

# **Changes: A Love Story Study Guide**

## **Changes: A Love Story by Ama Ata Aidoo**

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# Plot Summary

"Changes: A Love Story" by Ama Ata Aidoo is a novel that explores the changes that working women in Africa must face in their marriages and families while men's lives remain unaltered. After Esi divorces Oko, she has more time to focus on her career, but after she remarries to Ali Kondey, she must find a balance between being a career woman, a wife, and a friend to Opokuya who encounters problems in her marriage of a different nature. "Changes: A Love Story" is a very interesting novel that is sure to keep the reader entertained.

Esi first meets Ali at Linga Hideaways while confirming arrangements for a business trip. Esi and Oko's argument leads to marital rape which causes Esi to leave her husband. Opokuya and Kubi argue about the use of their car. Ali's childhood changes with Mma. Danjuma's decision to have him properly educated. Opokuya runs into Esi at Hotel Twentieth Century and Esi explains that she has left Oko because his attentions were too suffocating. As they talk, they encounter Ali who is infatuated with Esi, despite being married to Fusena who he met in teacher training school.

Ali begins courting Esi who refuses to return to Oko and begins sleeping with Ali. After an extended absence, Ali returns to Esi and proposes, insisting that she wear his ring. After telling Opokuya about her engagement, Esi visits her mother who disapproves of Esi lowering her status by becoming a second wife. Fusena is angry that Ali plans to take a second wife who has an university degree.

Ali's first visit to Esi's village is unsuccessful since he brings no one from his family to sponsor him. Ali's people agree to sponsor him if Fusena consents to his second marriage, and after she reluctantly consents, Ali returns to Esi's village with his people. After Ali and Esi are married, he does not go to her house that night, which saddens Esi. Ali is torn between spending time with his two wives. When Ali and Oko fight at Esi's house on New Year's Eve, Esi flees to Opokuya's house with Ogyaanowa and that is where they spend the holidays. Halfway through the new year, Ali takes Esi to Bamako to meet his people and they have a wonderful holiday.

Ali rarely visits Esi, and she is especially lonely during the holidays that year. He visits on New Year's Day to bring Esi a new car as a gift. When Esi drops Ali off at Hotel Twentieth Century, she realizes her marriage is a dead end. She visits Opokuya and agrees to sell her old car to her friend. After briefly increasing, the frequency of Ali's visits return to normal and one day, Esi tells Ali that this is not a marriage and she is not having it.

Several months later, Esi calls Opokuya to tell her about her break-up with Ali. After Opokuya visits Esi to comfort her and collect her car, Esi cries alone in the dark. Kubi, looking for Opokuya, arrives at Esi's house and embraces her. Thinking of her friendship with Opokuya, Esi repels him. Esi does not annul her marriage to Ali and they become good friends who have sex occasionally. Although Ali loves Esi in his own fashion, it is

not adequate for Esi and she wonders what fashion of love she will ever consider adequate.



# Section 1: Chapters 1 and 2

## Section 1: Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

"Changes: A Love Story" by Ama Ata Aidoo is a novel that explores the changes that working women in Africa must face in their marriages and families while men's lives remain unaltered. After Esi divorces Oko, she has more time to focus on her career, but after she remarries to Ali Kondey, she must find a balance between being a career woman, a wife and a friend to Opokuya who encounters problems in her marriage of a different nature. "Changes: A Love Story" is a very interesting novel that is sure to keep the reader entertained.

In Chapter 1, Esi is angry with herself as she drives to the offices of Linga Hideaways on Friday evening because she always ends up doing secretarial work when the secretary is away. She arrives at the office after 5 p.m., and a man with a handsome face offers to help her. After Esi explains that she is checking on the travel arrangements for a conference in Lusaka on Thursday, Ali Kondey introduces himself and assures her that everything will be fine. When Esi refuses Ali's proffered ride home, he watches in disappointment as she goes to her own car. As a Muslim, he sees his encounter with this fascinating woman as a gift from Allah and knows "If it was His will, things would right themselves in the end" (pg. 4.)

In Chapter 2, Ogyaanowa is unhappy as she hears the usual commotion in her parents' room which means they are fighting. Esi is surprised Oko is still in bed as she begins preparing for the day. Oko watches Esi dress with pleasure as he thinks that she has not lost her schoolgirl looks or ways. When Esi asks if he is getting out of bed at all today, Oko is relieved because there is little communication between them these days, but he has decided to give their marriage another chance despite his anger and embarrassment at how much he has invested in his marriage with Esi who he has always loved. Oko recalls a male voice warning him of the danger of showing a woman too much love, and he knows the man was right as he has received no affection or warmth from their six years of marriage. They have only one child, though he would welcome more, because Esi is on birth control. Esi puts her career above her duties as a wife and is respected by her colleagues, but Oko's friends laugh at him and claim he is not behaving as a man. After Oko and Esi argue about their friends and her job, he pulls her down and molests her. Silence follows as the room is filled with rage and frustration. As Esi washes and prepares for work, Oko feels he should apologize but is convinced that he must not. An hour later, Esi is at work at the Department of Urban Statistics. She catches her breath in her office and laughs bitterly as she realizes she has suffered marital rape though it is impossible in her society since sex from his wife is a man's right. Feeling angry and sore, Esi dozes for a moment and wakes with a start, disoriented but with a clear mind. She has come to a decision.



## Section 1: Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Esi is a workaholic who chooses her career over what her husband believes are her duties as a wife and mother. When she meets a handsome man, whom she believes is interested in her, she refuses his attentions, while he focuses on his belief in the Will of Allah. He decides that this woman is a gift and things will work out if it is His Will. Esi, however, returns to her home and a husband who demands all of her attention and affection. So much so in fact, he forces himself on her as he believes this as his right. Her personal rights have no influence on his behavior in this society, and this is especially demonstrated when Oko's actions are considered a way of giving Esi a second chance. While Oko's actions are a reaction to his frustration resulting from his bruised ego and self worth, it is easy for him to countermand his urge to apologize to Esi, as he is only able to see how her actions have robbed him of his worth as a husband in the eyes of those around them.



## Section 2: Chapter 3

### Section 2: Chapter 3 Summary

Opokuya has been a nurse and midwife for fifteen years. No one is as different as Opokuya and Esi, but they have been close friends for so long that they are nearly sisters. Opokuya lives on Sweet Breezes Hill with Kubi, her husband, and their four children. Opokuya and Kubi argue about the car's movements as they do every morning. He feels he should drive the car to work and leave it parked all day while she takes the hospital vans to work, but she wants him to take the car off government maintenance so she can take care of her family properly. The argument always ends with one of them giving in, and the winner drives the loser to work. Kubi asks why Opokuya needs the car today, and she explains that she needs to talk to Connie, his sister, about watching the children while she visits her mother. When Kubi claims that he is already late for a budget meeting, Opokuya knows she has lost and goes to sit in the car. As usual on mornings that Opokuya loses, there is no conversation during the drive. Kubi says he will meet her at the house, but Opokuya insists she will make her way to see Connie and meet him at Hotel Twentieth Century at 5:30 p.m. She exits the car, and Kubi whistles as he drives to work.

### Section 2: Chapter 3 Analysis

Opokuya also has trouble in her marriage derived from beliefs of what is best for the family, but hers is argued due to what she wants to do for her family, not what she is overlooking, as in the case of Oko and Esi. Both women are very different from each other and their marriage complications reflect their very different views. While Opokuya outwardly accepts her role in the society as a wife with duties, she also comes to feel as though these duties stifle her freedom from having anything for herself.



## Section 3: Chapter 4

### Section 3: Chapter 4 Summary

Ali Kondey is described in many different ways. The most effective advertisement for Linga Hideaways, he is a son of the world who dropped from his mother's womb determined to live this life. His mother, his father's favorite wife, died shortly after his birth, so Ali's father left him with Mma. Danjuma, his sister, for the first eight years of his life. Ali loves his father and is proud of the parts of himself which meet with his father's approval. Ali is only different from his father in preferring mature, sexually experienced women instead of young virgins. Ali's father is Musa Musa, the son of Musa Kondey, a rich minor prince. At the age of twelve, Musa Musa loses a kid while tending the goats and disappears. He next ventures home when he is over forty years old after his father is dead and has become a large trader.

Ali's house is a large structure at the entrance to Nima from New Town. He first came south with his father at the age of four and began to regularly travel with Musa Musa. Musa Musa's first order of business was always to place Ali in a Koranic school. One day, when Ali was nearly nine, Mma. Danjuma sends Danjuma and Ali to the market to buy kola, but she does not need kola; she only wants the boys out of the house because one should not discuss the future of young people in front of them. Mma. Danjuma approaches the men and asks Musa Musa to leave Ali with her properly to enroll in a French school. The men claim they discussed the same thing that morning, and Mma. Danjuma is surprised and relieved. Ali attends a French school and lycee before proceeding to a teacher training college where he meets Fusena, his wife. He then acquires a bachelor's and master's degree in Economics and Business Administration in England. English speakers find his language quaint while French speakers find it simple like the English.

### Section 3: Chapter 4 Analysis

When Ali's history is presented, it becomes evident that he is a well adored man who is accustomed to having his choice of woman. So in regards to his initial attraction to Esi, it can be inferred that he expects this woman to become his and he believes it is the will of Allah that will make it so. However, as a determined man, he may be interpreting this sign as what he desires instead of what Allah has desired for him. His is presented as a somewhat fable-like character in this section who was born a prince and destined for greatness. Once the tale comes up to the present time, the fabled life is given more support in the description of Ali's home and education.





## Section 4: Chapter 5

### Section 4: Chapter 5 Summary

When Esi arrives at the Hotel Twentieth Century, she learns that her friend has not yet arrived, so she decides to have a beer and is greeted by Opokuya who she has missed because they have been out of touch for weeks. As they talk excitedly, Esi comments that at least Opokuya should find life a little worthwhile, and Opokuya wonders what is wrong with her friend, causing Esi to think it is just like Opokuya to catch on so quickly; Esi cannot remember feeling so low in a very long time. She tells Opokuya that she has left Oko as she thinks of how much has happened in the month since Oko jumped her. He tried in vain to convince her to give him another chance. Opokuya is sorry for the failure of Esi's marriage. The two women talk about one another's children, and Esi explains that Ogyaanowa is staying at Oko's mother's house until school reopens. Opokuya tells Esi about her plan to visit her mother, admitting that she is homesick. Each think that the best husband always seems to be the one that someone else is living with. Esi is aware that Opokuya is her last hope of sympathy or understanding as her mother and grandmother found it hard to listen to her at all and there is no question of Esi talking to Oko's people because they hate her and want Oko to find a proper wife. Esi's uncertainty about the justification of her decision grows, making her hesitant to tell her story to Opokuya for fear of losing her friend too and having to fight alone. Esi and Opokuya have only lived in the same town once before since secondary school which was when Esi and Oko first married and Esi was pregnant. Now, Esi and Opokuya are both in Accra, and Esi has a big marital problem and should just talk to Opokuya and accept that she is a fool if her friend cannot understand. People change. Esi once worried that she would never marry, but now she finds Oko's attentions too suffocating. Esi is too easily bored, making it impossible to catch and hold a man by showing a lack of interest. Esi's grandmother, Nana, says that feeling grateful to a man is reason enough to marry him; love is not safe, and "the last man any women should think of marrying is the man she loves" (pg. 42.)

### Section 4: Chapter 5 Analysis

Esi and Opokuya are reunited. They speak of their lives and marriages, which includes Esi leaving her husband. She feels that she has failed in her marriage duties and knows that she will find no comfort from her family. She even worries about how her friend will react to this news. She remembers her grandmother telling her that the last man a woman should marry is the one she thinks she loves. During Esi's explanation of her marriage and the issues that had come up, she internally gages what her friend will think of her and what her friend's husband will think on this matter. Opokuya's perceptions are acute enough for her to know that her friend is suffering, and that perhaps she is as well, though she is not ready to admit it even to herself.



## Section 5: Chapter 6

### Section 5: Chapter 6 Summary

As night falls in Accra and light blazes from Hotel Twentieth Century, Esi and Opokuya are still talking since Kubi has not yet arrived. Opokuya asks Esi if another woman ruined her marriage, but Esi assures her friend that her marriage failed because Oko resented every minute she could not be with him and wanted her to change her job though he was first attracted to her because of her air of independence. Opokuya agrees that men want sharp, active women but fail to realize that she will grow bored and dissatisfied when she changes her job. Opokuya asks if Esi will remarry, but Esi does not want another husband to sit on her back all day. Opokuya claims it is frightening that societies have no patience with single women and do not even admit they exist as they see a woman's single state as "an insult to the glorious manhood of our men" (pg. 48.) There is no solution for Esi unless she finds a man prepared to accept her lifestyle. Opokuya says Esi cannot have it all because society will not allow it; she will be lonely at least some of the time. Society says that for marriage to work, at least one party must be a fool, but they really mean the woman. Opokuya insists Esi should have made more time for her husband because she has advanced in her career but lost her marriage, yet male workers manage careers and marriages.

Esi is excited as she notices Ali Kondey enter the lobby, and he notices her as well. He approaches their table and greets Esi who introduces Ali to Opokuya and invites him to join them. He cannot because he must attend a conference with a guest from across the border, but he asks to phone Esi in the coming week, and she agrees. After Ali leaves, Esi and Opokuya agree that he is handsome, and Esi admits that Ali has been showing interest though she has been trying not to encourage him. As they leave, Opokuya sees Kubi, but Esi does not want to say hello to him for fear that he will question her about Oko. She greets him and leaves quickly. Kubi apologizes to Opokuya for being late as they drive home. Kubi looks forward to objecting to Opokuya visiting her mother, and she is excited to tell him about her successful visit to Connie and Esi's situation, but she knows he will not like it. She wonders what would happen if she suspected Kubi and Esi, but she had decided early in her marriage to trust her husband which makes life easy. She is still irritated about not being able to use the car. As they arrive home, Opokuya realizes the day is over and that she envies Esi's freedom of movement and had been thinking that for a very long time.

### Section 5: Chapter 6 Analysis

The friends continue to talk about how Oko resented every minute that Esi was not with him, to dote on him, and shower him with affection. Opokuya states that the problem lies in their society where they cannot accept the true independence of a woman. This indicates that she too is unhappy with the restrictions their society places on them. This is demonstrated in Kubi's excitement in challenging Opokuya by telling her that she is



not able to visit with her mother. This shows the dominant male role in the characters and how their actions are not considerate of the female role, such as the way that Oko treated Esi in Chapter 2. Esi's attraction to Ali is evident when she becomes excited at his arrival. She also acknowledges his interest in her. Kubi arrives to pick up Opokuya and apologizes for being late, thus strengthening her argument for the next time they discuss the car. She also realizes that she envies Esi's new freedom, even when Esi goes out of her way in order to avoid any prolonged interaction with Kubi, as she is still too uncomfortable to express herself fully as of yet.



## Section 6: Chapter 7

### Section 6: Chapter 7 Summary

Ali and Fusena were classmates at the post-secondary school in Atebubu and spent a lot of time together as friends since Ali enjoys the company of interesting women and found Fusena interesting. After graduation, they both teach at primary schools in Tamale and continue to see each other regularly. During their six years of friendship, each has a number of affairs, but none are given much opportunity to grow. Eventually, circumstances force Ali and Fusena to face their emotions. He receives a scholarship in England which means a long parting, so one evening, Ali asks Fusena to marry him and she agrees. Neither recall how they got through the next couple of months. Ali's family is happy with his decision to marry, and the Kondeys and Al-Hassans arrange the marriage to occur in a week. Two months after the negotiations, Ali and Fusena have a proper Muslim wedding. She continues teaching at Tamale while Ali goes overseas, but both families insist Ali make sure Fusena is pregnant before he leaves the country. Four months after Ali arrives in England, Fusena writes to confirm she is pregnant with their first child, Adam.

Within six years, Ali receives his bachelor's and master's degrees. He spends the first three years in England without Fusena before sending tickets for Fusena and Adam. He meets them at the airport with great news: he has received his degree. The next day, they celebrate his degree and her arrival, and Ali explains that he sent for his wife because he is not going home yet. After the coup at home, he received letters from the new government that his programme has been cancelled. Ali gets a full-time job and studies part-time for his master's degree in Economics and Business Administration while Fusena stays at home. When she becomes pregnant with their second child, she feels tired and saddened by the rain in London. She feels the loss of exchanging a friend for a husband in marrying Ali. She is also upset that he is becoming more educated while she remains the same, and this problem follows when they return home. By the end of their first week back in Ghana, Fusena is pregnant a third time. After two years of babies and making a home, she cannot remember how it feels to be in a classroom, but Ali tells her it is unnecessary. Now, Ali tells Fusena that he is thinking of taking a second wife who has a university degree, and Fusena questions Allah about what she is supposed to say or do.

### Section 6: Chapter 7 Analysis

This section describes Ali's history of his friendship and marriage with Fusena, which became stressed during his progression in education, while she has remained uneducated and at home with the children. When Ali expresses interest in taking a second wife with a higher education, Fusena asks Allah for guidance. Fusena feels as though Esi is everything that she herself had aspired to be, but had given up in her relationship with Ali. She has watched Ali grow over the years and gain his further

education. Even without his presence, he has progressed while she feels as though she has remained behind and she longs for the friend she had lost in her marriage. Now as Ali takes a second woman, she feels as though her biggest fear is coming true that Ali has surpassed her and needs a woman that she had wanted to be, but had given up for him.



# Chapter 7: Chapter 8 and 9

## Chapter 7: Chapter 8 and 9 Summary

In Chapter 8, Ogyaanowa goes to her grandmother's house with the understanding that she will return home when school reopens, but Oko's mother becomes nasty to Esi when the marriage falls apart. Esi surprises Oko's mother by agreeing that Ogyaanowa continue to live there, so Ogyaanowa stays at her grandmother's house and gets completely spoiled. Esi does not want to admit that the arrangement suits everyone because she would be embarrassed to bring Ali home so soon after throwing Oko out if Ogyaanowa were home. Now a year after Esi met Opokuya at Hotel Twentieth Century and fourteen months after Oko jumped Esi, Oko blames himself for staying in bed for too long that morning. He works hard and acquires a bungalow in the country, thinking it may be a good idea for Esi and Ogyaanowa to escape the city on weekends, but Esi refuses to be impressed. Oko realizes that jumping Esi is not the entire reason she left, and he is embarrassed his wife left him for her career. He is startled when Esi asks for a divorce, but his new promotion saves him, though it cannot prevent him from thinking about Esi occasionally. It feels strange to sleep alone, but since Accra is far from his new job, Oko is able to pretend Esi has not really left him. He misses Esi and Ogyaanowa and cannot accept that it is really over. One day, Oko's mother leaves a beautiful young girl on his doorstep, and Oko lets her stay because she seems wholesome. When he receives Esi's request for a divorce, he is so angry that he rushes to Accra and says she can have a divorce if she invents grounds for it. When she asks him about the girl staying with him, Oko tells her not to be ridiculous and reminds her that she can always come back to him.

In Chapter 9, Ali tries in vain to get Esi out of his system because he has always trained himself not to be sexually attracted to another man's wife, and it has always worked until he met Esi. After first meeting Esi, Ali accepts the fact that she excites him, thinks about her and sends her gifts, but he begins seeking her out after the chance encounter at Hotel Twentieth Century. He is surprised and grateful to learn of her divorce, and he begins wooing her. The relationship soon becomes steady, their lovemaking reserved for Esi's bed and sleep afterward. Ali is excited by Esi's comfort with her naked body and tries to make her comfortable with him watching her. Being with Esi is a change for Ali as it allows him to unwind. He sleeps after their lovemaking and wakes when Esi announces that supper is ready. Food is another source of pleasure with Esi because she is an excellent cook. After they eat in companionable silence, Esi clears the table and sees Ali emerge from the bedroom, clothed, so she asks if he is leaving, but he assures her that he is not unless she wants him to. He checks something in his car. When and how long Ali stays with Esi is another dangerous game as he loves and does not want to hurt Fusena who he knows is aware of his serious affair. Esi finds their relationship relaxing and does not worry about Ali's comings and goings. She is surprised when Ali says he will see her the next day, but he does not come for the next two weeks. Esi prevents herself from going to Ali's office or calling his home. She is completely alone for the first time and misses her daughter.



## Chapter 7: Chapter 8 and 9 Analysis

Now a year later, Esi brings Ali home and Ogyaanowa is living at Oko's mother's home, while Oko comes to realize Esi left him for her career, but that his forced attentions on her were the catalyst. He realizes his error in trying to push her into being what he had wanted her to be. He thinks of her often and pretends she has not left him; however, he becomes angry when she asks for a divorce even though he has a young woman now living with him. This indicates that he may have loved Esi more than his actions are showing since even in all his errors he clings to her personality just as she is. Ali knows his wife is aware of his serious affair with Esi, but he enjoys the game he makes of spending more and more time with her. He finds her interesting and exciting, but she becomes insecure when he states he will be coming back the next day and instead stays away for two weeks. She finds herself lonely and missing her daughter, much in opposition to her dilemma with Oko, which may be a key indicator to her attraction.



## Section 8: Chapter 10

### Section 8: Chapter 10 Summary

Ali next visits Esi late on a Sunday morning. Esi wakes in a good mood, and when she hears a car at the gate, she is delighted to see Ali pull his car beside hers in the courtyard. After greeting him, she withdraws from his passionate embrace and demands an explanation for his absence. Ali claims that he was away on business and tried to call. When he had gone to his office after last leaving Esi's house, he had received an urgent message from his office in Abidjan and had to travel there. There is a reason that he has to go by his office nightly that he cannot tell Esi. Fusena phones there if he is not home by a certain hour. After Esi forgives Ali, they make love on her couch.

Some weeks later, Ali is clearly in a pensive mood while he is with Esi. He asks how she manages to be so beautiful and clever, and she wonders when he came home from his last business trip. When he says he returned only last night and came to see her today because he missed her, Esi is surprised because Ali does not seem like the type of man to need someone. Ali proposes marriage to Esi. She knows that becoming his second wife means many complications and asks if he has discussed the matter with his wife, but when he says he has and Fusena was grateful to have been warned, Esi is not convinced. Ali asks if Esi has talked to her mother about him as he fears she will not like him, and Esi admits that her mother does not like the idea of her becoming a second wife. Esi assures Ali that the situation with her mother is not hopeless as it is preferable to Esi remaining Ali's mistress. Ali proposes visiting Esi's family, and they arrange a trip for a Sunday nearly a month ahead. Ali presents Esi with a beautiful gold ring, but she worries it is improper since she will only be his second wife. To Ali, a wife is a wife, and he justifies this view by the Islamic views on marriage which state a man may have multiple wives if he can look after them properly. Since a ring for a second wife is not normal by recent traditions, Esi wants to wait to wear the ring until after the negotiations, but Ali refuses as he will give her a marriage ring in front of her family. This ring is to show the rest of the male world that she is taken in the meantime. Esi laughs at the insolence of the modern African male. Ali and Esi spend the rest of the afternoon planning the trip to visit her relatives, and when he leaves at sunset, Esi does not protest because it has been a full day to say the least.

### Section 8: Chapter 10 Analysis

Ali arrives for a visit and Esi is given the explanation that he had to leave on a business trip, which is not entirely true. His wife calls him each night at the office and he has not told Esi of this. This raises several questions for the reader: if it is a way of the culture to have more than one wife, then why is Ali lying to Esi when he spends time with her, and why does he make a game of spending more time with Esi when it comes to Fusena? Esi accepts his story, and they have a romantic reunion. When Ali proposes and she asks how his wife feels about this, his answer that Fusena is not upset only shows how





little he really knows about her. This may be a foreshadowing of what is to come in his relationship with Esi. They then discuss the matter of her family and her mother's concerns about her being a second wife and therefore second in line of his attentions, which is another foreshadowing of how their relationship is to play out.



## Section 9: Chapter 11 and 12

### Section 9: Chapter 11 and 12 Summary

In Chapter 11, Ali becomes a more frequent visitor at Esi's house, so it is not strange when he pulls out of the gate as Opokuya pulls in. After apologies and explanations for their long separation, Opokuya notices the ring on Esi's finger, and Esi shares her story. During their conversation, Esi asks if her friend thinks she should have stayed married to Oko, but Opokuya asks what Esi's mother thinks. Esi admits that her mother believes she deserves better than sharing someone's man. It would have been alright if Oko had taken a second wife because Esi would have still been the senior wife. Opokuya's objections are different as she wonders if Esi can see herself becoming friends with Ali's wife. When Esi confesses that she has never even seen Ali's wife, Opokuya claims the first rule has already been broken as the first wife must approve of the second wife. Esi promises to ask Ali to meet his wife before visiting her family. Opokuya states she must leave. Esi cares very much for Ali, and when Opokuya expresses the thought that Esi is very brave for trying an alternative lifestyle, Esi claims monogamy is so stifling. Opokuya, correcting her, says that she probably means marriage.

In Chapter 12, Ali is the type of person who never gives up. Since he decides to marry Esi, that is exactly what he is going to do. The first time he mentions his intention to Fusena, she is upset that his intended second wife has a university degree. She feels so sorry for herself that she could die. She allowed Ali to talk her out of teaching, and now her secret fear since London has arrived where Ali is bringing a more educated woman into their marriage. She returns to the house to ask Ali if this woman is a Muslim and when he says no, she drives off, looking for someone to talk to.

### Section 9: Chapter 11 and 12 Analysis

As Ali becomes more comfortable at Esi's home, Esi opens up to Opokuya and tells her how happy she is with Ali. However, she continues worry about what her friend thinks of her. This reveals Esi's insecurities and perhaps what she already knows deep down but does not yet wish to acknowledge. Opokuya defers to what Esi's mother thinks instead, indicating that she may have reservations about Esi's choice as well. Perhaps Opokuya is more perceptive about her friend than she opens up to. Ali's interaction with Fusena appears to be a dominating one where he has not considered her feelings, fears, and insecurities, which is part of his duties as a husband. This is in a way reminiscent of Oko and again foreshadows what Esi can expect from her marriage to Ali.



## Section 10: Chapter 13 and 14

### Section 10: Chapter 13 and 14 Summary

The second part of this novel opens with a conversation between two women, Ama and Aba, about how men leave women or add new women for many reasons, such as beauty, youth, energy, social status, education and career. In Chapter 13, Ali and Esi drive to Esi's village on one Sunday in July. Esi's father grill Ali mercilessly on two main points: whether his wife knows of his intention to marry Esi and why he has brought no one except an employee with him. Ali claims he has no one to back his side of the marriage because his family is up north, but since marriage involves two families investigating and approving one another, Esi's fathers order Ali to bring solid people for them to talk to or forget about marrying Esi. Ali worries that no one will back him because they all admire Fusena and do not know how she will take it. When Ali finally talks to his elders in Nima, he is shocked that they are only upset that he tried to marry behind their backs. They agree to go to Esi's people but not until Fusena consents to Ali's second marriage. Ali looks so sad that the elders agree to talk to Fusena as she had gone to talk to them the morning she first learned about Ali's intended marriage, and they have been biding their time. Within a few days, the elders send women to talk to Fusena, and she immediately realizes that the elders were unable to dissuade Ali from taking the graduate woman as a second wife. She cannot believe their beautiful journey is ending this way, but she makes the women's job easy by agreeing with all of their suggestions, though she knows all is lost. The older women feel bad, and an understanding is born between them that it is a man's world and a woman can only survive if she knows how to live as a woman in it. Yet, they are shocked by how little has changed for their daughters despite receiving educations.

In Chapter 14, while Ali is sorting himself out in Accra, Esi decides to go home and spend a weekend with her mother, Ena, and Nana. As soon as Esi arrives, Nana asks what repels her from Oko and attracts her to Ali. Esi claims that the women in Oko's family hate her. Nana asks what the difference is in leaving one man and marrying another since the "best husband you can ever have is he who demands all of you and all of your time" (pg. 109.) It is not a question of a certain type of marriage or being the only or one of many wives; it has always been necessary for women to be swallowed up like sacrificial animals by men who are like devouring gods. Nana is upset when Esi claims her main reason for wanting to marry Ali is that he is an only child and his family is far away, and Ena calls Esi a witch for hating people before running off. Nana is silently pleased with the sharpness of Esi's mind. Esi naps in Nana's bed while Ena and Nana go to church, and she wakes to hear Nana chide Ena for calling Esi a child. Ena complains that her life has not been much of anything and she has nothing to give to anybody. Nana claims Ena is a fool for pitying herself as it is not their fault that they did not go to school. Esi is pained by the conversation because she will never be as close to Ena as Ena is to Nana. She wonders why they sent her to school since it leads only to dangerous confusion. When Esi coughs, Ena and Nana hear her and invite her to join



them. Esi's mood changes as she knows the answers to personal questions. She will not pity herself, but instead, she will relax and flourish in Ena and Nana's peace.

The second time Ali goes to Esi's village is the first Sunday of the last quarter of the year. He takes the elders with him, and everything goes smoothly. No one expresses surprise when he presents Esi with a gold ring, and Ali and Esi become man and wife. Everyone celebrates, and then, Ali and Esi leave Esi's village in separate cars. Since Ali agrees to be waiting at Esi's house for her, she is disappointed that he is not there when she returns home, nor does he appear throughout the evening. Esi goes to bed without eating as she has no appetite. She recalls Ena and Nana's advice to be careful. There are rules to being one of any number of wives with the most important being to never forget that she is number two and to never show jealousy. Esi laughs since it did not take even half a day to realize what it means to be number two. She does not know how to not show jealousy. She recalls her wedding day to Oko when she did not spend a single minute alone. Thinking "oh well," she falls to sleep.

## **Section 10: Chapter 13 and 14 Analysis**

Ali and Esi's marriage is put on hold until he is able to provide backing to Esi's father. The women of his village go to Fusena in order to convince her that Ali's marrying Esi does not mean that all is not lost, but she is not convinced. Her fears grow and she resents her choices and Ali's part in placing her in this situation. Meanwhile, Esi's visit with her family is not what she had expected. She had come for relaxation and yet she finds herself pitying herself for her education that has lead her to this point in her life, much like Fusena.

While Fusena worries that her lack of education has kept her from fulfilling her own dreams and has caused Ali to seek a more educated woman, Esi begins to worry that this education that she has received has only caused her to want more from her life, husband and for herself. This in turn has left her always seeking more and therefore always to be left wanting within this society, as well as causing her to become isolated from the older women in her family. While others wonder about her reasons for wanting to marry Ali, Esi finds the freedom that being a second wife affords her, which she had not had when she had been married to Oko. Nana, however, finds her wisdom in her choice for herself. On the day of her marriage, Esi returns home to the realization that she is the second wife and will always be number two in her husband's life, while she spends her first night as a second wife alone, remembering how this was not at all what she had had when she was with Oko. The comparison is one that begins to bring Esi's self awareness full circle.



## Section 11: Chapter 15 and 16

### Section 11: Chapter 15 and 16 Summary

In Chapter 15, Ali can already see his house when he decides to return to Esi. He has felt guilty for the fifteen minutes since he left her house because he cannot stay with her tonight since it is New Year's Eve and he traditionally spends it with Fusena and their children. He partially feels the need to hurry home and initiate his family's rituals, and he partially feels guilty that he thinks of his house with Fusena as home and there is no possibility for establishing any rituals in his relationship with Esi. He decides to spend more time with Esi before going home, and wondering how his forefathers did it, he ponders which wife he will make love to on New Year's Eve. Esi is surprised and pleased to see Ali, and they make love desperately. Esi is shamed by her dependence on Ali, and Ali feels guilty about destroying the tradition between Fusena and himself. After an incredible climax, Ali feels "ready to empty some of his confusion and genuine affection for both women into a cauldron that was one" (pg. 120.) Ali and Esi are surprised to hear someone enter the gate, knock on the door and enter the house after finding the door unlocked. Recognizing Oko's voice, Esi locks the bedroom door to hide her nakedness, and Oko realizes what is happening and begins banging on the door as Esi and Ali dress. Ali leaves the room, locking the door behind him, and when Oko demands to see his wife, the two men's confrontation turns physical, causing Ogyaanowa to cry. Hearing her daughter, Esi opens the doors, rushes past the two men, grabbing her daughter, to her car and drives off, leaving the two surprised men staring after her.

In Chapter 16, Opokuya feels sorry for herself as she had left her two eldest children in charge of cooking for the holiday, but since it did not go well, she is trying to figure out if she can wake early enough to cook before going to work at the hospital. Kweku, her son, knocks at her bedroom door to announce that Aunt Esi is here with Ogyaanowa. After sending Ogyaanowa to the kitchen with the other young people, Opokuya asks Esi what is wrong, and Esi tells her that Oko and Ali are fighting. Not knowing what to say, Opokuya silently rocks Esi. She brings Kubi to hear Esi's story, and Kubi scolds Esi for leaving them alone to fight as it could be dangerous. Opokuya points out that there was nothing Esi could do since she could not have separated them. Kubi agrees and heads to Esi's house with his two eldest visiting nephews. Opokuya warns her husband to be careful.

### Section 11: Chapter 15 and 16 Analysis

Ali's time away from Fusena causes him to plan to return home for their New Year's ritual, but his guilt over leaving Esi is enough for him to return to her instead. This causes Ali to wonder about how his forefathers had managed to balance multiple wives. After their romantic reunion, they are interrupted by Oko, who gets into a fight with Ali, and both men are left by Esi as she grabs her daughter and takes off. This indicates that



Esi's greatest love is for her child and her duties as a mother will come first when it comes to either man. Esi flees to Opokuya's, and in a twist, Kubi heads to Esi's home in order to deal with the fighting men. Though it is clear that Kubi does not approve of Esi's choices, he is also friend enough to admit when the woman is in a situation that she could not handle on her own. This defense of Esi is a glimpse of why Opokuya had married this man.



## Section 12: Chapter 17 and 18

### Section 12: Chapter 17 and 18 Summary

In Chapter 17, Kubi and his nephews find Esi's house empty and return home to report to Opokuya and Esi. Esi is close to tears during Kubi's narration, but she reminds herself to pull it together. Kubi, Esi and Opokuya discuss the situation at length and conclude that each man must have driven away in his own car. When Kubi considers checking on Oko, Esi objects because she knows that he will want to return home with Kubi to collect Ogyaanowa, but Kubi insists. Kubi finds Oko with a cut lip. When Oko relates his version of the events, Kubi points out that Oko was in the wrong legally. After some conversation, Kubi decides to return home, but Oko wants to follow to collect Ogyaanowa. Distressed that Esi was right, Kubi dissuades Oko by sitting quietly and drinking his beer before returning home. Esi and Ogyaanowa spend the rest of the night with Opokuya's family. The children see the episode as unexpected and exciting, and Opokuya sees Esi's invasion as useful since Esi helps her cook. Esi spends the rest of the New Year holidays with Opokuya's family; though she wants to return home the next day, Opokuya and Kubi warn her against her, so she only goes home to lock up and retrieve clothes for Ogyaanowa and herself. Ali had driven to the office from Esi's house, and at the office, he phones Fusena and the children. Fusena is worried and promises to wait up for him. Next, he phones the Dakwas to check on Esi. Ali and Esi apologize to one another, and he also advises her to avoid her bungalow for a few days. On the second of January, Ali visits the Dakwa house. The children are pleased by his arrival, but the adults are not. Meanwhile, Oko decides to get on with his life because Esi is not the only woman in the world. He goes to collect Ogyaanowa who is eager to go with her father. Esi feels rejected but lets the child go anyway.

In Chapter 18, halfway through the new year, Ali takes Esi to Bamako after first sending messages to warn his people and apologize for not obtaining their permission before taking a second wife. He knows his behavior was unthinkable and unforgivable in the old days; however, as a modern, educated African, Ali cannot help bruising some of the traditions and hurting his people. He returns home with plenty of kolas as an apology. Ali and Esi arrive in Bamako at sundown, and there is very little talk that first night. Mma. Danjuma ensures that they have a comfortable room for the night. In the daylight, she looks over Esi and knows that she will never warm to Esi. She greatly likes Fusena, but she knows Ali is not a fool. Though he could have organized the permission better, part of the joy of children is forgiving their errors. Musa Musa raves openly against the couple, telling Ali that Esi is just a concubine and asking how Fusena feels about the situation. After Mma. Danjuma helps Ali beg Musa Musa for forgiveness, Musa Musa is somewhat mollified and openly flirts with Esi. He concludes that he could sleep with her but instructs himself that she is forbidden territory. Esi has a lovely time in Bamako after the initial difficulties, and she greatly likes Ali's people. Ali is fascinated by watching Esi make genuine efforts to operate in his other environment. Both share the conviction that they have had a wonderful holiday.



## Section 12: Chapter 17 and 18 Analysis

Kubi's opinion is clear on his return from the empty house and his insistence on checking on Oko. Esi fears that he may come back with Kubi in order to take her child. Again, Kubi proves his defense of Esi by telling Oko that he was wrong and by talking him out of coming back for his daughter. By these actions, it is clear that Kubi may not care for Esi's choices, but that he does in fact have some feelings for Esi in friendship and is willing to protect her when necessary. Oko appears to have calmed, and when he arrives for his daughter, he is expecting to go on with his life and no longer fight over Esi. However, Esi feels rejected as her daughter is eager to spend time with her father. In a way, this is taking her grounding away from her as she has become bound to her duties as a mother and by removing her child, it leaves her feeling open and vulnerable. This can be devastating to her marriage to Ali as his family takes to openly calling her a concubine and defending Fusena in front of her. Though Esi has taken great lengths in order to appease his family, which gives Ali pride, it eats at Esi for having been so openly rejected and treated as second.





## Section 13: Chapter 19 and 20

### Section 13: Chapter 19 and 20 Summary

In Chapter 19, Ali continually makes excuses to Esi about why he cannot visit her. A year after marrying Ali, Esi has settled into her new life, and all of her hopes for marriage have been fulfilled; since Ali is rarely around, she is free, contented and able to concentrate on her job. Esi realizes that she likes working, and though she feels bad about her daughter, she enjoys her freedom which is "almost like before she had got married the first time and had had a child" (page 138). After the trip to Bamako, a change starts taking place in Esi. She feels more like Ali's wife and expects him to become more of a husband. She begins to wonder how they will have children since he is around so seldomly. She is lonely and misses Ali, especially when she does not have extra work. Esi finds it unacceptable when she learns that Ali takes his new, pretty secretary home after work daily. She does not ask why he did not tell her about his new secretary though she wants to. She also notices the impatience and tiredness in his voice when she phones him. Around this time, Esi bumps into Opokuya at the market, and Opokuya notices the lost looks in Esi's eyes that never leaves over the next few months.

In Chapter 20, the end of the year is the most desolate time in Esi's life. She hopes Ali will visit for a reasonable length of time, but she rarely sees him at all. Esi is upset when Oko's mother refuses to allow Ogyaanowa to spend the holidays with her and secretly fears that Oko and his family are playing the child against her, but Ogyaanowa is always happy to see her mother. Rejecting her notion of going to her village for Christmas, she has a drink instead and sleeps for the rest of the day. By New Year's Eve, she decides she needs tranquillisers and obtains them from her doctor. She does not have the courage to take them until the next evening when she uses them to sleep through the festivities. A persistent car horn wakes her, and she sees an unfamiliar new car from which Ali appears. Esi greets Ali with a quiet reserve that causes his heart to sink. He gives her the keys to the car; it is her New Year present, but Esi is ashamed that she cannot experience joy for the new car. After they eat, Esi does not care when Ali claims he must leave, but she pretends because of the car. She drops him off at Hotel Twentieth Century and sits in her car, thinking. She realizes her situation is not different than if she had remained his mistress, and this is a complete dead end. Esi recalls how hurt she used to be when Ali left her to go home, by which he meant the house where Fusena and their children lived.

### Section 13: Chapter 19 and 20 Analysis

A year after their joining Esi feels the effects of loneliness and sees how Ali has drifted farther from her in his time, attention and affection. Now, her freedom has become her cage of solitude. This is evident to Opokuya when she runs into Esi, and she knows her friend's pain is deep, again demonstrating her perceptions. Esi's vulnerability has

become an open hollowness within her, and she seeks medication in order to deal with her pain. This shows how her life has come full circle and brought an end to the life and vibrance that had attracted Ali to Esi in the first place. The excitement she had felt at his presence now seems like a burden instead of a positive reaction. She begins to feel as though his family was correct in that she is no more than a concubine.



## Section 14: Chapter 21 and 22

### Section 14: Chapter 21 and 22 Summary

Instead of going home, Esi visits Opokuya and shows her friend the gift from Ali. Opokuya is speechless with envy and happiness for her friend. She asks Esi to sell her old car to her, refusing Esi's offer to give it to her freely. After they agree on a price, Esi returns home late in the afternoon. She feels guilty for sharing her doubts of Ali with Opokuya and is very uncomfortable selling her junky old car to her friend, but she decides to have an engineer repair it before selling it to Opokuya. Esi argues with herself about Ali, the two cars and Ali's secretary. She does not like the fact that Ali drives his secretary home, and when she remembers he can have more than two wives, she goes to sleep because she does not want to remember it.

In Chapter 22, things with Ali do not improve. He tries to visit Esi more frequently during the first few weeks of the new year but cannot keep it up, and things return to the pattern of the recent past. He calls regularly and brings Esi extravagant gifts. Through his gifts, she sees the world, but she sees very little of her husband. The explosion occurs near the end of their third year of marriage. Esi is fed up because she has not seen Ali in weeks. When she hears his car enter the gates, she meets him at the door to say she "can't go on like this" (pg. 158.) Ali tries to embrace Esi, but she struggles free to tell him this is not a marriage and she is not having any of it. Ali does not know what to say, so Esi tells him to go home to his wife and children and leave her alone. After Ali leaves in confusion, Esi collapses into a chair with a headache.

Three months later, Esi calls Opokuya at the hospital to tell her about the break-up. Opokuya feigns surprise, though she already knew. She comforts Esi by promising to visit soon, and Esi informs her that she can take the car now that it has been repaired and repainted. After a delay of several days, Opokuya visits Esi, and she is worried by her friend's behavior. That evening is one of the rare times that they seem to have little to talk about. Since Esi obviously wants to be alone and Opokuya is excited about the car, Opokuya leaves to drive home. Esi listens to her old car drive away before going inside. To her surprise, tears begin to flow down her cheeks quietly.

### Section 14: Chapter 21 and 22 Analysis

Though Esi is happy with the new present that Ali has purchased for her, she is coming to resent the role of being a second wife. Plus her jealousy over his secretary is making her position more clear, that she is the newest wife, but that she may not be so new after long. Finally she confronts Ali, claiming that the relationship that they have is not a marriage but an inconvenience. She tells him to return to his wife and children, and she feels alone and abandoned, much as Oko had felt in the beginning of the tale. From this point, it is Esi who craves the attention and affection that Oko had once shown her, and the old woman's words to not marry for love ring true. Opokuya is not surprised to hear

of Esi's breakup, yet she fakes it for her friend's sake. Opokuya knows there is much pain inside Esi at this time and the fact that she is unable to help her friend weighs heavily on her mind.



## Section 15: Chapter 23

### Section 15: Chapter 23 Summary

In the final chapter, Esi is only aware of her desolation and does not know what to do. She sits on the edge of her bed, crying, until she falls asleep for a half hour. She wakes in the dark to see car lights and opens the door, wondering who it could be. Kubi enters and stares silently at Esi. He is overcome by the sight of this vulnerable, tearful Esi. He thought Opokuya was here, but Esi explains that she has already left in her new car. Kubi takes Esi in his arms and begins kissing her, moving toward the couch. Esi wonders if this is how things are meant to be between her and Kubi. Perhaps it is the answer to how to meet one's needs and avoid attachment and pain. As she thinks of Opokuya, she realizes she cannot afford to lose her friendship. When Kubi begins unzipping his trousers, Esi pushes him away. He pauses and reorganizes himself. He starts to say something, but there is no need. Esi will never hurt Opokuya by speaking of this.

Esi never returns to Oko, nor does she get an annulment from Ali or have his child. Esi and Ali become good friends who occasionally have sex. Their marriage changes radically but continues with no questions or answers. Esi teaches herself not to expect Ali at all, though she cannot help but hear of his womanizing activities. Opokuya hears the most gossip about Ali but tells Esi the least. Esi believes Ali when he says he loves her in his own fashion, but she becomes certain that his fashion of love proved inadequate for her. Wondering what fashion of love she will ever consider adequate, Esi comforts herself by thinking that maybe she will get the answers to the big questions she is asking of life someday.

### Section 15: Chapter 23 Analysis

Esi is adrift in her loneliness, and Kubi comes to see her. It is revealed that Kubi has held some attraction for her at bay which he reveals by kissing her. Luckily, Esi realizes what this will cost her in her friendship with Opokuya and denies Kubi because she recognizes that she needs her friend. As her relationships progress, she is left with many unanswered questions, yet she comes to expect no answers and follows her own wishes. In doing so, she has found faith in her path, though she continues to hope that someday perhaps she will receive her answers.



# Characters

## Esi

Esi is a pretty, independent, and hardworking woman who is the protagonist of this novel. Esi first meets Ali Kondey at the offices of Linga Hideaways while checking on the travel arrangements for a conference in Lusaka on Thursday. One morning, Esi and Oko, her husband, argue, and he molests her, causing her to decide to leave him. She runs into Opokuya at the Hotel Twentieth Century several months later, and she is glad to see her friend who she has missed because they have been out of touch for weeks. They talk about their marriages and children, but when their conversation is interrupted by Ali's arrival, Esi admits to Opokuya that she likes him. Esi allows Ogyaanowa, her daughter by Oko, to live with Oko's mother though she does not want to admit that the arrangement suits everyone because she would be embarrassed to bring Ali home so soon after throwing Oko out if Ogyaanowa were home. Esi begins dating and sleeping with Ali and even forgives him for an extended absence. When Ali proposes, Esi accepts though she knows that becoming his second wife means many complications. Opokuya visits Esi, and Esi tells her friend about her relationship with Ali. When Esi spends the weekend with her mother and grandmother, she laments her education because she feels it alienates her from the older women in her family who were not educated. After some complications in obtaining the permission of Esi's family, Esi and Ali are married. Everyone celebrates. Ali and Esi leave Esi's village in separate cars. Since Ali agrees to be waiting at Esi's house for her, she is disappointed that he is not there when she returns home, nor does he appear throughout the evening. Esi goes to bed without eating as she has no appetite. She recalls Ena and Nana's advice to be careful. There are rules to being one of any number of wives with the most important being to never forget that she is number two and to never show jealousy. Esi laughs since it did not take even half a day to realize what it means to be number two. She does not know how to not show jealousy. She recalls her wedding day to Oko when she did not spend a single minute alone. As time goes on, Ali and Esi see less of one another, and Esi becomes extremely jealous when she learns that he is spending a great deal of time with his new secretary.

The end of the year is the most desolate time in Esi's life. She hopes Ali will visit for a reasonable length of time, but she rarely sees him at all. Esi is upset when Oko's mother refuses to allow Ogyaanowa to spend the holidays with her and secretly fears that Oko and his family are playing the child against her, but Ogyaanowa is always happy to see her mother. Rejecting her notion of going to her village for Christmas, she has a drink instead and sleeps for the rest of the day. By New Year's Eve, she decides she needs tranquilisers and obtains them from her doctor. She does not have the courage to take them until the next evening when she uses them to sleep through the festivities. A persistent car horn wakes her, and she sees an unfamiliar new car from which Ali appears. Esi greets Ali with a quiet reserve that causes his heart to sink. He gives her the keys to the car. It is her New Year present, but Esi is ashamed that she cannot experience joy for the new car. After they eat, Esi does not care when Ali claims



he must leave, but she pretends to do so because of the car. She drops him off at Hotel Twentieth Century and sits in her car, thinking. She realizes her situation is not different than if she had remained his mistress, and this is a complete dead end. Esi recalls how hurt she used to be when Ali left her to go home, by which he meant the house where Fusena and their children lived. Things with Ali do not improve. He tries to visit Esi more frequently during the first few weeks of the new year but cannot keep it up, and things return to the pattern of the recent past. He phones regularly and brings Esi extravagant gifts. Through his gifts, she sees the world, but she sees very little of her husband. The explosion occurs near the end of their third year of marriage. Esi is fed up because she has not seen Ali in weeks. When she hears his car enter the gates, she meets him at the door to say she "can't go on like this" (pg. 158.) Ali tries to embrace Esi, but she struggles free to tell him that this is not a marriage and she is not having any of it. Ali does not know what to say, so Esi tells him to go home to his wife and children and leave her alone. After Ali leaves in confusion, Esi collapses into a chair with a headache.

Three months later, Esi phones Opokuya at the hospital to tell her about the break-up. Opokuya feigns surprise, although she already knew. She comforts Esi by promising to visit soon, and Esi informs her that she can take the car now that it has been repaired and repainted. After a delay of several days, Opokuya visits Esi and she is worried by her friend's behavior. That evening is one of the rare times that they seem to have little to talk about. Since Esi obviously wants to be alone and Opokuya is excited about the car, Opokuya leaves to drive home. Esi listens to her old car drive away before going inside. To her surprise, tears begin to flow down her cheeks quietly. In the final chapter, Esi is only aware of her desolation and does not know what to do. She sits on the edge of her bed, crying, until she falls asleep for a half hour. She wakes in the dark to see carlights and opens the door, wondering who it could be. Kubi enters and stares silently at Esi. He is overcome by the sight of this vulnerable, tearful Esi. He thought Opokuya was here, but Esi explains that she has already left in her new car. Kubi takes Esi in his arms and begins kissing her, moving toward the couch. Esi wonders if this is how things are meant to be between her and Kubi. Perhaps it is the answer to how to meet one's needs and avoid attachment and pain. As she thinks of Opokuya, she realizes she cannot afford to lose her friendship. When Kubi begins unzipping his trousers, Esi pushes him away. He pauses and reorganizes himself. He starts to say something, but there is no need; Esi will never hurt Opokuya by speaking of this. Esi never returns to Oko, nor does she get an annulment from Ali or have his child. Esi and Ali become good friends who occasionally have sex. Their marriage changes radically but continues with no questions or answers. Esi teaches herself not to expect Ali at all, though she cannot help but hear of his womanizing activities. Opokuya hears the most gossip about Ali but tells Esi the least. Esi believes Ali when he says he loves her in his own fashion, but she becomes certain that his fashion of love proved inadequate for her. Wondering what fashion of love she will ever consider adequate, Esi comforts herself by thinking that maybe she will get the answers to the big questions she is asking of life someday.



## Ali Kondey

Ali is the handsome and charming man who owns Linga Hideaways. Ali first meets Esi at the offices of Linga Hideaways when she arrives to check on the travel arrangements for a business trip. As a Muslim, he sees his encounter with this fascinating woman as a gift from Allah. Ali Kondey is described in many different ways. The most effective advertisement for Linga Hideaways, he is a son of the world who dropped from his mother's womb determined to live this life. His mother, his father's favorite wife, died shortly after his birth, so Ali's father left him with Mma. Danjuma, his sister, for the first eight years of his life. Ali assumes many nationalities from the countries in which his father lived, travelled and traded, and the women he seduces fall in love with the image he paints of his father. Ali loves his father and is proud of the parts of himself which meet with his father's approval. Ali is only different from his father in preferring mature and sexually experienced women instead of young virgins. Ali's father is Musa Musa, the son of Musa Kondey, a rich minor prince. At the age of twelve, Musa Musa loses a kid while tending the goats and disappears. He next ventures home when he is over forty years old, after his father is dead, and has become a large trader. Ali's house is a large structure at the entrance to Nima from New Town as he had decided early in his sojourn into the south that he would always live in the zongo of the cities in which he found himself. He first came south with his father at the age of four and began to regularly travel with Musa Musa. Musa Musa's first order of business was always to place Ali in a Koranic school. One day, when Ali was nearly nine, Mma. Danjuma sends Danjuma and Ali to the market to buy kola, but she does not need kola; she only wants the boys out of the house because one should not discuss the future of young people in front of them. Mma. Danjuma approaches the men and asks Musa Musa to leave Ali with her properly to enroll in a French school.

Ali attends a French school and lycee before proceeding to a teacher training college where he meets Fusena, his wife. He then acquires a bachelor's and master's degree in Economics and Business Administration in England. English speakers find his language quaint while French speakers find it simple like the English. Ali and Fusena were classmates at the post-secondary school in Atebubu and spent a lot of time together as friends since Ali enjoys the company of interesting women and found Fusena interesting. After graduation, they both teach at primary schools in Tamale and continue to see each other regularly. During their six years of friendship, each has a number of affairs, but none are given much opportunity to grow. Eventually, circumstances force Ali and Fusena to face their emotions. He receives a scholarship in England which means a long parting, so one evening, Ali asks Fusena to marry him and she agrees. Neither recall how they got through the next couple of months. Ali's family is happy with his decision to marry, and the Kondeys and Al-Hassans arrange the marriage to occur in a week. Two months after the negotiations, Ali and Fusena have a proper Muslim wedding. She continues teaching at Tamale while Ali goes overseas, but both families insist Ali make sure Fusena is pregnant before he leaves the country. Four months after Ali arrives in England, Fusena writes to confirm she is pregnant with their first child, Adam. Within six years, Ali receives his bachelor's and master's degrees. He spends the first three years in England without Fusena before sending tickets for Fusena and





Adam. He meets them at the airport with great news: he has received his degree. The next day, they celebrate his degree and her arrival, and Ali explains that he sent for his wife because he is not going home yet. After the coup at home, he received letters from the new government that his programme has been cancelled. Ali gets a full-time job and studies part-time for his master's degree in Economics and Business Administration while Fusena stays at home. When she becomes pregnant with their second child, she feels tired and saddened by the rain in London, and she feels the loss of exchanging a friend for a husband in marrying Ali. She is also upset that he is becoming more educated while she remains the same, and this problem follows when they return home. By the end of their first week back in Ghana, Fusena is pregnant a third time. After two years of babies and making a home, she cannot remember how it feels to be in a classroom, but Ali tells her it is unnecessary. Now, Ali tells Fusena that he is thinking of taking a second wife who has a university degree, and Fusena questions Allah about what she is supposed to say or do.

Ali encounters Esi for the second time at the Hotel Twentieth Century where she is talking to Opokuya and though he cannot join them, he asks for permission to call Esi that week, which she grants. Ali tries in vain to get Esi out of his system because he has always trained himself not to be sexually attracted to another man's wife, and it has always worked until he met Esi. After first meeting Esi, Ali accepts the fact that she excites him, thinks about her and sends her gifts, but he begins seeking her out after the chance encounter at Hotel Twentieth Century. He is surprised and grateful to learn of her divorce, and he begins wooing her. The relationship soon becomes steady, their lovemaking reserved for Esi's bed and sleep afterward. Ali is excited by Esi's comfort with her naked body and tries to make her comfortable with him watching her. Being with Esi is a change for Ali as it allows him to unwind. After an extended absence, he begins visiting Esi again and eventually proposes. After some trouble obtaining her family's permission, Ali marries Esi. Their marriage does not go smoothly as he struggles to balance his spare time between his two wives and feels guilty for frequently ignoring Esi. Eventually, she confronts him, claiming that theirs is not a marriage. Although Esi does not divorce Ali, their marriage becomes a close friendship in which they occasionally seek physical comfort in one another's arms.

## Oko

Oko is Esi's first husband and Ogyaanowa's father. He is embarrassed that Esi seems to love her job more than him, and an argument between the couple leads to Oko raping Esi. As a result, Esi divorces Oko. He moves to the country when he is promoted to a higher position with the school there, but he cannot accept the fact that Esi has left him. When he encounters Ali at Esi's bungalow, he fights his ex-wife's new husband. He somewhat holds Ogyaanowa over Esi's head, but Esi never returns to Oko.



## **Fusena**

Fusena is Ali's first wife who he met at teacher training school. They have three children. Fusena gives up her career as a teacher in order to be a wife and mother, so she is very upset when Ali wants to take Esi, a woman with an university degree, as a second wife, but she knows she has no real choice in the matter.

## **Opokuya**

Opokuya is Esi's best friend who often talks to, advises, and comforts Esi in times of distress. She frequently argues with Kubi, her husband, about the use of their car. When Ali buys Esi a new car as a New Year's gift, Opokuya purchases Esi's old car.

## **Kubi**

Kubi is Opokuya's husband with whom she frequently argues about the use of their car. He works for the government. Near the end of the novel, Kubi attempts to sleep with Esi, but she repels him for the sake of her friendship with Opokuya.

## **Ogyaanowa**

Ogyaanowa is the young daughter of Esi and Oko who hates it when her parents fight. After they divorce, Ogyaanowa lives with her paternal grandmother.

## **Ena**

Ena is Esi's mother who is very upset about Esi's divorce. She also sees Esi's remarriage to Ali as lowering her position by becoming a second wife.

## **Nana**

Nana is Esi's grandmother who is very upset about Esi's divorce. She also sees Esi's remarriage to Ali as lowering her position by becoming a second wife.

## **Mma. Danjuma**

Mma. Danjuma is Ali's aunt who raises and loves him like her own son.

## **Musa Musa**

Musa Musa is Ali's father whom Ali is very proud of.



# Objects/Places

## Accra

Accra is the main setting of this novel and this city in Africa is where the majority of the novel's action occurs.

## Bamako

Bamako is a village in the north where Ali's family lives and where Ali takes Esi to meet his people after their marriage.

## Sweet Breezes Hill

Sweet Breezes Hill is a part of Accra where the Dakwas live. Esi visits Opokuya's home during Ali and Oko's fight and after she realizes her marriage with Ali is a dead end.

## Linga Hideaways

Linga Hideaways is Ali's travel agency that includes offices in many countries. Ali first meets Esi in the Accra office when she checks on the arrangements for a business trip.

## Esi's Bungalow

Esi lives in a bungalow in Accra with Oko, and after their separation, she keeps the bungalow. Ali frequently visits during their courtship and marriage. This is also where the fight between Oko and Ali transpires.

## Ali's Home

Ali's home is a large structure at the entrance to Nima from New Town. Even after marrying Esi, Ali always considers the house where Fusena and his children reside as home.

## Esi's Village

When Ali decides to marry Esi, he must go to her village to negotiate the marriage. His first visit is unsuccessful because he goes without a sponsor from his family, but the elders in his family sponsor him after obtaining Fusena's consent, so his second visit is fruitful. This is where Ali marries Esi and presents her with a gold wedding ring.



## **Oko's Mother's House**

After Esi and Oko divorce, Ogyaanowa lives at Oko's mother's house, and this is where Esi visits her daughter throughout the novel.

## **Esi's Job**

Esi works at the Birth and Death Registry. She likes working, though she is unwanted by her male coworkers. Oko is embarrassed that she makes more money than he does and that she loves her job more than him. During her marriage to Ali, Esi is able to devote far more time to her career.

## **England**

Ali attends college in England, and this is where he receives his bachelor's and master's degrees in Economics and Business Administration. When Fusena joins her husband, she is depressed with the rainy weather in England.



# Themes

## The View of Women in Society and Women's Rights

Arguably the most important theme in this novel is that of the way women are treated and viewed in the society of Africa in which the novel is set. Additionally, women's rights and the lack thereof are explored throughout this book. In the first chapter, Esi's anger at driving to the offices of Linga Hideaways results from the fact that she always ends up doing secretarial work when the secretary is away, and this is a result of Esi being a woman. Oko is angry with Esi for putting her career above her duties as a wife, which causes his friends to claim he is not behaving as a man. This causes him to rape Esi. Later at work, Esi realizes she has suffered marital rape though it is impossible in her society since sex from his wife is a man's right. She decides to leave Oko. Opokuya and Kubi's arguments result from his belief that his wife does not need to use the car, and he asserts his authority as the man of the house in forbidding her to use it most days, parking it outside of his job instead.

During Opokuya and Esi's conversation at Hotel Twentieth Century, they discuss the fact that men want sharp, active women but fail to realize that she will grow bored and dissatisfied when she changes her job. Opokuya claims it is frightening that societies have no patience with single women and do not even admit they exist as they see a woman's single state as "an insult to the glorious manhood of our men" (pg. 48.) There is no solution for Esi unless she finds a man prepared to accept her lifestyle. Opokuya insists Esi should have made more time for her husband because she has advanced in her career but lost her marriage, yet male workers manage careers and marriages. Esi admits that she has been overlooked for promotions several times despite how hard she works. Ali forces Fusena to relinquish her career after they are married and have children; when he decides to take Esi as a second wife, she is disheartened that Ali plans to take a second wife who has a university degree.

When Ali proposes to Esi, he insists that she wear his ring to show the rest of the male world that she is taken. When the elder women in Ali's family undertake the job of convincing Fusena to consent to Ali's marriage to Esi, she makes the women's job easy by agreeing with all of their suggestions, though she knows all is lost. The older women feel bad, and an understanding is born between them that it is a man's world and a woman can only survive if she knows how to live as a woman in it; yet, they are shocked by how little has changed for their daughters despite receiving educations. When Esi visits Ena and Nana, she distinctly feels the difference in their relationships which she blames on the fact that they were not educated while she was; this distinction leads to alienation between Esi and her mother.



## Marriage

Another prevalent theme in "Changes: A Love Story" is the theme of marriage as the novel's plot is centered around the failure of Esi's marriage with Oko and her remarriage to Ali. Oko is angry that Esi puts her career above her duties as a wife, and as a result, he rapes her. When Esi realizes she has suffered marital rape though it is impossible in her society since sex from his wife is a man's right, she decides to divorce Oko.

Opokuya and Kubi argue about the car's movements as they do every morning. He feels he should drive the car to work and leave it parked all day while she takes the hospital vans to work, but she wants him to take the car off government maintenance so she can take care of her family properly. The argument always ends with one of them giving in, and the winner drives the loser to work.

When Esi runs into Opokuya at Hotel Twentieth Century, she tells her friend about the dissolution of her marriage, and the two discuss marriage as an institution in general. Esi once worried that she would never marry, but now she finds Oko's attentions too suffocating. Esi is too easily bored, making it impossible to catch and hold a man by showing a lack of interest. Esi's grandmother, Nana, says that feeling grateful to a man is reason enough to marry him; love is not safe, and "the last man any women should think of marrying is the man she loves" (pg. 42.) Opokuya asks Esi if another woman ruined her marriage, but Esi assures her friend that her marriage failed because Oko resented every minute she could not be with him and wanted her to change her job though he was first attracted to her because of her air of independence. Opokuya agrees that men want sharp, active women but fail to realize that she will grow bored and dissatisfied when she changes her job. Opokuya asks if Esi will remarry, but Esi does not want another husband to sit on her back all day. Opokuya claims it is frightening that societies have no patience with single women and do not even admit they exist as they see a woman's single state as "an insult to the glorious manhood of our men" (page 48). There is no solution for Esi unless she finds a man prepared to accept her lifestyle. Opokuya says Esi cannot have it all because society will not allow it; she will be lonely at least some of the time. Society says that for marriage to work, at least one party must be a fool, but they really mean the woman. Opokuya insists Esi should have made more time for her husband because she has advanced in her career but lost her marriage, yet male workers manage careers and marriages.

After graduating from teacher training school and before attending college in England, Ali's family is happy with his decision to marry Fusena, and the Kondeys and Al-Hassans arrange the marriage to occur in a week. Two months after the negotiations, Ali and Fusena have a proper Muslim wedding. She continues teaching at Tamale while Ali goes overseas, but both families insist Ali make sure Fusena is pregnant before he leaves the country. After two years of babies and making a home, she cannot remember how it feels to be in a classroom, but Ali tells her it is unnecessary. Now, Ali tells Fusena that he is thinking of taking a second wife who has a university degree, and Fusena questions Allah about what she is supposed to say or do. When Ali proposes to Esi, he insists she wear his ring to show the rest of the male world that she is taken.



On Ali and Esi's wedding day, Ali does not return to Esi's house with her, and she recalls Ena and Nana's advice to be careful. There are rules to being one of any number of wives with the most important being to never forget that she is number two and to never show jealousy. Esi laughs since it did not take even half a day to realize what it means to be number two. She does not know how to not show jealousy. Ali struggles with trying to spend time with both of his wives, but eventually, Esi decides that theirs is not a marriage and she will have none of it. Esi never returns to Oko, nor does she get an annulment from Ali or have his child. Esi and Ali become good friends who occasionally have sex. Their marriage changes radically but continues with no questions or answers. Esi teaches herself not to expect Ali at all, though she cannot help but hear of his womanizing activities. Esi believes Ali when he says he loves her in his own fashion, but she becomes certain that his fashion of love proved inadequate for her. Wondering what fashion of love she will ever consider adequate, Esi comforts herself by thinking that maybe she will get the answers to the big questions she is asking of life someday.

## Friendship

One of the subtle yet very important themes in "Changes: A Love Story" concerns friendship, and the focus of this theme is on the friendship between Esi and Opokuya, though other friendships also play a role in this novel. No one is as different as Opokuya and Esi, but they have been close friends for so long that they are nearly sisters. At the Hotel Twentieth Century, Esi and Opokuya run into one another, and they are excited since they have been out of touch for weeks. As they discuss the fact that Esi has left Oko, Opokuya is sorry for the failure of Esi's marriage. Each woman thinks that the best husband always seems to be the one that someone else is living with. Esi is aware that Opokuya is her last hope of sympathy or understanding as her mother and grandmother found it hard to listen to her at all and there is no question of Esi talking to Oko's people because they hate her and want Oko to find a proper wife. Esi's uncertainty about the justification of her decision grows, making her hesitant to tell her story to Opokuya for fear of losing her friend too and having to fight alone. Esi and Opokuya have only lived in the same town once before since secondary school which was when Esi and Oko first married and Esi was pregnant. Now, Esi and Opokuya are both in Accra, and Esi has a big marital problem and should just talk to Opokuya and accept that she is a fool if her friend cannot understand. When Ali and Oko fight, Esi runs to Opokuya's house and spends the next several days there. She also turns to her friend when her relationship with Ali is ruined. When Kubi kisses Esi near the end of the novel, she pulls away because she knows that she cannot afford to lose Opokuya as a friend; Esi will never mention this out of her desire to avoid hurting Opokuya.

During her first marriage, Esi puts her career above her duties as a wife and is respected by her colleagues, but Oko's friends laugh at him and claim he is not behaving as a man. Ali and Fusena were classmates at the post-secondary school in Atebubu and spent a lot of time together as friends since Ali enjoys the company of interesting women and found Fusena interesting. After graduation, they both teach at primary schools in Tamale and continue to see each other regularly. During their six years of friendship, each has a number of affairs but none are given much opportunity



to grow. Eventually, circumstances force Ali and Fusena to face their emotions. He receives a scholarship in England which means a long parting. One evening, Ali asks Fusena to marry him and she agrees. When she becomes pregnant with their second child in England, she feels tired and saddened by the rain in London and she feels the loss of exchanging a friend for a husband in marrying Ali. After Esi tells Ali that their relationship is not a marriage, she does not divorce him. Instead, they become good friends who occasionally enjoy the physical benefits of marriage.





# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is the third person. This point of view is omniscient and reliable and this can be seen by the fact that the narrator is able to report upon the characters' thoughts and emotions as well as their dialogues and actions. This point of view is important in Aidoo's novel because it allows the reader to witness the inner dynamics of these marriages and other relationships. As a result, the reader is able to better understand the reasons for the events that occur.

This narrative is told using a larger percentage of exposition, although there is still a significant amount of dialogue scattered throughout the novel. The majority of the exposition focuses on the thoughts and feelings of the characters upon whom a specific scene is focused. This distribution is effective as it aids the reader's comprehension by providing justification for the events that occur through the characters' thoughts and feelings. The viewpoint of this novel alternates continually. The main focus varies between Esi and Ali, but it also detours to present the viewpoints of Opokuya, Oko, Fusena, and Ogyaanowa.

## Setting

This novel is set in the real world of Africa, primarily in the city of Accra. This continent is composed of many small countries that are situated close together and as a result, the characters, especially Ali, frequently travel between the different countries. The characters are native Africans, but their society has recently undergone major changes as a result of colonialization. The society is divided religiously between Christians and Muslims, and there is some conflict in lifestyle between the two groups. A major conflict is seen in the position of women in this society as they are only recently receiving educations and beginning careers. Because of this, the women in this novel must struggle to balance their wifely duties with their careers. One such example of this is seen in Oko's jealousy of Esi's career which eventually results in the dissolution of their marriage. Additionally, Ali prohibits Fusena from pursuing her education and career after they marry and have children.

Accra is the main setting of this novel, and this city in Africa is where the majority of the novel's action occurs. Bamako is a village in the north where Ali's family lives and where Ali takes Esi to meet his people after their marriage. Sweet Breezes Hill is a part of Accra where the Dakwas live. Esi visits Opokuya's home during Ali and Oko's fight and after she realizes her marriage with Ali is a dead end. Linga Hideaways is Ali's travel agency which includes offices in many countries. Ali first meets Esi in the Accra office when she checks on the arrangements for a business trip. Esi lives in a bungalow in Accra with Oko, and after their separation, she keeps the bungalow. Ali frequently visits during their courtship and marriage. This is also where the fight between Oko and Ali



transpires. Ali's home is a large structure at the entrance to Nima from New Town. Even after marrying Esi, Ali always considers the house where Fusena and his children reside as home. When Ali decides to marry Esi, he must go to her village to negotiate the marriage. His first visit is unsuccessful because he goes without a sponsor from his family, but the elders in his family sponsor him after obtaining Fusena's consent. Therefore, his second visit is fruitful and Ali marries Esi, presenting her with a gold wedding ring. After Esi and Oko divorce, Ogyaanowa lives at Oko's mother's house, and this is where Esi visits her daughter throughout the novel. Esi works at the Birth and Death Registry. She likes working, though she is unwanted by her male coworkers. Oko is embarrassed that she makes more money than he does and that she loves her job more than him. During her marriage to Ali, Esi is able to devote far more time to her career. Ali attends college in England, and this is where he receives his bachelor's and master's degrees in Economics and Business Administration. When Fusena joins her husband, she is depressed with the rainy weather in England.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel tends to be primarily casual and informal. The sentences are constructed mostly in adherence to grammatical traditions with some improper constructions occurring. These occasional deviations from proper grammar are often used as a method of portraying a certain character's train of thought, in a style similar to stream-of-consciousness. This language aids reader comprehension as it aids in developing both the characters in the novel and the society in which they live.

The language that is used in this novel serves to characterize the culture and the characters presented in the narrative. By the predominate use of exposition, the reader becomes aware of the characters' thoughts that characterize the misogynistic culture. This knowledge allows the reader to immerse themselves in the characters' culture in order to better understand their thoughts, feelings and actions. Overall, the language is fairly easy to understand and extremely useful in fully developing the underlying circumstances which cause the events portrayed in the novel.

## Structure

This novel is comprised of twenty-three chapters that are divided into three parts of the novel. The first part contains twelve chapters, the second part consists of six chapters, and the remaining five chapters form the third part of the novel. The chapters range in length from four to fourteen pages, averaging around eight pages. The chapters are numbered rather than titled, and they tend to be fairly short but very detailed in conveying the thoughts and feelings of the characters, as well as the events that transpire. Each chapter presents varying lengths of time within the narrative, ranging from mere minutes to months of time.

The novel's plot is fairly simple with minor subplots which easily coexist within the overall plot. "Changes: A Love Story" by Ama Ata Aidoo is a novel that explores the



changes that working women in Africa must face in their marriages and families while men's lives remain unaltered. After Esi divorces Oko, she has more time to focus on her career, but after she remarries to Ali Kondey, she must find a balance between being a career woman, a wife and a friend to Opokuya who encounters problems in her marriage of a different nature. "Changes: A Love Story" is a very interesting novel that is sure to keep the reader entertained.

The novel's pace is fairly quick as many aspects are covered in a short space, and the narrator is effective in summarizing the more mundane events that occur. The novel is easy to read as the narrator instills a fluent understanding of the culture in the reader which aids in comprehension. The novel contains several flashbacks in which Ali's past and his marriage to Fusena is described. This novel is easy to read and very entertaining from cover to cover.



## Quotes

"This was a Friday evening. As a strictly brought-up Muslim who had actually gone to the mosque earlier in the afternoon, there was only one way to interpret his encounter with this fascinating woman: a gift from Allah. So he should not let himself feel too bad about the way the encounter had ended. If it was His will, things would right themselves in the end" (Chapter 1, pg. 4.)

"Just ask anybody. There are many thoughts that come into our minds which we are not aware of, at the time we are doing the thinking. Feelings can be even worse" (Chapter 2, pg. 5.)

"Meanwhile, our governments are behaving like all professional beggars. They have learned the rules of effective begging, one of them being that you never object to anything the giver likes. And they know the givers like one thing very much now: that there should not be too many of us" (Chapter 3, pg. 14-15.)

"Ali always pretended great shock at any suggestion that his father might die. He thought any discussion of that subject was in very bad taste, and Musa Musa agreed with him. Indeed the only opinion Musa Musa could possibly have shared with African heads of state is that any discussion of our mortality is treason and punishable, by death of course, if the circumstances are right" (Chapter 4, pg. 26-27.)

"Opokuya, I have left Oko" (Esi, Chapter 5, pg. 36.)

"In the silence that followed, each woman was thinking that clearly the best husband always seems to be the one some other woman is living with!" (Chapter 5, pg. 38.)

"Love?... Love?... Love is not safe, my lady Silk, love is dangerous. It is deceitfully sweet like the wine from a fresh palm tree at dawn. Love is fine for singing about and love songs are good to listen to, sometimes even to dance to. But when we need to count on human strength, and when we have to count pennies for food for our stomachs and clothes for our backs, love is nothing. Ah my lady, the last man any woman should think of marrying is the man she loves" (Nana, Chapter 5, pg. 42.)

"In any case, everyone knows that a man's relationship with women other than his wife, however innocent, can always help ruin a marriage. And that includes his love for his own mother." (Chapter 6, pg. 44.)

"Esi, listen: men are not really interested in a woman's independence or her intelligence. The few who claim they like intelligent and active women are also interested in having such women permanently in their beds and in their kitchens" (Opokuya, Chapter 6, pg. 45.)



"And now here was Ali telling her that he was thinking of making a woman with a university degree his second wife. So Allah, what was she supposed to say? What was she supposed to do?" (Chapter 7, pg. 67.)

"To think that your woman is being cold to you because of another man is almost ennobling. Maybe he is throwing money at her. Maybe he is more good-looking than you. Women seem never able to resist shows... But to have to fight with your woman's career for her attention is not only new in the history of the world, but completely humiliating" (Chapter 8, pg. 69-70.)

"He knew very few women from his part of the world who even tried to be at ease with their own bodies. The combination of forces against that had been too overwhelming- traditional shyness and contempt for the biology of women; Islamic suppressive ideas about women; English Victorian prudery and French hypocrisy imported by the colonisers... All these had variously and together wreaked havoc on the mind of the modern African woman: especially about herself. As far as Ali could tell, he told himself, most women behaved as if the world was full of awful things- beginning with their bodies" (Chapter 9, pg. 75.)

"Does that mean you will marry me?' 'Must I?' 'Yes Esi, I want to marry you'" (Ali and Esi, Chapter 10, pg. 86.)

"Why Esi, for the same reason that any betrothed or married woman would wear any man's ring. To let the rest of the male world know that she is bespoke" (Ali, Chapter 10, pg. 91.)

"Opokuya, Ali is wonderful. And so understanding of the kind of woman I am" (Esi, Chapter 11, pg. 94.)

"Every other wife in their circle of friends envied Fusena. Yet here she was feeling so sorry for herself, she could literally die. She had allowed Ali to talk her out of teaching, hadn't she? And now the monster she had secretly feared since London had arrived. Her husband had brought into their marriage a woman who had more education than she did" (Chapter 12, pg. 100.)

"The older women felt bad. So an understanding that had never existed between them was now born. It was a man's world. You only survived if you knew how to live in it as a woman. What shocked the older women though, was obviously how little had changed for their daughters- school and all!" (Chapter 13, pg. 107.)

"It used to be possible to talk and know that you and everyone else knew what you were talking about. It has stopped being like that for some time now. These days, we are getting used to people saying big things when they mean so little or nothing at all. They talk of pretty things when they intend ugly, and carry dangerous deeds home that properly belong to the bush" (Nana, Chapter 14, pg. 109.)



"Lying alone in bed with her eyes hard and wide-open in the dark, she remembered some of the advice her mother and grandmother had given her. They had told her to be careful. That being one of any number of wives had its rules. If she obeyed the rules, then her new marriage would be like a fire that had been lighted inside her. They recited some of the rules to her. They made her aware of some of the pitfalls. Above all, they said, there were two things she had to bear in mind at all times. One was never to forget that she was number two, and the other was never to show jealousy" (Chapter 14, pg. 116.)

"Guilty in spite of the fact that by all the precepts of his upbringing Esi was indeed his wife, and yet by 'home' he meant only one place, which was where Fusena and his children were. Hopelessly guilty because he knew that there was not the slightest possibility of him ever being able to establish any rituals in the relationship with Esi" (Chapter 15, pg. 119.)

"In the meantime, Oko had decided that behaving the way he had just done wouldn't do. It was a definite lowering of standards. Why make that bitch think she was the only woman in the world? He was going to leave her and get on with his life" (Chapter 17, pg. 131.)

"Yes, Ali had not forgotten his beginnings... So, if he found a woman like Esi attractive enough to want to marry her, then that should be good enough for her. He could have organised the matter of the permissions better. But then, the joy of having children is also sometimes having to forgive them when, after they had done wrong, they come back to say sorry" (Chapter 18, pg. 134.)

"Fade in the end-of-day sounds of the city and its traffic: yes, do fade them in: especially when you are in doubt" (Chapter 19, pg. 137.)

"Obviously, Ali was determined to keep her off his and Fusena's home. As her heart began to pound rather uncontrollably, she asked herself a question. To wit: in what way was her situation different from what it would have been if she had simply stayed as Ali's mistress, in spite of going to see her people in the village, giving her the ring and all? The question was out. A shudder ran through her as she began to examine its full implications. And the conclusion came rather swiftly. This was a complete dead end" (Chapter 20, pg. 149.)

"Plainly, Opokuya didn't know how to handle the information or all the unexpected and conflicting emotions it had aroused in her. On one hand, she was really happy for Esi. But she was also feeling envious: very envious. And that was quite new to her nature. She was wondering how any one person could be so lucky. And in any case, where was her luck? What was it she had got out of life and out of marriage? Answer: a very faithful husband. Four fine children. Endless drudgery at work. And the state, who was her employer, paying salaries so low you were convinced the aim was to get people like her to resign and go to work for doctors in private practice. Now look at her, and look at Esi" (Chapter 21, pg. 153-154.)



"Opokuya my sister, just tell me that you told me so!" (Esi, Chapter 22, pg. 159.)

"Esi's mind snapped open. There must be a cure for most pains including a feeling of desolation, she was thinking. Why not? she added, all in her head. Then it occurred to her that maybe this was what had always been between her and Kubi. Which neither of them had wanted to face but which had inspired his treatment of her to swing between that of a kindly understanding uncle and an irritable, disapproving older brother? It also occurred to her that this might be an answer to the great question of how to get one's physical needs met, and still manage to avoid all attachment and pain" (Chapter 23, pg. 163.)

"Esi easily guessed what he had been about to say. She was never going to breathe a word of what had nearly happened- to Opokuya or any living soul. There are things you don't do to a friend. Opokuya was not just a friend. She was a sister, almost her other self. And definitely there are some tales you don't tell even to yourself" (Chapter 23, pg. 164.)

"So what fashion of loving was she ever going to consider adequate? She comforted herself that maybe her bone-blood-flesh self, not her unseen soul, would get answers to some of the big questions she was asking of life" (Chapter 23, pg. 166.)

## Topics for Discussion

What is the role of women in the society of Accra? How does Esi adhere to and deviate from this role?

Compare and contrast Esi's marriage to Oko and Ali.

What are the religious components presented in this novel?

How does Esi try to balance her independence and her marriage to Ali? What is the result?

Describe Esi and Opokuya's friendship.

By the end of the novel, how does Esi feel about herself and life in general?

How is marriage portrayed in "Changes: A Love Story" by Ama Ata Aidoo?