that their boss, **John Thompson**, wants to see him. John Thompson asks him to take a message to his wife, **Margery**. He writes a letter for Karanja to give her.
- Karanja goes to the Thompson's house and Margery offers him coffee. The way in which Margery talks to Karanja shows her stereotypical views about African people, and reveals her prejudice. She asks him personal questions about having a wife, which makes Karanja feel embarrassed. He thinks of Mumbi, whom he loved, but who refused him.
- Karanja wishes others had seen him having coffee with Margery. He feels it gives him a higher status among the African workers.
- Karanja has heard rumours that the Thompsons are going to leave Kenya after Independence, but he does not have the courage to ask Margery about this.
- At the research station Thompson thinks about the coming Independence. He is sad about the end of British rule in Kenya and the dreams he had for it when he was young. He is not hopeful that the Kenyans will manage to run the research station once the British have left.
- Thompson looks out of the window and sees **Dr Lynd**'s dog run towards a group of men. Dr Lynd is a scientist who studies plant diseases (a plant pathologist) at the research station. The men run away, afraid the dog will attack them, but one man, Karanja, is trapped against a wall. Karanja picks up a stone, ready to throw it at the dog. Before the dog can jump at him, Dr Lynd shouts and restrains the dog.
- Dr Lynd is rude to Karanja for throwing stones at her dog. When Karanja says that he did not throw stones, Dr Lynd replies: "The way you people lie ..." Thompson arrives and says, "I'll deal with this." He does not criticise Dr Lynd, although he has heard other complaints about her dog. Neither does he criticise Karanja. He leads Dr Lynd away, and only then tells her it was not the "boy's" fault.

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Flashbacks

- Thompson remembers one night when he thought he had run over a dog in his car. "He drove away sadly; it was as if he had murdered a man." (Chapter 4)
- Dr Lynd remembers an incident during the State of Emergency when two men rushed into her house, tied her up, and her houseboy hacked her dog to pieces. This is one reason why Dr Lynd tells Thompson that she hates black people.
- During the State of Emergency Thompson was sent to work in detention camps, to rehabilitate Mau Mau followers, so they would lead "a normal life as British subjects". At Rira detention camp the prisoners went on a hunger strike. Thompson ordered the prisoners to be beaten and 11 prisoners died. After an inquiry, he was sent to Githima. He felt humiliated and disgraced.
- John Thompson and the librarian, Mrs Dickinson, use Karanja as their personal messenger. Karanja resents this because it lowers his status in the eyes of other workers. However, he puts up with it because he wants to keep his good reputation amongst the white people.

> What Karanja resented most was not the missions or their triviality, but the way they affected his standing among the other African workers. But on the whole Karanja would rather endure humiliation than lose the good name he had built up for himself among white people. He lived on the name and power it brought him. (Chapter 4)

2. Themes

Betrayal

- Dr Lynd felt betrayed by her houseboy, who let her attackers into her house. Her dog knew and trusted her houseboy, so the dog did not attack the men. Her houseboy betrayed this trust when he killed her dog.
- Thompson feels "a vague sense of betrayal" by the British government when he thinks of Kenyan Independence.

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Activity 4

Read the extract, then answer the questions below.

[Karanja's visit to the Thompson's house]

Margery came back with two cups of coffee.
"Do you take sugar in your coffee?"
"No," he said automatically, and knew, at the same time, he lacked the courage to ask her about the rumours. Karanja loathed tea or coffee without lots of sugar. 5
Margery sat opposite Karanja and crossed her legs. She put her cup on the arm of the chair. Karanja held his in both hands afraid of spilling a drop on the carpet. He winced every time he brought the cup near his lips and nostrils.
"How many wives have you?" she asked. This was her favourite 10
question to Africans; it began the day she discovered her latest cook had three wives. Karanja started as if Margery had tickled a wound that had only healed at the surface. *Mumbi*.
"I am not married."
"Not married? I thought you people – Are you going to buy a wife?" 15

(Chapter 4)

1. Explain why Karanja goes to Margery's house. (1)
2. a) What are the rumours that Karanja has heard? (1)
   b) Why is he worried about the rumours? (1)
3. Describe how Margery Thompson's treatment of Karanja shows her feelings of superiority or racism/prejudice. Use a short quotation from the extract in your answer. (2)
4. Giving THREE points, briefly describe what happens during the incident with Dr Lynd's dog at the research station. (3)

[8]

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Answers to Activity 4

1. Karanja goes to Margery's house to deliver a message from John Thompson/ her husband. ✓ (1)
2. a) Karanja has heard rumours that after Independence John Thompson is going to leave Kenya. ✓ (1)

   b) He is worried because if John Thompson leaves Kenya he will lose his job / the power and status his job gives him. ✓ (1)
3. Margery asks personal questions in a rude way. ✓

   "How many wives have you?" ✓

   "Are you going to buy a wife?" ✓

   "I thought you people ..." ✓ (2)
4. Dr Lynd's dog/bull-mastiff charges/runs towards a group of men. ✓

   One man/Karanja cannot run away in time and he picks up a stone to defend himself. ✓

   Dr Lynd calls the dog off/restrains the dog before it attacks the man/Karanja. ✓

   Dr Lynd accuses Karanja of throwing stones at her dog, but Thompson defends him/ tells her it was not Karanja's fault. ✓ (3)

[8]

hint Any one of these quotations from the extract can be used to show the insulting way in which Margery speaks to Karanja.

hint Any THREE of these points will earn you 3 marks in question 4.

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Chapter 5

▶ Day 2: Monday evening 9 December 1963

1. What happens and who is involved?

- **John** and **Margery Thompson** are at home together, but they hardly talk to each other. They do not have a happy marriage.
- John Thompson has resigned from his job. They will return to Britain. It is painful for him to realise that he is not needed any more. He feels angry about having to leave behind everything he has worked for.
- Thompson reads the notes that he made when he was young and enthusiastic about the British Empire. He had hoped to develop them into a book, with the title *Prospero in Africa*. The extracts from these notes reveal Thompson's racist attitudes towards Africans, which were a product of his colonial mind-set. In particular, the notes tell us about Thompson's attitude to the Mau Mau. He sees it as an evil movement that threatens to destroy the values on which British civilisation is based.

notes

Prospero is a character in a play called *The Tempest*, written by William Shakespeare. In the play, Prospero is exiled from his own country and goes to an island. He imposes his values and way of life on the inhabitants of the island.

In his book, *Prospero in Africa*, Thompson argued that "to be English was basically an attitude of mind: it was a way of looking at life, at human relationship, at the just ordering of human society. Was it not possible to reorientate people into this way of life by altering their social and cultural environment?" (Chapter 5).

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o wants to show us that Thompson is wrong to want to take over and control lands that are not his. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o believes that colonisers like Thompson had no regard or respect for the "social and cultural environment" of the Kenyans.

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Flashbacks

- John Thompson thinks back to his younger days when he was happy with his wife and he had faith in the British Empire, which he wanted to help develop.
- Margery remembers the affair she had with Dr Van Dyke. It seems that she had the affair because she was bored and wanted excitement.

2. Themes

Lack of communication

- Margery and John Thompson both seem to want to talk to each other, but cannot. Margery feels impatient with her husband. "They were on the brink of change, she reflected, and still he would not talk." She does not know exactly what she wants Thompson to say, "but let a man and wife at least share their anxieties about everything: their past, ..."

Betrayal

- Margery betrayed her husband when she had the affair with Dr Van Dyke.

Activity 5

Read the extract, then answer the questions below.

[John Thompson thinks about leaving Kenya]

> Let silly fools like Dr Lynd stay. But eventually they would all be thrown out without ceremony. That is why Thompson had resigned, to get away before Uhuru. For why should people wait and go through the indignity of being ejected from their seats by their houseboys?
>
> (Chapter 5)

1. To what does Uhuru refer? (1)
2. What are Thompson's reasons for leaving Kenya? Explain in your OWN words. Give TWO reasons. (2)
3. What did Margery do to betray her husband? (1)

[4]

Answers to Activity 5

1. The Independence Day celebrations/Kenyan Independence ✓ (1)
2. Thompson wants to leave Kenya because he thinks that the Kenyans will treat the British badly if they stay. He does not have faith in their ability to rule the country. ✓✓ (2)
3. Margery had an affair with Dr Van Dyke. ✓ (1)

[4]

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Chapter 6

▶ Day 2: Monday 9 December 1963

1. What happens and who is involved?

- After **Gikonyo** returned from the detention camps he became successful in business, both as a carpenter and as a trader. Now, with five other men, he wants to buy a farm. They have asked a Member of Parliament (**MP**) to help them get a loan.
- Gikonyo goes to the capital city, Nairobi, to see the MP. The description of Gikonyo as an honest and hardworking businessman contrasts with the character of the MP. There is the suggestion that the new leaders of the post-independence government may let the people down. This **foreshadows** what is to come. For example:
  - There was a crowd of people waiting outside the MP's office, "But people were used to his broken appointments and broken promises. Sometimes they would keep coming, day after day, without seeing their representative."
  - Gikonyo asks the MP: "Do you think it possible to get the loan, or should we go and find other means of getting the money?" The MP's reaction suggests that he might want to stop Gikonyo trying to get the money elsewhere: "Gikonyo thought he detected alarm on the other's face."
  - The MP has been invited to Thabai for the Uhuru celebrations, but he will not join the villagers whom he represents in parliament. He says that "on that day all the Members of Parliament have been invited to various functions here in the *capital*".
- Gikonyo says that those who will "taste the first fruits of independence" will not be those who fought in the Movement, but those "who ran to the shelter of schools and universities and administration. And even some who were outright traitors and collaborators.
- **Mugo** is confused about why he has been asked to give the speech at the Independence Day celebrations. To avoid seeing anyone in Thabai, he walks to Rung'ei.
- On Monday evening Gikonyo visits Mugo at his house. Mugo thinks he has come to ask what his decision is about giving the Independence Day speech. They talk about life in the detention camps.

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- The real reason why Gikonyo visits Mugo is to talk about his "troubles of the heart". He tells Mugo that Mumbi had changed when he came back from detention.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o gives us an idea about what people think of Mugo:

> Two days later, people were to talk about Mugo … with varying degrees of exaggeration how he organized the hunger-strike in Rira … his solitary habits and eccentric behaviour at meetings marked him as a chosen man.

Flashback

- Mugo thinks about the only speech he made, when the Movement "convened the meeting to introduce returning detainees to the public". He spoke of how detainees had suffered, and that it was the thought of seeing their homes and families again that kept them going.

  His speech inspired many. Yet Mugo felt disgusted with his speech. It was a lie: he had no one to return home to. "I did not want to come back; I did not long to join my mother, or wife or child because I did not have any."

  After this meeting Mugo "took refuge in reticence". He became more and more silent and cut off from the community.

Did you know?

When people joined the Mau Mau, they had to swear an Oath of Unity. The British wanted people to confess to taking the oath, to break the sense of unity in the Movement. They also wanted to get names of people involved in administering the oath, as they wanted to stop people recruiting new members to the Movement.

2. Themes

Heroism

- Gikonyo thinks Mugo is a hero because of his behaviour in the detention camps. Although he was beaten many times, he never confessed. Gikonyo says, "You were brave not to confess. We admired your courage, and hid our heads in shame."
- Gikonyo also admires Mugo because of the speech he made. Gikonyo says: "As you spoke, I felt you were reading my heart ..."

Confession

- In the detention camps Mugo was beaten many times. But, Gikonyo says, he never confessed to being a member of the Mau Mau. This is ironic, because Mugo was never a member of the Movement. As he says: "There was nothing to confess."
- Gikonyo confessed to having taken the oath because he wanted to return home and be with his family. Yet he felt that this made him a coward.

Suffering and sacrifice

- Gikonyo thinks the people in power now are not the ones who suffered during the struggle. They only "knew suffering as a word".

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Activity 6

Read the extract, then answer the questions below.

[Gikonyo visits Mugo.]

"No. It is not that which brought me here tonight." He told Mugo about his visit to Nairobi and his meeting with the M.P.
Mugo, who sat on the bed opposite Gikonyo, waited for him to continue.The fire contained in the hearthplace by three stones glowed between them. 5
"But it is not that which brought me here. It is my troubles, troubles of the heart." Gikonyo smiled and tried to sound casual. "I was really coming to ask you a question," he finished with a dramatic pause.
Mugo's heart sagged between fear and curiosity.
"Do you know that you and I were once in the same detention 10 camp?" Gikonyo said, feeling his way into a talk.
"Were we? I can't remember." Though slightly relieved, Mugo was still suspicious. "There were so many people," he added quickly.
"It was at Muhia camp. We knew you were to be brought there. We had, of course, heard about you in connection with the hunger-strike 15 at Rira. The authorities did not tell us. It was supposed to be a secret, but we knew."
Mugo vividly remembered Rira and Thompson, who beat him. Of Muhia, he could only recall the barbed-wire and the flat dry country. But then most camps were in such areas. 20
"Why do you tell me all this? I don't like to remember."
"Do you ever forget?"
"I try to. The government says we should bury the past."

[Chapter 6]

1. Refer to lines 1–2 ("No. It is ... with the M.P.").
   a) What does Mugo think the reason is for Gikonyo's visit? (1)
   b) What is the the real reason for Gikonyo's visit? (1)
   c) Refer to line 6. Explain why Gikonyo repeats the word "troubles". (1)
2. What does the outcome of Gikonyo's visit to Nairobi show the reader about the new government? State TWO points. (2)
3. Refer to the words "fear" (line 9) and "suspicious" (line 13).
   Explain why Mugo is afraid and suspicious at this point. (2)
4. Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Give a reason for your answer.
   The hunger-strike at Rira was not important to the authorities. (2)
5. Mugo refers to the government's request to "bury the past". Do you think it is possible for a person to "bury the past"? Discuss your view. (2)

[11]

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Answers to Activity 6

1. a) To see if Mugo has made a decision about the invitation to speak at the Uhuru celebrations. ✓ (1)

   b) To talk to him about Mumbi because she has changed since he got back from detention. ✓ (1)

   c) To show how deeply he is affected/ how emotionally fragile/ how hurt he feels. ✓ (1)

2. They are corrupt/ greedy/ they just look out for themselves/ they do not care for the ordinary people. ✓

   They are not to be trusted. ✓ (2)

3. He is afraid that his secret, that he betrayed Kihika, will be discovered. ✓ He is suspicious that Gikonyo knows the truth.✓ (2)

4. False. ✓

   They tried to keep it a secret. / It was important because it could lead to bad publicity/criticism. / It could expose them as ruthless. / They held an inquiry and John Thompson was demoted. ✓✓ (2)

5. Yes, it is possible to bury the past if you can find new things to focus on or if you can manage to forgive the people who wronged you. ✓✓

   OR

   No, it is very difficult to forgive people who caused you to lose loved ones or who affected your life permanently. ✓✓ (2)

[11]

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Chapter 7

▶ Past time

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1. What happens and who is involved?

In this chapter there are many **flashbacks** as **Gikonyo**, who is still talking with **Mugo** on Monday evening, remembers the past.

- The chapter begins with a description of the village of Thabai in the past and the arrival of the railway. The railway station and Kinenie forest became meeting places.
- Gikonyo's story is told from the time he came to Thabai as a child to his return to the village after his detention. He was friends with **Karanja** and **Kihika** when they were young, before the State of Emergency.
- Kihika's attraction to Christianity and political beliefs are explained.
- Gikonyo and Karanja were rivals for **Mumbi**. Gikonyo won Mumbi's love, even though he lost the race with Karanja to the train. Gikonyo and Mumbi were married.
- Karanja has a "strange experience" at the station when he has some kind of dizzy spell. A selfish, cruel side to his character is revealed.

  > The earth was going round again. I must run, he thought, it cannot be helped, why should I fear to trample on the children, the lame and the weak when others are doing it?

- A State of Emergency was declared as the British tried to control the freedom fighters.
- Kihika fled to the forest to avoid being arrested and to join a group of freedom fighters there. **Wambuku**, Kihika's girlfriend, had tried to make him stay. **Njeri**, who also loves Kihika, joined him in the forest to fight.
- Gikonyo was sent to the detention camps. After four years, he could no longer bear to be away from home and his beloved Mumbi. He confessed to taking the Mau Mau oath. He was released two years later.
- After six years in the camps Gikonyo returned to Thabai. He found that Mumbi had had Karanja's child and that Karanja was the local Chief.

2. Themes

Community and the collective

- There was a strong community spirit in Thabai before the State of Emergency.
- The economy was strong as both Africans and Indians traded there, and the railway or "iron snake had first crawled along this plain ... Thabai was the envy of many ridges not so graced with a railway line."

Suffering and sacrifice

- Kihika uses the example of Christ's sacrifice to explain to people that sacrifice is necessary in the fight for independence. He tells Karanja:

  > "In Kenya we want deaths which will change things, that is to say, we want true sacrifice. But first we have to be ready to carry the

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> cross. I die for you, you die for me, we become a sacrifice for one another. So I can say that you Karanja, are Christ. I am Christ. Everybody who takes the Oath of Unity to change things in Kenya is a Christ."

- The descriptions of life in the detention camps, and the changes Gikonyo sees in Thabai when he returns, show how Kenyans suffered during the State of Emergency. Gikonyo's feelings of despair at finding his village so changed when he returns home can be compared to the despair felt by all the Kenyans.
- Gikonyo suffered even more when he returned home to find Mumbi with another man's child. He experienced "a heavy dullness. Life had no colour." After his return he takes no joy in life and begins to think that "Thabai was just another detention camp".

Confession

- Gikonyo confessed to taking the Mau Mau oath. He lost heart when Jomo Kenyatta lost his court case and Gatu, another detainee, was killed. Gikonyo's suffering and his need to see Mumbi caused him to confess that he had taken the oath:

> His desire to see Mumbi was there. His mind was clear and he knew without guilt, what he was going to do ... He walked ... to the office where screening, interrogations and confessions were made ...

However, Gikonyo did not name anybody involved in oath administration, so he was not released for another two years after his confession.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o wants us to see Gikonyo as an ordinary man who can sometimes be weak. Gikonyo confessed because he could no longer bear to be away from home.

Betrayal

- Gikonyo felt betrayed when he found out that Mumbi had had Karanja's child.
- Karanja betrayed the Movement and worked for the British. He became a local Chief in the British administration and a home guard. After reporting to Karanja on his return to Thabai, Gikonyo is confused by this betrayal:

> ... he only knew that the man with whom he had taken an oath to fight the whiteman was talking to him about the power of the white people, the man with whom he used to play the guitar, who often came to the workshop for gossip, was now shouting at him.

Lack of communication

- There is a "valley of silence" between Gikonyo and Mumbi. It is only at the end of the novel that this is bridged and Gikonyo hears Mumbi's side of the story.

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3. Symbols

Railway

- The train is described as an iron snake that coughed and vomited smoke "as it rattled along". Again, the metaphor of a snake is used to describe the train.

  At first people were suspicious of the railway. But in time they made use of it for their own needs:

> the railway platform became the meeting place for the young. They talked in groups at home, they went for walks in the country, some even went to church; but in their minds was always the train on Sunday … they just went there to meet one another, to talk, to gossip, to laugh.

  The forest, which was another social venue for the youth, is contrasted with the train station:

> From the station they normally went to dance in Kinenie Forest … often the dances ended in fights … At the platform things were different. Nobody thought of starting a fight.

The running race

- One day, Wambuku, Kihika, Njeri, Mumbi, Gikonyo and Karanja were late going to the station to see the train. For Karanja and Gikonyo the run to the train became a symbolic race between them for Mumbi. They both wanted to win to impress her. Karanja overtook Mumbi and Gikonyo. Mumbi stopped running, Gikonyo waited for her, and they stayed in the forest.

Land

- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o often uses descriptions of the land as a way to show the effect of the colonialists on the lives of the Kenyans. Before the State of Emergency the Kenyans had control of their land and it was a sacred link to their history and ancestors.
- When Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o describes the youth of Gikonyo and Mumbi he writes about the land in a positive way. When Gikonyo was young and falling in love with Mumbi he often thought of her in close association with the land. "He saw Mumbi moving in the country paths among the pea-flowers and green beans and maize plants."
- When Gikonyo returned from the detention camps years later, he noticed the poor condition of the land:

> The bumpy battered land sloped on either side; sickly crops just recovering from a recent drought, one more scourge which had afflicted the country in this period leaving the anxious faces of mothers dry and cracked.

- The suffering of the land mirrors the suffering of the people. The destroyed land symbolises how the British have destroyed the Kenyan people.

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Forest

- When Mumbi and Gikonyo first made love they were in the forest, which symbolises a place of refuge.
- The forest later became a refuge for Kihika and other freedom fighters. As Mumbi explained: "He had to choose between prison and forest. He chose the forest."
- Before the State of Emergency the forest was a place of romance, song and dance, although it was also a place of fights, as often "the dances ended in fights".

Activity 7

Read the extract, then answer the questions below.

[After a flashback about how the youth socialised in the forest and at the station.]

> "I rarely missed the train," Gikonyo now remembered, years later, when this was only a myth. "I loved to rub shoulders with the men and the women.
> "Yet the day I missed the train was the happiest in my life," he told Mugo.
>
> (Chapter 7)

1. a) State one reason why Gikonyo and his young friends went to the train station so often in the past. (1)
   (b) Refer to the last line in the extract. Why do you think Gikonyo says that day was the happiest in his life? (1)
2. In the novel, what does the forest symbolise for the freedom fighters? (1)
3. Why does Gikonyo confess in the detention camp? Give TWO reasons. (2)

[5]

Answers to Activity 7

1. a) They went to socialise/to meet their friends. ✓ (1)
   b) Mumbi chose to be with him rather than Karanja. ✓
   OR
   It was the first day Mumbi and Gikonyo made love. ✓
   OR
   Since his return from detention, Gikonyo and Mumbi's relationship has not been good, he is remembering the love they had in the past. ✓ (1)
2. A place of safety/refuge. ✓ (1)
3. He wants to return home, to be with Mumbi. ✓
   He can no longer bear the suffering / hard conditions in the camps. ✓
   He has lost faith in the independence Movement. ✓ (2)

[5]

hint Any TWO of these answers will earn you 2 marks.

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Chapter 8

A Grain of Wheat

▶ Day 2: Monday evening 9 December 1963

1. What happens and who is involved?

- **Gikonyo** continues to tell **Mugo** about what happened during the first few days after he returned to Thabai. He tells him how he felt about Karanja's betrayal, and Mumbi and the child.
- He explains that he decided to "never talk about the child", to ignore Mumbi, and to concentrate on his work.
- Mugo walks to a teashop where he meets **Githua** and **General R.** Mugo decides that he will speak at the Independence Day celebrations. "He would speak at the Uhuru celebrations. He would lead the people and bury his past in their gratitude. Nobody need ever know about Kihika."

Flashback

- Mugo thinks back to a day during the State of Emergency when he believed he heard God speak to him, as God spoke to Moses. For him it felt like the climax of his life. A week later, "Kihika came into his life".
- The villager **Githua** at the teashop proudly tells everyone about his past, and how he lost his leg fighting in the struggle.
- Mugo dreams that he is in Rira detention camp. The men call out, "Mugo save us." Mugo cannot refuse: "Here I am, Lord. I am coming." Again, we are reminded of Mugo comparing himself with Moses in the Bible, who led his people to freedom.

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2. Themes

Guilt

- After Gikonyo has left, Mugo feels the burden of his guilt. His thoughts are disjointed: "His mind lightly hopped from one episode to another."

Confession

- Gikonyo feels better after confessing his feelings to Mugo. "The weight had been lifted." However, he feels uncomfortable about exposing his feelings. Perhaps he thinks that Mugo is judging him for not forgiving Mumbi and accepting the child, or that he has shown Mugo that he is not a strong man and husband.
- On his way home, Gikonyo feels ashamed about having been "the first to confess the oath in Yala Camp".
- After Gikonyo has left, Mugo wonders if he should have confessed that he betrayed Kihika, to find peace of mind. He thinks:

> "Suppose I had told him ... suppose I had suddenly told him ... Everything would have been over ... all over ... the knowledge ... the burden ... fears ... and hopes."

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3. Symbols

The railway

- The railway is used to show the inequality in British colonial society. For example, Mugo remembers when he was a boy, seeing "a group of white people smoking, talking and laughing, while black people carried bags of maize and pyrethrum from standing lorries into the railways trucks". In later years, when Mugo thought of a white man, "he always pictured a man smoking a cigarette and a standing train that vomited out smoke".

Activity 8

Test yourself by answering the questions below.

1. Do you agree with the way Gikonyo behaved towards Mumbi when he returned from the detention camp? Give a reason for your answer. (2)

2. Why does Mugo decide to speak at the Independence Day celebrations? (1)

[3]

Answers to Activity 8

1. Yes, Mumbi was married to Gikonyo so she should not have betrayed him. ✓✓

   OR

   No, Gikonyo still loves Mumbi, he should have talked to her first and listened to her side of the story. ✓✓

   OR

   No, Mumbi was not thinking rationally, she was too emotional when Karanja told her Gikonyo was coming home. ✓✓ (2)

2. Mugo decides to speak at the Independence Day celebrations because he thinks he has been called to lead the people, and that no one needs ever know the truth. ✓ (1)

[3]

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Chapter 9

▶ Day 3: Tuesday 10 December 1963

1. What happens and who is involved?

- **Mugo**'s thoughts about his time in the camps, and the fact that he survived when so many others died at the Rira camp, lead him to believe that he must "lead the people of Thabai in the Uhuru celebrations. Thereafter, as a Chief, he would lead his people across the desert to the new Jerusalem."
- Mugo goes to Gikonyo's house to tell him about his decision to speak at the Independence Day celebrations. Gikonyo is not there, but he meets **Mumbi**.
- Mumbi wants to talk to Mugo about Gikonyo, whom she wants "above everything else". Mugo says that Gikonyo has already told him about the child and Karanja.
- During their conversation, Mumbi tells Mugo about events that happened in Thabai during the State of Emergency.

The destruction of the old Thabai village

During the State of Emergency the villagers were forced from their homes, which were burnt. They were made to dig trenches. The British used the trenches as a way to stop the villagers leaving and entering the village easily.

The old Thabai village was destroyed because a group of "Forest Fighters", led by Kihika, attacked the Mahee Police Post. The British retaliated and closed all African trading centres, such as Rung'ei Market, " 'in the interests of peace and security' ".

- General R and Lieutenant Koina arrive at Gikonyo's house. Gikonyo thinks that Karanja betrayed Kihika. At the Independence Day celebrations, he wants Mugo, at the end of his speech to say "that the man who betrayed Kihika should come forward – and stand condemned before the people".
- This upsets Mugo, who says that he cannot lead them, and rushes out.

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Flashback

- The chapter begins by describing what happened after Mugo's arrest – his experience in the detention camps. Although Thompson treated Mugo cruelly, Mugo never gave in and because of this the other prisoners saw him as a hero and it "gave them courage".
- Wambuku, the pregnant woman whom Mugo tried to save from being beaten by a home guard in the trench, later died. Njeri died in a battle after Kihika's death. Both girls had loved Kihika.
- Mumbi's and her mothers' huts were burnt. Mumbi and Wangari, her mother-in-law, built their new huts. Karanja secretly helped Mumbi, even though he belonged to the home guard.
- There were rumours that Karanja had betrayed Kihika. Mumbi refused his offer of bread when they were starving. But Karanja came again to offer food. He said that he did not betray Kihika. Mumbi believed him and took the food, but she felt ashamed.
- The local Chief was murdered. Karanja became the new Chief. He was terrifying:

  > He led other homeguards into the forest to hunt down the Freedom fighters. It was also during his rule that even the few remaining fit men were taken from the village to detention camps.

- One day, Karanja sent for Mumbi. He told her that Gikonyo was to be released. Mumbi felt "full of submissive gratitude", and allowed him to make love to her. He laughed at her afterwards as he had triumphed over both her and Gikonyo. Mumbi threw a shoe at him and ran away.

2. Themes

Confession

- Mumbi confesses to Mugo her private thoughts about her betrayal of Gikonyo.

Betrayal

- General R thinks that Karanja betrayed Kihika.
- Karanja betrays his people by working against the freedom fighters in the home guard and as a Chief.

Community and the collective

- We read about how Karanja abused his power as a Chief.
- Thompson had also abused his power at Rira, and lost his job because of it.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o wants us to think of Karanja and Thompson as typical of those who do not work for the good of the community.

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Suffering and sacrifice

- Mumbi's account of life during the Emergency gives the reader a clear picture of the suffering of the villagers. Because of the trench around the village the British had total control over their lives:

> Women were allowed out two hours before sunset to go and look for food. Nobody else was allowed out: even school-children had to remain in the village. Within days, the two hours of freedom were reduced to one. And as the time neared, even one hour of freedom was taken away. We were prisoners in the village, and the soldiers had built their camps all around to prevent any escape.

Activity 9

Read the extract below and answer the questions about it.

[Flashback to Mugo's experience at Rira detention camp]

> If Mugo had cried or asked for mercy Thompson might have relented. But now it seemed to him that all the detainees mocked and despised him for his failure to extort a cry from Mugo. And that was how Mugo gained prestige among the other detainees. Beyond despair, there was no moaning; the feeling that he deserved all this numbed Mugo to the pain. But the other detainees saw his resignation to pain in a different light; it gave them courage ...
>
> (Chapter 9)

1. What did Thompson want from Mugo? (1)
2. Give TWO reasons why Mugo was considered a hero. (2)
3. How did Karanja help Mumbi during the State of Emergency? (2)

[5]

Answers to Activity 9

1. Thompson wanted him to confess that he had taken the Mau Mau oath. ✓ (1)
2. The people thought that because Mugo did not cry out when he was beaten at the camp that he was showing great courage, ✓ and that he was not betraying the Movement. ✓ (2)
3. He helped her rebuild her hut. ✓ He gave her food for her family.✓ (2)

[5]

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Chapter 10

A Grain of Wheat

▶ Day 3: Tuesday 10 December 1963

1. What happens and who is involved?

- **Mwaura** had been spying on Karanja for **General R**, and his reports confirmed General R's suspicions that Karanja had betrayed Kihika. General R wants to expose Karanja at the Independence Day celebrations as the person who betrayed Kihika.
- **Karanja** is worried that **Thompson** is going to leave Kenya, as this may mean he will lose his job. He thinks of Thompson's power and thinks about how he, Karanja, had "experienced that power, which also ruled over the souls of men, when he, as a Chief, could make circumcised men cower before him, women scream by a lift of his finger". This clearly shows Karanja's vicious, cruel nature.
- We learn that Karanja had confessed his oath to the Mau Mau and registered as a home guard when Thompson was the District Officer, soon after Kihika had shot Robson.
- Mwaura tells Karanja that he should go to the celebrations to hear Mugo speak.
- Thompson tells Karanja that he is leaving Kenya. Karanja is very afraid of what will happen to him when the British leave.

Flashback

- Karanja remembers an incident when he was Chief. He arrested a man for not paying poll-tax. The man had been unemployed since being released from detention. Karanja had the man beaten and locked up. There was an inquiry. Karanja was made to pay a fine, and apologise. Later he was demoted from being a Chief. However, the District Officer gave him a letter of recommendation and he got the job at Githima.

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2. Themes

Betrayal

- General R, who "never forgot a friend or enemy", believes that Karanja betrayed Kihika. He is wrong, but Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o sees Karanja's support of the British as a betrayal of the Kenyan people.
- Karanja feels betrayed by Thompson. He remembers the "dog incident" of the day before. (See Chapter 4)

  > Karanja recalled his terror as the dog approached him. He shuddered. Thompson had saved him from shame. Thompson. And he was going. He strolled back to his room, heavy with a sense of imminent betrayal.

- He has served the British and they will leave him behind when they go.

3. Symbols

Dogs

- Dogs are used by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o as a symbol of white power, used to terrify and subdue the Kenyans. For example, Karanja remembers his fear of Dr Lynd's dog.
- When Karanja learns that Thompson is leaving, he walks away like "a dog that has been unexpectedly snubbed by the master it trusts".
- Mwaura mocks Karanja, saying that he once knew a white man in Nairobi who left Kenya, who "at least shot dead all his pets – cats and dogs. Couldn't bear to leave them alive without a kindly helper."

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Activity 10

Read the extract, then answer the questions below.

[Karanja thinks about a past event.]

Had the man gone, Karanja wondered? He should have asked him yesterday.
Yesterday after the dog incident. Karanja recalled his terror as the dog approached him. He shuddered. Thompson had saved him from shame. Thompson. And he was going. He strolled back to his room, heavy with a sense of imminent betrayal. 5
He had once before experienced a similar feeling. That was the day, soon after the State of Emergency was officially lifted, that the reigning D.O. advised him to resign his post as Chief. Then new Party political leaders like Oginga Odinga were agitating for Independence and the release of Jomo Kenyatta. Karanja arrested a man who had not paid poll-tax for two years.The man had been without a job since he left detention. He was so angry that instead of answering questions, he spat on the dust. The Chief did exactly what he was used to doing: he had the man beaten by his bodyguard, and locked him up at the homeguard post until morning. The matter was taken up by men connected with Odinga, and in this way reached the courts. Karanja was compelled to pay a fine and make a public apology. This had cut him to the quick. Why should he be punished for doing exactly what he had been praised for doing a month or so before? 10 15 20

[Chapter 10]

1. Explain why Karanja is so upset at the news of Thompson's return to England. (2)
2. In line 6, Karanja experiences a "sense of imminent betrayal". In fact, he betrayed his own people.
   Give TWO reasons why he decides to betray his people by joining the homeguard. (2)
3. Karanja arrests a man for not paying tax.
   a) Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence. Write only the answer (A–D):
   The arrest shows Karanja's ...
   A abuse of power.
   B short temper.
   C cowardly nature.
   D leadership. (1)
   b) What is the final outcome of this incident for Karanja? (1)
4. What is Thompson's post in the colonial government in the time just before Independence? (1)
5. In this extract Karanja recalls being punished for something he was praised for earlier. What does this tell you about the colonial government in Kenya? (1)

[8]

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Answers to Activity 10

1. He is upset because he is worried ✓ that he will lose his job/ his power/status. ✓ (2)
2. He decides to betray his people by joining the homeguard because he wants to be safe rather than risk being killed by fighting for the Movement. ✓ He also wants to have a well-paid job and power over his people. ✓ (2)
3 a) A abuse of power. ✓ (1)
   b) Karanja has to pay a fine and apologise publically. ✓ (1)
4. Thompson is the head of the Githima Forestry and Agricultural Research Station. ✓ (1)
5. This tells us that the British colonial government in Kenya is hypocritical/insincere and cannot be trusted. ✓ (1)

[8]

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Chapter 11

▶ Day 3: Tuesday evening 10 December 1963

1. What happens and who is involved?

- The **Thompsons** go to their farewell party. Many British people are worried that after Independence the Russians and the Chinese will take over Kenya. The Thompsons are not the only people planning to leave.
- **Dr Lynd** reminds Thompson about her dog being killed; and says that she is afraid as she recently saw the person who killed her dog. This frightens her, but she still does not want to leave Kenya and her property.
- The Thompsons are not happy and do not communicate well with each other at the party.
- John Thompson drops a glass, which falls the floor and breaks.
- On the way home, Thompson says: "We are not yet beaten ... Africa cannot, cannot do without Europe." Nevertheless, he is still planning to leave Kenya.
- Now that the Thompsons are leaving, the members of the British community speak fondly of them, although many of the women had disliked Margery.

> They searched their hearts and suddenly discovered that they had always admired John, that Margery had been their special friend, and what wouldn't they do to help them settle down in their next home!

The tone here is **sarcastic**, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o wants to show the reader how insincere and hypocritical these British people were.

vocab

Sarcasm: An ironic expression or tone used to mock or make fun of someone.

2. Symbols

The broken glass

- The glass that Thomson drops at the party may be seen to represent Kenya, which has been broken by the British. The Kenyan waiter "rushed in with a dustpan and brush and collected the broken pieces". Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o suggests that all Kenyans will have to work hard to clear up the mess that the British have made in the country.

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- The glass could also represent how Thompson's dreams have been broken. His dreams that the British Empire would endure have now been shattered. As Kenya frees itself from Britain, the empire is breaking into pieces like the glass.

Activity 11

1. Read the extract, then answer the question below.

[the Thomsons at their farewell party]

> Thompson's imminent departure and the Independence tomorrow night brought back in their hearts the man who had been at the centre of scandal at Rira. Thompson was therefore a martyr, had been so received at Githima, was so regarded now on the eve of his departure from a country he had served so well.
>
> (Chapter 11)

1 a) What does Rira refer to? (1)
b) What was the scandal at Rira? (3)
c) Who regarded Thompson as a martyr? Explain why they thought he was a martyr. (2)

2. Read the extract, then answer the questions below.

> By eleven o'clock people were getting drunk. A few couples were dancing. The African waiters stood aside, like posts, dressed in white Kanzus, a red band round the waist, and a red fez on the head.
> Men clustered around Margery, caressing her figure with their eyes. 5
> One by one they were pulled onto the floor by their wives, until only one fat man with a long unkempt beard and busy eyebrows was left talking to her. She kept on stealing S.O.S. glances at her husband who did not see because he was now engaged in a group that was discussing politics, Independence Day, and the fate of the 10
> whiteman under a black government.
>
> (Chapter 11)

2 a) Refer to line 2. Identify the figure of speech used in this line. (1)
b) Explain the figure of speech. (1)
c) Is this statement TRUE or FALSE? Give a reason for your answer.
Margery and her husband got on well with each other at the party. (2)

3. What did the British believe would be the "fate of the whiteman under a black government"? (1)

[11]

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Answers to Activity 11

1 a) Rira was a detention camp. ✓ (1)

b) John Thompson ordered that many detainees should be beaten because they would not confess to having taken the Mau Mau ✓ oath. Eleven ✓ people died. After an inquiry Thompson was removed from the camp. ✓ (3)

c) The British regarded Thompson as a martyr. ✓ They thought that he had worked hard at Rira against the Mau Mau and they thought that it was unfair that he should have been dismissed/lost his job. ✓ (2)

2 a) A simile. ✓ (1)

b) The waiters are compared to posts. This suggests they are standing straight and still/not moving. ✓ (1)

c) False. ✓

Margery and Thompson are not getting on well, as they are not talking or dancing together and he does not notice her when she tries to catch his attention. ✓✓ (2)

3. The British were afraid that they would be harmed after Independence. ✓ (1)

[11]

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Chapter 12

▶ Day 3: Tuesday evening 10 December 1963

1. What happens and who is involved?

- **Gikonyo** arrives home in a bad mood. He is rude to **Mumbi**. They argue and he pushes her child away and hits Mumbi.
- Gikonyo's mother, **Wangari**, expresses her anger at Gikonyo's behaviour and he leaves their home.
- Gikonyo visits **Warui** to tell him that Mugo will not lead the speeches at the Independence Day celebrations. They go to visit Mugo together.
- **Mugo** has bad memories that make him feel very disturbed.
- Gikonyo and Warui arrive at Mugo's hut. Mugo says that he will not speak at the celebrations. They think that he is being modest (humble). They ask him to think again.
- Warui goes to **Wambui**'s place, and they tell others about Mugo's refusal. Soon the whole village believes that "The man who had suffered so much had further revealed his greatness in modesty. By refusing to lead, Mugo had become a legendary hero."
- Gikonyo is angry, with everyone – the MP, Mugo and Mumbi. When he gets home, his mother tells him that Mumbi has left him. She has gone to her parents.

Flashbacks

- The previous afternoon, after returning from Nairobi, Gikonyo had visited the farm he wanted to buy, with the other men. They found a signpost that said the old owner (Burton) had left Kenya, and the new owner was their MP.
- Mugo remembers being scared by a horse when he was young. He had felt the same fear yesterday when he left Mumbi and General R.
- Mugo also remembers working in the trenches. A woman was being whipped by a home guard. Mugo held the whip to stop him. Mugo was whipped. He was arrested. He also remembers Warui telling him about an old lady who thinks her son, Gitogo, has come back from the dead.

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2. Themes

Heroism

- It is ironic that when Mugo says he cannot speak at the celebrations – "I cannot, I cannot face so many eyes" – it is misinterpreted by others as modesty. In their eyes, he is still a hero.

Lack of communication

- The trouble between Mumbi and Gikonyo, which began with Gikonyo refusing to talk about the child, reaches a crisis. Mumbi leaves him and their marriage seems broken.

Guilt, suffering and sacrifice

- Mugo's memories have made him afraid, but are also related to the guilt he feels. We see Mugo's "irrational terror" as he runs through the streets of Thabai. He remembers trying to save the woman in the trench from being beaten in spite of his terror, and the torture that followed. But when Warui tells him about the old woman who thinks her dead son, Gitogo, has visited her, Mugo is overwhelmed by his feeling of guilt. He feels that what he did to Kihika made the people's suffering worse. Once back at his home he is so troubled that he imagines he sees "thick blood dripping from the mud walls of his hut".

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Activity 12

1. What happened about the farm that made Gikonyo so upset? (1)
2. Why was Mugo arrested and sent to the detention camps? (1)
3. When Mugo tells Gikonyo and Warui that he "cannot face so many eyes", to whom is he referring? What is he really afraid of? (2)
4. At the end of Chapter 12, Wangari says to Gikonyo: "Read your own heart, and know yourself."
   a) Who is Wangari? (1)
   b) What has happened to make her say this? State TWO points. (2)
   c) What does she mean? (1)

[8]

Answers to Activity 12

1. The MP bought it, but he had promised to help Gikonyo and his friends to buy it. ✓ (1)
2. He stopped a home guard whipping /beating a pregnant woman. ✓ (1)
3. The crowd of people at the Independence Day celebrations. ✓ He is afraid that the people will know that it was he who betrayed Kihika. ✓ (2)

4 a) Gikonyo's mother. ✓ (1)
b) Gikonyo had hit Mumbi. ✓ Mumbi has left him. ✓ (2)
c) Wangari means he must think about what he has done, and face the truth. ✓ (1)

[8]

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Chapter 13

▶ Day 4: Wednesday 11 December 1963

1. What happens and who is involved?

- **Mugo** is seen walking in the rain to the market, without seeking shelter. People consider him "a hero, no ordinary man".
- **Wambui** decides that the women must try to persuade Mugo to speak, as the men have failed. A group of women meet at the market place and decide to send Mumbi to Mugo.
- **Mumbi** is worried about telling her parents why she left Gikonyo. She is also worried about General R's warning that Karanja will be killed for what he thinks is Karanja's part in Kihika's death. She thinks that "enough blood had already been shed".
- Mumbi tells Mugo that she has quarrelled with Gikonyo and returned to her parents. She then tells him that the women of Thabai and Rung'ei area want him at the Independence Day celebrations. Mugo says that he cannot go.
- Mumbi persists and Mugo begins to talk to her. He tells her about the horror of the camps. When Mumbi says that he must speak to the people about "Everything", Mugo tells her that he killed Kihika. He seems desperate and terrified, and even attacks Mumbi.

Flashbacks

- The story of Tom Robson, "*Tom*, the Terror", is told. He was the District Officer in Rung'ei. He caught and cruelly killed suspected freedom fighters. "He was a man-eater, walking in the night and day. He was death." He was shot, and killed, by Kihika.
- At the time Tom Robson was shot, Mugo had a shamba near Rung'ei Railway Station. He had just finished building his new hut, after the old Thabai had been destroyed. "The hut was his first big achievement. After moving into it, he resumed his daily life: he looked after the crops, his eyes fixed to the future."
- Kihika was being hunted by the police, and came to Mugo's hut. He told Mugo that he wanted him "to organize an underground movement in the new village". He asked Mugo to meet him the following week, in Kinenie Forest.

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- Mugo was afraid that he would be caught and sent to prison for sheltering Kihika. He only wanted to be left alone. He felt angry that Kihika had tried to involve him in the Movement. Mugo did not know what to do. Mugo also felt jealous of Kihika, who had a family. "Kihika had everything; Mugo had nothing." He did not want to be involved with the Movement; he did not like its violence.

  > What shall I do, he asked himself. If I don't serve Kihika he'll kill me. They killed Rev. Jackson and Teacher Muniu. If I work for him, the government will catch me … And they'll hang me … I am not ready for death.

- Later, he saw a poster offering a reward for news that would help the British capture Kihika. He was tempted and thought about what he could do with the money.
- Mugo went to see the new District Officer, John Thompson. The hatred that Mugo felt towards Kihika came back. He was relieved to tell Thompson "the story that had tormented him for a week". He told him where he had arranged to meet Kihika.
- Suspecting Mugo was just another person giving them false information, Thompson spat in his face. "Mugo was back in his nightmare." It seems Mugo fainted and fell on to the floor. "He did not want the money. He did not want to know what he had done."

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2. Themes

Community and the collective

- At the beginning of the chapter Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o speaks to the reader directly by saying, "You remember the Wednesday, just before Independence?" This makes us feel as if we are part of a conversation with others. It invites the reader to be one of the people in the market on that wet day.
- This links with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's belief that the community is very important. However, Mugo only wants to be left alone. He does not want to be involved. He wonders:

  > "Why should Kihika drag me into a struggle and problems I have not created? … I am not his brother. I am not his sister. I have not done harm to anybody. I only looked after my little shamba and crops."

  Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o shows that this attitude is unhealthy and must be punished, just as Mugo is punished at the end of the novel.
- In Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's opinion, the power of women in the community is very important. Mumbi and other women in the novel are often shown to be strong. For example, in this chapter we read the story of Wambui persuading the men at a shoe factory to join the 1950 workers' strike.

  Mumbi tells her mother that she will not return to Gikonyo: "I may be a woman, but even a cowardly bitch fights back when cornered against a wall." The community's women ask her to go to Mugo. She tells him that the "women of Thabai and Rung'ei area sent me to you. They want you at the meeting tomorrow." We see that women succeed where the men have failed, as Mugo responds to Mumbi – although, ironically, he does not give the speech she expected to hear at the celebrations.

  At the end of the novel we see how Mumbi persuades Gikonyo to face up to his life, just as his mother told him to "Read your own heart, and know yourself."

Suffering and sacrifice

- In the flashback, when Mugo remembers the visit from Kihika, Kihika tells Mugo why he is fighting, and the importance of sacrifice.

  > "But a few shall die that the many shall live. That's what crucifixion means today. Else we deserve to be slaves, cursed to carry water and hew wood for the whiteman for ever and ever."

- Mugo, in contrast, is not prepared to sacrifice his life as he thinks that he has a duty to keep himself "alive, healthy, strong".

3. Symbols

Water

- It rains on this Wednesday. Many people believe that the rain just before Independence Day is a sign and a "blessing for our hard-won freedom".

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Activity 13

Read the following extract, then answer the questions below.

[Wambui tells Mumbi to persuade Mugo to speak at the celebrations.]

Wambui put it in this way: Independence Day without him would be stale; he is Kihika born again. She went around the market place determined to put her secret resolve into practice. Women had to act. Women had to force the issue. "And, after all, he is our son," she told women at the market place at an impromptu gathering after the rain. Wambui's fighting spirit had never died.

She believed in the power of women to influence events, especially where men had failed to act, or seemed indecisive. Many people in old Thabai remembered her now-famous drama at the workers' strike in 1950. The strike was meant to paralyse the country and make it more difficult for the whiteman to govern. A few men who worked at a big shoe factory near Thabai, and in the settled area, grumbled and even said, so the rumours went, that they would not come out on strike. The Party convened a general meeting at Rung'ei. At the height of the proceedings, Wambui suddenly broke through the crowd and led a group of women to the platform. She grabbed the microphone from the speakers. People were interested. Was there any circumcised man who felt water in the stomach at the sight of a whiteman?

Women, she said, had brought their Mithuru and Miengu to the platform. Let therefore such men, she jeered, come forward, wear the women's skirts and aprons and give up their trousers to the women. Men sat rigidly in their seats and tried to laugh with the crowd to hide the inner discomfort. The next day all men stayed away from work.

Now the women decided to send Mumbi to Mugo. Mumbi the sister of Kihika. They would confront Mugo with sweet insistent youth – youth not to be ignored or denied.

[Chapter 13]

1. Refer to lines 1–2 ("Wambui put it ... Kihika born again").
   a) To whom does the word "him" refer? (1)
   b) Explain why Wambui says that "Independence Day without him would be stale". State TWO points. (2)
2. What does this extract suggest about Wambui's character? (3)
3. Explain why the community considers Mugo to be their hero. State TWO points. (2)
4. Indicate whether the following statement is TRUE or FALSE. Write "no"or "false" or "yes" or "true" and give a reason for your answer.
   Kihika was betrayed by Karanja. (2)
5. Who killed D.O. Tom Robson? (1)
6. Give two reasons why, in your opinion, Mugo betrayed Kihika. (2)

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Answers to Activity 13

1 a) Mugo ✓ (1)

b) She sees him as the new leader/hero of the struggle. ✓
She feels his presence at the Independence Day celebrations will enhance (improve) the event. ✓ (2)

2. She is a person of strong character./She does not give up easily/is determined. ✓
She is able to influence/persuade others. ✓
She is able to endure hardships. ✓
She is willing to make sacrifices in the name of the struggle. ✓ (3)

3. Mugo endured much suffering. ✓
He saved the pregnant woman, Wambuka (while she was digging trenches). ✓
He gave shelter to Kihika/hid Kihika while the British were looking for him. ✓
The sacrifices Mugo made can be compared with those made by Kihika. ✓
They believe he led the hunger strike at Rira. ✓
He did not confess to taking the oath. ✓
He never cried out when he was being beaten. ✓ (2)

4. False. ✓
Kihika was betrayed by Mugo./ Karanja was only suspected of betraying Kihika. ✓ (2)

5. Kihika ✓ (1)

6. He was jealous of/ hated Kihika. ✓
He was tempted by the reward. ✓
He was afraid that he would be caught for sheltering Kihika. ✓
Kihika wanted him to help build the Movement and Mugo did not want to be involved. ✓ (2)

[13]

hint

Any THREE of the answers in question 2 will earn you 3 marks. Any TWO in question 3 will earn you 2 marks

hint

Any TWO of the answers in question 6 will earn you 2 marks.

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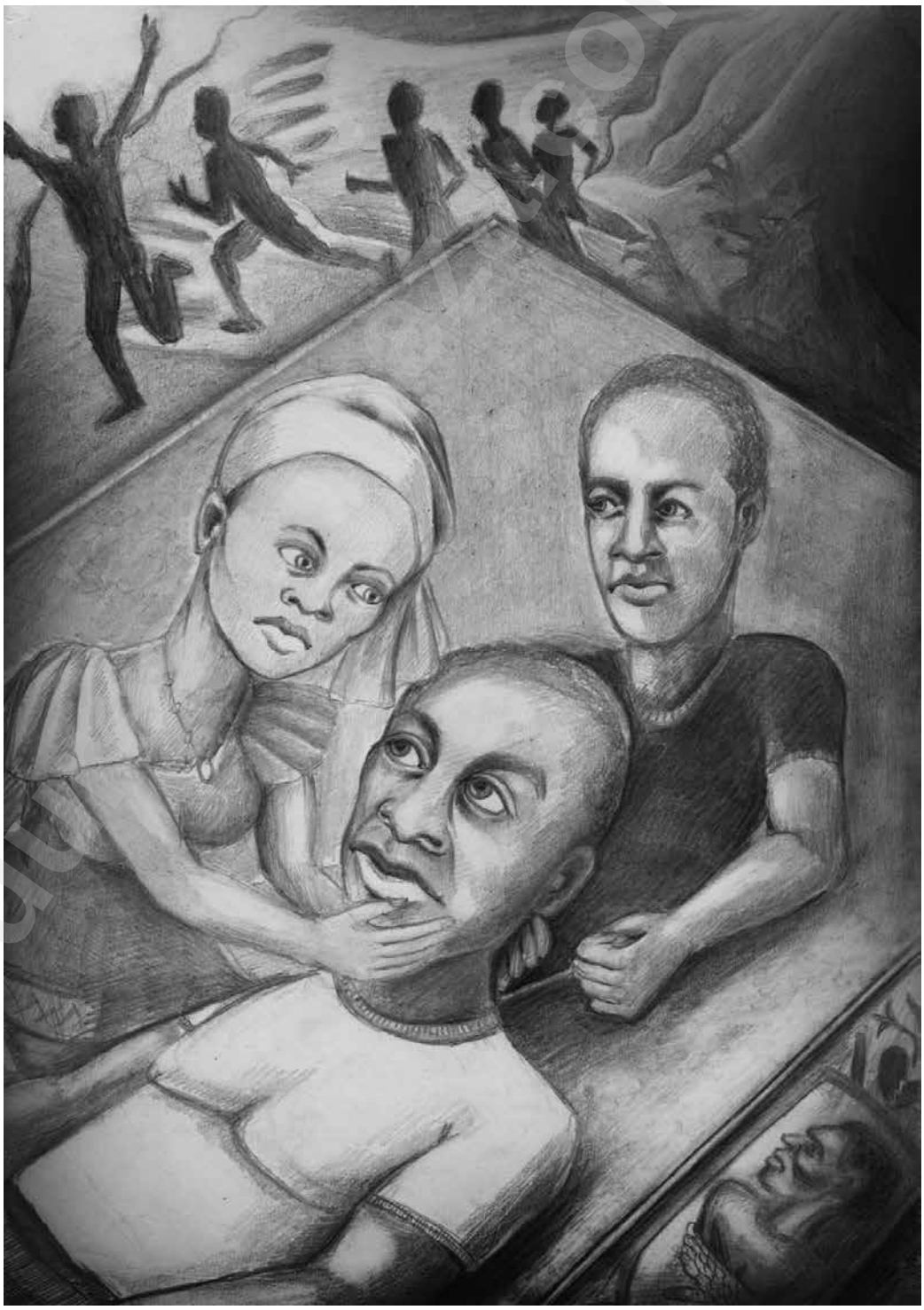
Chapter 14

▶ Day 5: Thursday 12 December 1963 – Independence Day



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1. What happens and who is involved?

- The **villagers** gather to celebrate the night before Independence Day.
- A group go to **Mugo**'s hut to sing to him. They knock on the door and hope that he will join them, but he does not respond. The night ends with a storm that destroys huts and crops.
- On Independence Day many celebrations take place. In the morning a race around the field is organised. Karanja arrives and decides to join the race, hoping that "this time he would win the race and Mumbi together".
  - **Mumbi** is shocked to see **Karanja** in the race as she has sent him a note to warn him to stay away because he is going to be publicly accused of being the one who betrayed Kihika. When Mumbi wrote the note she thought Karanja had betrayed Kihika, but now she knows that it was Mugo.
  - In the morning **Mumbi** had told Wambui that Mugo did not want to take part in the ceremony, and asked: "Can't we leave him alone?" Mumbi "did not want anybody to die or come to harm because of her brother". Mumbi does not want vengeance for Kihika, she is prepared to forgive. She does not want Mugo to suffer any more. Yet she is annoyed with herself for caring about Karanja, as he has ruined her life.
  - While they run the race, **Gikonyo**, Karanja, **General R** and **Lieutenant Koina** think about their past.
  - Gikonyo falls, and causes Karanja to fall too. General R wins the race.
  - Mumbi rushes to Gikonyo and holds his head in her hands. She then remembers that they are not together any more and, embarrassed, goes home.
  - Gikonyo does not get up and is taken to hospital. He has broken his arm.
  - In the afternoon the ceremonies and speeches take place. General R is called to speak instead of Mugo. General R asks for the person who betrayed Kihika to come forward; he thinks that it will be Karanja, but it is Mugo who comes forward. Mugo makes his public confession:

    > "You asked for the man who led Kihika to this tree, here. That man stands before you, now. Kihika came to me by night. He put his life into my hands, and I sold it to the whiteman. And this thing has eaten into my life all these years."

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Flashbacks

- Mumbi thinks back to the previous evening, when Mugo attacked her. When she had asked him what was wrong he had taken his hands off her and knelt before her. He had told her that he had betrayed her brother, Kihika.
- Karanja remembers that he had confessed the oath so he would not be taken to the camps and could stay in Thabai, near Mumbi. He could not force himself on her. Yet he had taken advantage of her. Afterwards, he thought Mumbi despised him, as she had thrown a shoe at him.
- Karanja was in a state of despair because the Thompsons had gone, and with them, the security that "white power" had given him. He had told Mwaura that he would not attend the Independence Day ceremonies. But Mumbi's letter had changed his mind. He wanted to see her again. He still "trusted his physical power over Mumbi". He did not take her warning seriously. Hearing that she had left Gikonyo also gave him hope.
- General R remembers his childhood and violent father.
- Lieutenant Koina remembers how he had worked for Dr Lynd. He had liked her dog. Yet the woman and her dog lived in luxury whilst Kenyan people lived in poverty. It was he who had let the men into her house and killed her dog. When he saw her again at Githima he had been surprised that she was still in Kenya. He wondered if his life really would improve with Uhuru.

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2. Themes

Community and the collective

- At the beginning of the chapter, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o refers to "our village" and uses "we" to show that everyone is connected and working together. Mugo, who does not respond when the villagers come to his hut, is alone and isolated from the community.

  > For more than an hour Mugo's hut was taken prisoner. His name was on everybody's lips. We wove new legends around his name and imagined deeds. We hoped that Mugo would come out and join us, but he did not open the door to our knocks.

  Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o believes that everyone must show responsibility and commitment to the community.

  Organising the race at the celebrations is a way of involving more people in the event and is another way in which Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o tells us that it is important for the community to do things together.

3. Symbols

Water

- The night before the celebrations there is a great storm.

  > The wind and the rain were so strong that some trees were uprooted whole, while others broke at the trunk, or lost their branches.

  This suggests the dramatic and violent effects of colonialism on Kenya. Afterwards, however, hope is suggested by the rain stopping and the earth beginning to renew itself. This can be compared to the Kenyans, who will now begin to build a new country of their own.

  > The morning itself was so dull we feared the day would not break into life. But the rain stopped. The air was soft and fresh, and an intimate warmth oozed from the pregnant earth to our hearts.

- The chapter ends with signs of a storm coming to show that it will cleanse the land and bring a new time for Kenya.

The running race

- The race is a symbolic opportunity for Gikonyo, Karanja, General R and Lieutenant Koina to resolve the past and face the future. The race also serves to unite the people, as the celebrations do not begin as well as they should:

  > contrary to what might be expected on an Uhuru day, a gloom hung over the morning session, that is over the sports and dances.
  >
  > But suddenly towards the end of the morning session, something happened that seemed to break the gloom. A three-mile race ... was announced.

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4. Figurative language

Oxymoron: An oxymoron is the use of two words or phrases together that are opposite in meaning. In Karanja's flashback as he is running the race, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o uses one: "White power had given Karanja a fearful security ..." If you have security you should not be afraid. Here it means that the security the British gave Karanja was not lasting, it was dangerous to trust it. When Thompson left Karanja felt betrayed.

Activity 14

Read the following extract, then answer the questions below.

[Karanja, Gikonyo and others participate in a race.]

Warui dropped out almost immediately. He went and sat next to Wambui and Mumbi.
"You? I'll never trust your strength again," Mumbi teased him. "You have shamed all your faithful women."
"Let the children play," he said, and slowly shook his head. "In our time, we ran for miles and miles after our cattle stolen by the Masai. And it was no play, I tell you."
Before the end of the first lap, many runners had followed Warui's example and dropped out. Only one woman completed the third lap. It was at the end of the fourth round when many people had opted out of the race, that Mumbi suddenly noticed Karanja's presence. Her clapping abruptly stopped; her excitement slumped back to memories of yesterday. The sight of Karanja and Gikonyo on the same field embarrassed her so that she now wished she had stayed at home with her parents. Why had Karanja come, anyway, despite her warning note? Or did he not receive the message?
Seeing General R in the race, she was reminded of what the General had said two days before this. The irony of his words now struck her with her fuller knowledge of the situation. Circumstances had changed since she wrote that note. Then she had not known that the man who had actually betrayed Kihika was now the village hero. How could she tell this to anybody?
Could she bear to bring more misery to Mugo, whose eyes and face seemed so distorted with pain? She recalled his fingers on her mouth, the others awkwardly feeling her throat. Then the terrible vacuum in his eyes. Suddenly at her question, he had removed his hands from her body. He knelt before her, a broken, submissive penitent.

[Chapter 14]

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1. Refer to lines 19 – 20 ("Circumstances had changed ..."). What does Mumbi mean? (1)
2. Refer to lines 13 – 22 ("The sight of ... this to anybody"). Identify and discuss a theme of the novel revealed in these lines. (4)
3. Refer to lines 18 – 19 ("The irony of ... of the situation"). Explain what is meant by "the irony" in General R.'s words. (3)
4. Discuss Mumbi's character. (3)
5. In your opinion, is it important to find out who betrayed Kihika, even though Independence has been gained? Justify your answer. (2)

[13]

Answers to Activity 14

1. Mugo told Mumbi that he had betrayed Kihika./ Mumbi now knows that Mugo, and not Karanja, betrayed Kihika. ✓ (1)
2. The theme is betrayal of the freedom Movement. Mumbi knows that Mugo betrayed Kihika, not Karanja. However she does not tell General R this. ✓✓✓✓

   OR

   Mumbi's betrayal of her husband, Gikonyo. Mumbi had Karanja's child/ had sex with Karanja, and this is why she felt embarrassed to see them both in the race. ✓✓✓✓ (4)
3. General R thinks that he is going to arrest Karanja for betraying Kihika but Mugo is the one who betrayed Kihika and he will also be at the celebrations. ✓✓✓ (3)
4. She is a responsible person. ✓

   She is committed to her family/ still loves Gikonyo./ She is willing to make sacrifices to take care of her mother-in-law during Gikonyo's absence. ✓

   She is hard-working – she builds a new home for her mother-in-law and herself. ✓

   She is very patient as she endures Gikonyo's absence and his harsh treatment of her for a long time. ✓

   She is not vengeful and does not want to take revenge for her brother's death. ✓

   She is compassionate and realises that people have suffered enough. ✓ (3)
5. Yes. The truth has to be revealed and the person has to be punished/ made to pay for his betrayal. ✓✓

   OR

   No. It serves no purpose. Independence has been gained. ✓✓ (2)

[13]

hint Any THREE of the answers to question 4 will earn you 3 marks.

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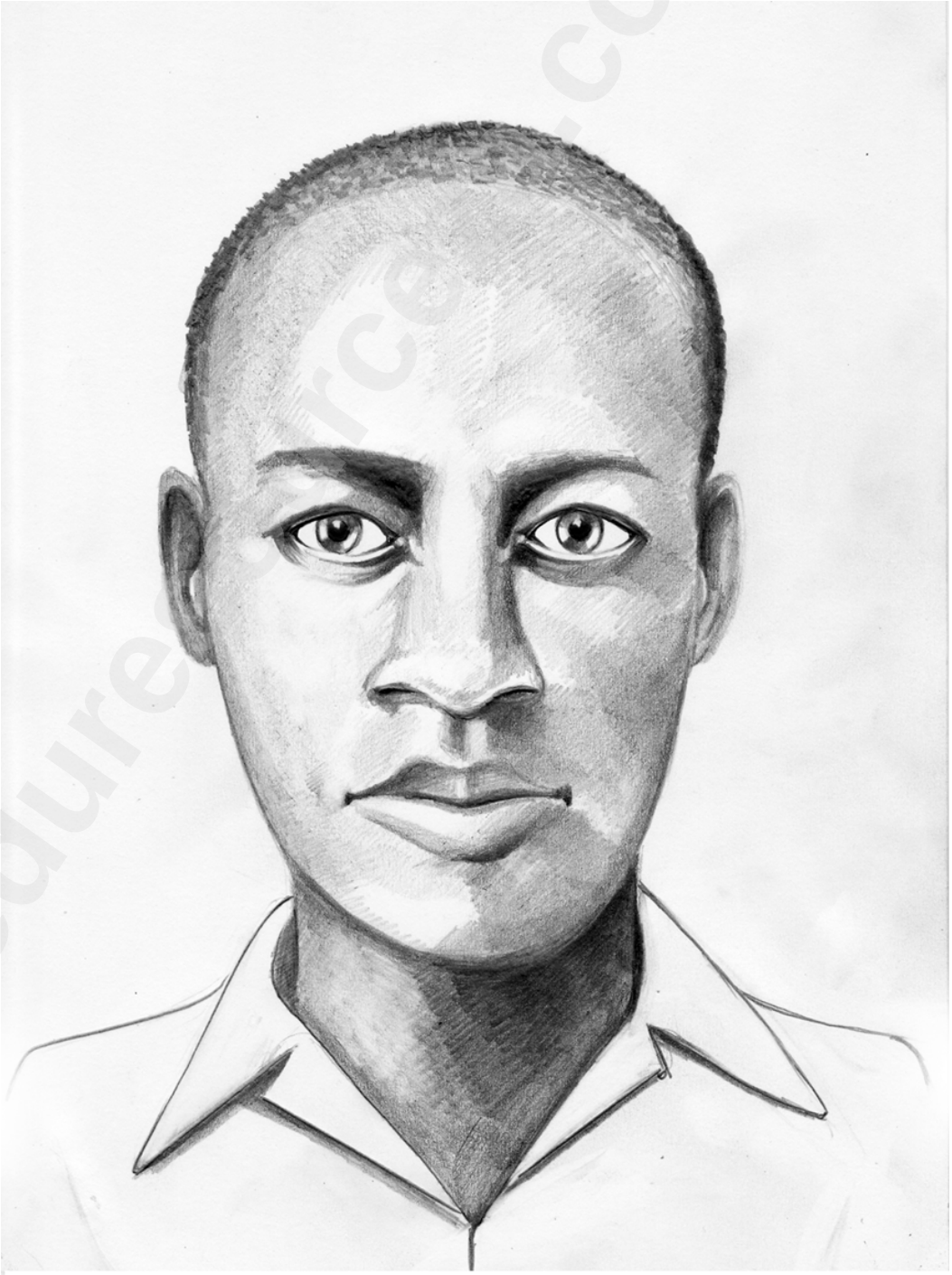
Karanja

▶ **This chapter continues the story of Karanja, after the Independence Day celebrations**



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1. What happens and who is involved?

General R speaks against "traitors and collaborators with the colonial enemy". In this chapter, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o takes us into the thoughts of Karanja, who was just such a man.

- **Karanja** prepares to leave Thabai as he realises that without the whiteman's power to protect him he will not be able to stay.
- On his way to the bus stop, in Thabai, Karanja meets **Mumbi**. He thanks her for the note, and says that he looked for her at the celebrations (meeting). Mumbi tells him that she never wants to see him again.
- Karanja says that Mwaura told him that they had wanted to kill him, thinking he was the traitor. He tells Mumbi that Mugo confessed at the meeting. She had not heard about it. Karanja asks to see his child, but Mumbi asks him to leave her alone.
- Karanja had felt protected by the whiteman's power. "He was scared of black power." At the celebrations he had been too afraid to say that he had nothing to do with Kihika's capture. Now that "Mumbi had finally rejected him", he wonders why he has been saved.
- Karanja is on the road to Githima, at the railway crossing. It almost seems as if he wants to commit suicide as he steps towards the train as it passes. The train goes on and he is left alone in the dark.

Flashbacks

- Karanja thinks about his past and his relationship with his mother, Wairimu, who was disappointed in her son. She had disapproved of him being a home guard and a Chief. She had warned him: "Don't go against the people. A man who ignores the voice of his own people comes to no good end."
- Karanja confessed the oath after he had seen Kihika hanged. He felt disgust, not sorrow for a lost friend. To save himself he joined the homeguard. In his first job he identified members of the Mau Mau for the British. He wore a hood over his head so that he could not be recognised.

2. Themes

Heroism

- Karanja and Mumbi think that Mugo is courageous for confessing that he betrayed Kihika. Karanja says: "He is a man of courage."

Suffering and sacrifice

- Karanja is the opposite of Kihika, as he was not prepared to make any sacrifices. He does not have Kihika's heroic courage. He is too selfish to join the Mau Mau cause, as he only thinks of himself and what benefits and power he can gain.

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Betrayal

- Karanja is a traitor, like Mugo. He betrays his friend Gikonyo by having sex with his wife, he betrays his people by working for the British and shooting terrorists and, by leaving Thabai, he even betrays his mother.

  Notice how like Mugo Karanja has become at this point in the story. His whole life is now meaningless and, like Mugo, he is troubled and confused. "Thompson has gone, I have lost Mumbi. His mind hopped from image to image, following no coherent order. Incidents in his life would pop up and then disappear."

Community and the collective

- Instead of Karanja facing up to how he betrayed the community by confessing his Mau Mau oath and becoming a home guard, he tries to run away like a coward.

  It seems that Karanja is left alone, abandoned by the British, and the people of Thabai:

  > He was conscious … of many angry eyes watching him in the dark ... When the train disappeared, the silence around him deepened; the night seemed to have grown darker.

Guilt

- Notice too how Karanja has become very troubled, like Mugo, because of his guilt. He had not felt guilty when he was abusing his power as a home guard and Chief.

3. Symbols

Railway

- The train that passes Karanja may be seen as a symbol of the British leaving Kenya, as it was their technology.

4. Figurative language

- The description of the train as it passes Karanja is very vivid: "The train was now so near he could hear the wheels screeching on the rails. He felt the screeching in his flesh ..." The sound of the train is described in a **metaphor** as if it was tearing into Karanja's body. The repetition of the word "screeching" is an example of **onomatopoeia**, bringing the sound of the train to life.
- It is ironic that Karanja, who had betrayed so many of his people, was not denounced as a traitor at the Uhuru celebrations. In an **ironic twist**, he was saved by Mugo, who had betrayed only one person, Kihika.

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Activity 15

Read the following extract, then answer the questions below.

[Karanja and Mumbi meet by accident.]

"How is Gikonyo?" he asked, without thinking much about the question. He guessed she had gone to the hospital because he had not seen her at the meeting.
"He is all right. The nurses told me he might be out soon."
"I looked for you at the meeting. I wanted to see you. I wanted to thank you for the note." 5
"It's nothing. It cost me no effort. In any case, you ignored it."
"Then I had not known what the warning was all about. I'd thought you wanted to see me."
"No." 10
"Never?"
"Never again." They spoke hurriedly because of the drizzle.
"Anyway, thank you," he said after a small pause. "They wanted to kill me?"
"I don't know." 15
"I know. Mwaura told me."
"Who is Mwaura?"
"He works with me. When Mugo came to the meeting –"
"Mugo, to the meeting?"
"Yes. And confessed –" 20
"Confessed?"
"Haven't you heard? He came to the meeting and in front of us all said it. He seems to be a courageous man."
"Yees!" She agreed, recovering from the shock, and starting to edge away from Karanja. "It's raining. I must go home," she said. 25
"Can't I … may I not see the child … last time?"
"Can't you be a man and leave me alone, Karanja?" she said with passion, and immediately turned away. Karanja watched her go until she was swallowed by the mist and the village huts.

[Chapter "Karanja"]

1. Refer to line 1 (" 'How is Gikonyo?'")
   Briefly outline the events that led to Gikonyo being in hospital. State TWO points. (2)
2. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence.
   The words "without thinking much about the question" in line 1 mean that Karanja is ...
   A really worried about Mumbi.
   B not really worried about Gikonyo.
   C really worried about Gikonyo's family.
   D not really worried about Mumbi. (1)

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3. Refer to line 6 ("... thank you for the note").
   a) Explain why Mumbi sends Karanja a note. State TWO points. (2)
   b) What does Karanja think the note means? State TWO points. (2)
4. Refer to lines 13 – 14 ("They wanted to kill me?").
   a) To whom does "They" refer? (1)
   (b) Why do these people not kill Karanja? (1)
5. What role does Mwaura play in the few days before the freedom celebrations? (1)
6. Refer to line 25 (" 'Can't I ... may I not see the child ... last time?' ")
   How does this line make you feel towards Karanja? Discuss your view. (2)
7. Refer to line 31 ("she was swallowed by the mist and the village huts").
   These words have both a FIGURATIVE and a SYMBOLIC meaning.
   a) Explain the figurative way in which Mumbi is "swallowed". (1)
   b) Explain the symbolic way in which she is "swallowed". (1)
8. Consider the novel as a whole.
   Do you think Mumbi is cold and unfeeling towards Karanja? Discuss your view. (2)
9. Consider the novel as a whole.
   Do you admire Karanja? Discuss your view. (2)

[18]

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Answers to Activity 15

1. He participated in the Uhuru race. ✓
   He fell/broke his arm. ✓ (2)
2. B not really worried about Gikonyo ✓ (1)
3 a) To warn him/ to tell him not to come to the Uhuru celebrations. ✓ (1)
   He might be arrested. /People think he is a traitor. / She does not want anyone else to be harmed because of her brother. (1)
   b) He thinks she wants to see him. /He hopes she still has feelings for him. ✓✓ (2)
4 a) To General R and his men. ✓ (1)
   b) Mugo confesses to betraying Kihika. ✓ (1)
5. He has to make sure that Karanja attends the celebrations. ✓ (1)
6. I feel sorry for Karanja because he seems unsettled/nervous. He is normally very composed, commanding and in control. / This stammering shows a softer, more sensitive side of his nature. / He cares about his son and this is his last chance to see him.✓✓
   OR
   I do not feel sorry for him because he forced himself on Mumbi when she was very vulnerable. He does not have any right to see his son. ✓✓ (2)
7 a) When Karanja can't see her any more, this is compared to the mist swallowing her. /The mist swallowing her is a metaphor for the way she disappears from Karanja's sight. / She disappears from Karanja's sight/Karanja cannot see her any longer. ✓ (1)
   b) Her disappearance is a symbol of the fact that they will never be together. / She is now gone from his life. ✓ (1)
8. Yes. He is the father and should be allowed to see the child. She resists all his advances and does not allow him to see the child.✓✓
   OR
   No. It is his own fault. He knew Mumbi was married when he fathered her child. She appreciates the news he gives her about Gikonyo's release and lets him make love to her. ✓✓ (2)
9. No. I do not admire Karanja because he betrays his people and takes advantage of Mumbi, who is another man's wife. / He is selfish and he is a traitor. / When he was a home guard he was obsessed with power and killed people as if they were animals.✓✓
   OR
   Yes. He is ambitious and he goes after what he wants. He has power and resources when most other Kenyans are suffering. ✓✓ (2)

[18]

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Mugo

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- Day 4, Wednesday 11 and Day 5, Thursday 12
- Independence Day 1963

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1. What happens and who is involved?

- *Independence Day:* **Mumbi** and **Wangari** visit **Gikonyo** in the hospital and tell him about Mugo's confession.
- Gikonyo still praises Mugo. He says: "Tell me another person who would have exposed his soul for all the eyes to peck at."
- Mumbi is worried about Mugo and twice goes to his hut, but cannot find him.
- **Mugo** feels that he has now lost Mumbi's trust and she must think him vile. After his confession Mugo thinks he will run away to Nairobi. He passes the hut of the old woman whose son, Gitogo, had been shot by British soldiers. He feels he wants to see her. The woman believes he is her dead son who has returned. She is happy, but it seems that the shock kills her. Mugo imagines she is his cruel aunt. Instead of escaping to Nairobi, Mugo goes back to his hut.
  - Mugo sits on his bed, with water dripping from his wet hair. **General R** and **Lt Koina** come to his hut. They have come to take him to a trial because, as General R says: "Your deeds alone will condemn you ... No one will ever escape from his own actions." General R does not sound angry or bitter.

Flashbacks

- Mugo thinks about what happened just before the Independence Day celebrations. He remembers how Mumbi "trusted him, and confided in him". Her trust had made him tell the truth and he had confessed. He had thought that she would tell the others.
- At the celebrations Mugo thought about letting Karanja take the blame. But if he did, he would never be able to look Mumbi in the face. After Mugo had finished speaking there was silence. The people did not attack him, but let him leave.

2. Themes

Guilt

- After his confession the burden of guilt was lifted from Mugo. "Mugo felt light. A load of many years was lifted from his shoulders."

Suffering and sacrifice

- Mugo's death is associated with Kihika's. Kihika sacrificed his life for Kenya and when Mugo sacrifices his life he atones (pays) for Kihika's death. This helps to heal the wounds of Kenya's colonial past. In the end he recognises what he has done and that, like Judas, who betrayed Christ, he could not have committed a greater crime. In this way he also becomes heroic as he accepts his fate. He tells General R and Lieutenant Koina that he is "ready".

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Community and the collective

- The chapter shows us how dangerous it is to live isolated from the community. Mugo visits the old lonely woman who cannot see reality when she mistakes him for her son. Mugo also cannot see reality as he imagines that the old woman is his cruel aunt. With this incident the author is saying that living alone will lead to unhealthy ideas about the world.

3. Symbols

Water

- The rain drenches Mugo so that when he returns to his hut, just as at the beginning of the book, a drop of water enters his eye. Yet this time he is not afraid, and the water "ran down his face like a tear". Water, now, is cleansing.

Grain of wheat

- With Mugo's death the people are aware that revenge is irrelevant and meaningless, as the important thing is that silence must be broken. Now that everyone knows the truth they can go into the future, and the village and Kenya can prosper once more.
- This means that, like Kihika, Mugo is like the grain of wheat which must die (dry out) so that there can be new life. The grain of wheat has borne fruit for Kenya in the form of a healthier community in the newly independent country.

Activity 16

Read the extract below, then answer the questions below.

[Mugo goes to speak at the Independence Day celebrations]

> He found General R. speaking, and this reminded him of Karanja. Why should I not let Karanja bear the blame? He dismissed the temptation and stood up. How else could he ever look Mumbi in the face? His heart pounded against him, he felt sweat in his hands, as he walked through the huge crowd. His hands shook, his legs were not firm on the ground. In his mind, everything was clear and final. He would stand there and publicly own the crime. He held on to this vision. Nothing, not even the shouting and the songs and the praises would deflect him from this purpose. It was the clarity of this vision which gave him courage as he stood before the microphone and the sudden silence. As soon as the first words were out, Mugo felt light. A load of many years was lifted from his shoulders. He was free, sure, confident.
>
> (Chapter 16: Mugo)

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1. What is the "crime" that Mugo is going to confess to? (1)
2. Explain what has made him decide to confess. (1)
3. Refer to line 12, "A load of many years was lifted from his shoulders." Explain the figurative meaning of this sentence. (1)
4. Discuss the importance of the theme of confession in this extract. (2)
5. Mugo isolates himself from the community. Discuss why he does so. (2)
6. Mugo is a traitor, but no one in the village suspects him. If you were in Mugo's situation, would you have confessed to your crime? Discuss your view. (2)

[9]

Answers to Activity 16

1. Mugo's crime was that he betrayed Kihika to the British. ✓ (1)
2. Mumbi confesses her guilt about Karanja to Mugo, and so she is an example to him that to confess is the correct thing to do. ✓ (1)
3. It refers to the guilt that Mugo felt for betraying Kihika, which was like a heavy load. ✓ (1)
4. Confession has the power to make one feel relieved and better. After he confessed "Mugo felt light"/ felt as if the burden of guilt had been lifted. ✓✓ (2)
5. He is consumed by guilt and he is afraid that the community will find out. ✓

   The fact that he had no family, just an aunt who raised him and treated him badly, also meant that he had always felt alone. ✓ (2)
6. Yes, I would have confessed because one should get rid of guilt for peace of mind. I would not be able to live with my feelings of guilt. ✓✓

   OR

   No, I would want to be respected as a hero. Karanja also betrayed his people, so he deserved to die more than I did. ✓✓ (2)

[9]

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Warui, Wambui

▶ Two days after Independence Day 1963

1. What happens and who is involved?

- **Warui**, a village elder, and **Wambui**, an old woman who was active during the struggle, sit after the celebrations and talk about the death of the old woman (the mother of Gitogo, the young deaf man whom the British shot during the Emergency).
- They feel downhearted and depressed because of the constant drizzle of rain, and also because they are still trying to come to terms with the fact that Mugo was a traitor. They feel that "something went wrong".
- **Mumbi** visits them. She wonders if she could have saved Mugo. She tells them that he had confessed to her the night before the meeting, and how his face had changed. Finally, she says that perhaps they must not worry too much about the meeting and Mugo. She says: "We have got to live." Warui and Wambui agree that life must continue.
- Wambui feels that Independence has been "a terrible anti-climax". "Perhaps we should not have tried him, she muttered."

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2. Themes

Betrayal

- Warui and Wambui are both like "bereaved children for whom life has suddenly lost warmth, colour, and excitement". They feel that Mugo's behaviour has betrayed the Uhuru celebrations.

Community and the collective

- Warui and Wambui believe that the old woman died because she was cut off from the community. When Mumbi comes she is the first to recognise that they must all continue to work together. Warui adds that "we have the village to build", and Wambui says: "And the market tomorrow, and the fields to dig and cultivate for the next season".

Suffering and sacrifice

- Warui says that he has not seen Wambui "since the day of the big sacrifice". He is referring to the sacrifice of rams on Independence Day, but the words may also refer to the other big sacrifice of the day – that of Mugo, who offers his life so that the village may have the truth.

3. Symbols

Water

- The rain on Independence Day is not heavy, but just a drizzle. It symbolises the state of shock the villagers are in after hearing Mugo's confession. After the big build-up to the celebrations, there is no violent storm, but a steady rain, an anti-climax.

It is as if they had expected Mugo to be their hero and lead them into the future, but their expectations were shattered. They do not know what to do. Wambui "was lost in a solid consciousness of a terrible **anti-climax** to her activities in the fight for freedom".

vocab

Anti-climax: A disappointing end to an exciting or impressive series of events. Opposite of climax.

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Activity 17

Read the following extract, then answer the questions that follow.

[Warui and Wambui are discussing Mugo.]

"A man has nowhere else but where he lays his head," was the cryptic rejoinder to the many compliments on her tidiness. Warui had not seen her since the day of the big sacrifice. For the last two days people in Thabai had more or less kept to themselves, avoiding, by general consent, public discussions on the events of Uhuru day. There were things that puzzled Warui, questions for which, in vain, he sought answers in the heart. Failing, he had come to see Wambui. Yet they now conversed, as if they did not know what the other was talking about, as if they were both ashamed of certain subjects in one another's presence.
"Perhaps it is this cold that killed her," he tried again.
"Who?'
"The old woman."
"Yees!" she said, irrelevantly, and sighed. "We all forgot her on that day. We should not have left her alone. She was old. Loneliness killed her."
"Why on that day, I keep on asking myself. She used to live alone, or is that not so?"
"Then, life was around her. The smoke and the noise of children. On that day, all of us went to the meeting. All of us. There was no smoke anywhere, and there were no cries or laughter of children in the streets. The village was empty." She spoke as if building up a case in an argument.

(Chapter 17: Warui, Wambui)

1. Briefly discuss each of the following characters. State TWO things about each character.
   (a) Warui (2)
   (b) Wambui (2)
2. The Day of Independence is supposed to be a celebration. Briefly discuss the shocking events that take place during this celebration. State TWO points. (2)
3. Refer to line 13 ("The old woman").
   Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence:
   The old woman is the mother of ...
   A Karanja.
   B Gikonyo.
   C Gitogo.
   D Mumbi. (1)

[7]

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Answers to Activity 17

1 a) He is one of the village elders. ✓
He is wise. ✓
He is experienced. ✓
He misjudged Mugo (trusted him). ✓
He gave Mugo the land for his new shamba, as when he was in detention the British confiscated his other piece of land. ✓ (2)

b) She supported and helped the freedom fighters. ✓
She smuggled guns to the fighters. ✓
She is very brave. ✓
She is involved in the trial and execution of Mugo. ✓
She is cunning/very clever. ✓ (2)

2. General R invites the person who betrayed Kihika to stand up and admit it. ✓
Mugo admits that he is guilty of betraying Kihika. ✓ (2)

3. C/ Gitogo ✓ (1)

[7]

hint
Any two answers in question 1a) and b) will earn you 2 marks

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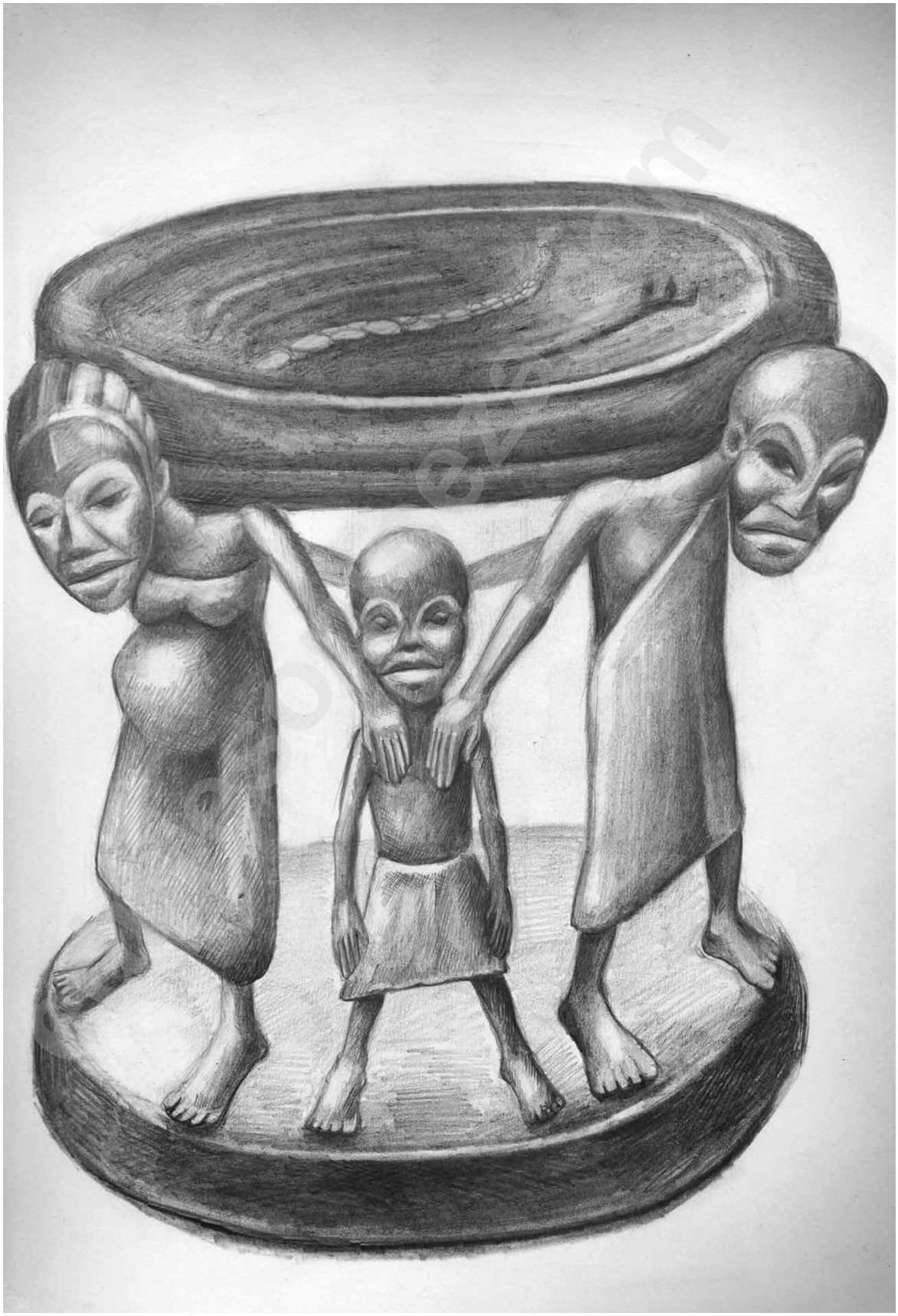
Harambee



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1. What happens and who is involved?

- **Gikonyo** is in hospital recovering from breaking his arm during the race at the Independence Day celebrations. "Lying in hospital, he was again possessed by a desire to carve the stool", just as he had dreamed of making a stool for Mumbi while he was in detention.
- On the seventh day of his stay in hospital, when **Mumbi** comes to see Gikonyo, she tells him that she may not come again.
- Gikonyo says that he needs to talk, but Mumbi says that they need time for this. Finally she agrees to come the next day, and she leaves "with determined steps, sad, but almost sure".
- Gikonyo has hope now that they can reconcile (make up), and he thinks once again about the stool he wants to carve. He decides that he will "change the woman's figure. I shall carve a woman big – big with child."

Flashback

- As Gikonyo lies in bed thinking about his life in the detention camps, he is "pricked with guilt. Courage had failed him, he had confessed the oath in spite of vows to the contrary." He thinks that he is no better than Karanja and Mugo, and Mugo's confession makes him want to talk to Mumbi and find out what she thinks.

2. Themes

Community and the collective; Lack of communication

- This last section of the book is called Harambee, which means "unity" or "working together". In this way Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o emphasises the importance of the community.
- The relationship of Gikonyo and Mumbi shows us how necessary it is that people communicate and work together. The fact that Gikonyo wants to speak about Mumbi's child is a sign that he is breaking his silence and is prepared to communicate with Mumbi about their troubles. When he asks her to speak about the child Mumbi sits down again. She agrees that they need to talk, "to open our hearts to one another, examine them, and then together plan the future we want". Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o believes that this is the attitude that all Kenyans should adopt.
- In an ironic twist, it is Karanja's son, whose conception was the reason for the break between Gikonyo and Mumbi, who becomes the bridge that will lead him back to her.

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3. Symbols

The stool

- "He would carve the stool from a Muiri stem, a hard wood that grew around Kerinyaga, and Nyandarwa hills." The wood Gikonyo wants to use for his carving makes us think once more of the lush land of Kenya as it was before the State of Emergency and it suggests that Kenya will continue.
- In addition, the "woman big with child" shows that Gikonyo has the ability to put aside the troubles in his past, forgive Mumbi and look to the future with hope.

A grain of wheat

- There is a reference to grain in the Bible (I Corinthians 15:36). It says that the grain must die for new life to happen. This is the idea that sacrifices may lead to transformation and new life.
- At the end of the novel we see this particularly in the relationship between Gikonyo and Mumbi. Gikonyo's anger and jealousy must die for their marriage to come to life again.

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Activity 18

Test yourself by answering the questions below.

1. Explain the meaning of Harambee and why this is the name of this last chapter of the novel. (3)
2. Read the extract below, then answer the question:
   [Gikonyo watches Mumbi leave the hospital]

> She walked away with determined steps, sad but almost sure. He watched her until she disappeared at the door. Then he sank back to bed. He thought about the wedding gift, a stool carved from Muiri wood. "I'll change the woman's figure. I shall carve a woman big – big with child.'
>
> (Harambee)

   Identify two words in the extract that show you that Mumbi is a strong woman. (2)
3. Give TWO reasons to support this statement:
   The novel ends in a positive way. (2)

[7]

Answers to Activity 18

1. Harambee means unity or working together. ✓ This is the name of this section because we see that Gikonyo and Mumbi are now beginning to talk so they can build a future together.✓ This represents Kenyans who, together will now begin building a new life for themselves without the British. ✓ (3)
2. "Determined" and "sure". ✓✓ (2)
3. Gikonyo breaks his silence and accepts Mumbi's child, and Mumbi says she is prepared to talk about their life. ✓
   Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o wants us to understand that Gikonyo and Mumbi symbolise the best of Kenyans. It is appropriate that the book ends with their reconciliation. ✓ (2)

[7]

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