

# **Half of a Yellow Sun Study Guide**

**Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

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## Plot Summary

"Half of a Yellow Sun" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, features Nigeria during the 1960s and the struggle of the people trying to come to terms with a dual nature and culture. The book opens by focusing on a young 13-year-old Igbo boy named, Ugwu. He is going to work in the city at a rich professor's home. The professor's name is Odenigbo. The boy's aunt walks him to the residence and sends him in, alone. Ugwu soon settles in and is almost treated as if he is family by Odenigbo and his fiancée, Olanna. Olanna is the daughter of a businessman in Lagos, and also has a background of extreme wealth. She has only just returned from London where she has been obtaining a degree in sociology.

The reader is introduced to a wide range of characters who parade past Ugwu his first few months there. Each weekend there is a political meeting in the den where Odenigbo entertains dissidents and fellow radicals who are unhappy about the English colonization of their country. Richard Churchill is the only white Englishman in Odenigbo's circle of friends. He is involved with Kainene the brusque younger sister to Olanna. His former girlfriend, Susan, a snobbish Englishwoman, berates Richard for his choice in women. Richard doesn't see it that way. The reader sees that Richard is in love with the country and identifies with it, though he understands that he might always remain an outsider. The reader also meets Odenigbo's mother, whom everyone calls "Mama." She disapproves of Olanna because Olanna's mother didn't breastfeed her, and thus insinuates that Olanna is a witch. This upsets Olanna very much, but once Mama leaves, her love for Odenigbo overrides her disappointment. They begin trying to have a child. The reader also meets Olanna's former boyfriend, Mohammed, a wealthy Hausa, and Olanna's Aunt and Uncle who live in Kano.

Several years later, in the midst of a governmental overthrow of the Nigerian government, there is great civil unrest. The two dominant tribes, the Hausa and the Igbo both accuse one another of instigating the overthrow. Both are pointing fingers at the other. Olanna and Odenigbo have had a child, whom they simply call "baby." The violence escalates and moves towards a purge of all Igbo living in the area. Olanna's beloved Aunt and Uncle are murdered while she is visiting them with the baby due to this escalation. She just manages to escape onto a train. When she reaches Nsukka the violence has reached there too and she sees a woman carrying the severed head of her dead child in a basket. Once in safety Olanna learns from Richard that there were massacres that took place at the airport that morning. The area still held by the Igbo people declares its independence, calling this area the Republic of Biafra.

Nigeria reacts badly to this declaration and vows to never allow the succession. England and Russia immediately send arms to the Hausa-held Nigerian government and the violence becomes commonplace. Fearing for their safety Olanna, Odenigbo, Ugwu, and baby move to the outer lying areas where there are food shortages and neither Olanna nor Odenigbo have access to their money. Olanna and Odenigbo decide to make their union official and have a quick wedding, which is cut short by a bombing at the reception.



The reader will often have the linear plot line interrupted by the inclusion of sections from a book titled, 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' These selections are placed in ostensibly to show what is also going on globally at the same time as the Biafran War. After this first selection, the reader is returned to the ongoing story, but it takes place at a time before the war. In a flashback the reader sees Olanna as she is leaving Odenigbo's home to go back to London to finish up her last year of schooling. Mama, Odenigbo's mother, plots to break them up by having her serving girl, Amala seduce Odenigbo. She is successful and Odenigbo sleeps with her. Olanna finds out about it and moves all of her things out. Later, Olanna finds out that Amala has borne Odenigbo's child. In her grief Olanna gets drunk and seduces Richard, who sleeps with her. In the morning they realize their mistake and make a bargain not to tell Kainene. However, Olanna does tell Odenigbo.

Odenigbo realizes his mistake and he and Olanna get back together. Together they adopt Amala's child, whose real name is Chiamaka, but her nickname is Baby. In the meanwhile, Kainene finds out about Richard and Olanna's indiscretion and is so furious that she burns Richard's book manuscript. They make up afterwards and stay together.

In the present day, war-torn Biafra is in a tailspin and the rebellion is going badly. People are starving and the level of violence is nightmarish. Nigeria has instituted a siege of the major cities and isn't allowing food, medicine, or supplies into any of the cities. When Olanna asks Richard why the global community is not helping them, Richard can offer no excuse. Richard tries to do his part by writing news articles that are immediately picked up by the international community. Kainene starts a refugee camp and Olanna assists her. Odenigbo's mental state is not good. His mother has been killed in the violence and unable to deal with the grief and the likely loss of the war, he begins drinking and slides into a deep depression.

Kainene and Olanna make amends and they are able to resume their former close relationship. Ugwu, now 16, falls in love with a girl, but before he can go much further with her he is drafted into the Biafran army. The reader watches as a brilliant, sensitive, gifted young man is turned into a killing machine. The ultimate turning point for him is when he willingly participates in the gang rape of a girl from a bar one night. Later, he is wounded in battle and everyone fears that he is dead.

Olanna's family can no longer stay in Lagos and move in with Kainene and Olanna. While visiting friends in the hospital Olanna and Kainene find Ugwu. They take him home. Children begin dying of starvation in the refugee camps and Kainene vows to do something. Olanna is worried that her sister will do something foolish. Unbeknownst to her family, Kainene steals out at night to cross enemy lines to see if she can find food for the children. She is never seen again, though Richard and the others frantically search for her.

Starving and disease-ridden, the Biafran resistance gives up and Nigeria is unified once more. Olanna's family return to their mansion only to find everything nearly destroyed. All of their savings in the banks have been confiscated, and they are devastated. Ugwu, now well, returns to his village to see what is left of it. It is here that he learns the

devastating news that his sister had been gang raped by some soldiers. As a way to cope with the news and the violence he has lived through, he begins to write a book, which he titles: "The World Was Silent When We Died."



# Part One: Chapters 1-2

## Summary

### Chapter 1

This chapter opens with the focus resting on a young boy from the local village of Opi going to work at the 'Master's' house. His aunt is walking him there and tells him about the man that he will work for. She reminds him to say 'Yes, Sah' to everything. The reader learns that Ugwu's new boss teaches mathematics at the local university. It is obvious that Ugwu has never been out of his village as the city mesmerizes him. His Aunt got him this job and she warns him not to make her look bad, as she also works for Master Odenigbo.

Once inside, Ugwu is introduced to Odenigbo. Ugwu has never seen a house filled with so many books and feels very overwhelmed when his aunt leaves him there. Odenigbo walks in and Ugwu immediately notes that while he is very young, he is also very hairy. Ugwu thinks he looks like a wrestler, except that Master wears glasses. Master speaks English, which further elevates him in Ugwu's eyes. Master tells him to go into the kitchen and help himself to whatever is in the refrigerator. At first he is shy but when he sees that there is no one there to watch him and Master tells him that he's going out for a walk, he takes great sections of chicken, and extra-large chunks of bread. Thinking of his family, she takes a little extra and stuffs it into his pockets for later.

Ugwu explores the house and is once again overwhelmed by everything he sees, including real beds. The house is warm and his belly is full and eventually he finds a bed and lies down in it. He falls asleep though he hadn't intended to do so. The next thing he knows Odenigbo is shaking him gently and asking him why everything smells like chicken. Sheepishly, Ugwu shows his gathered food to Odenigbo who only smiles and tells him to take it back down to the kitchen to have someone wrap it up for him. When he returns Odenigbo tells him what his duties will be in the household.

While he is going over a rather lengthy list with Ugwu Odenigbo gets sidetracked and begins speaking of politics and the government. Ugwu doesn't understand and Odenigbo tells him that he will be enrolled in primary school, though he will be the oldest in his class. He warns Ugwu that he will learn two kinds of history in school, and that he should remember the white version, but hold the 'real' version closer to his heart. He also tells Ugwu to stop calling him 'sah' and instead to call him Odenigbo.

Weeks pass but Ugwu still calls him 'sah'. Mostly Ugwu is good at attending Odenigbo, but one day when he tries to iron Odenigbo's socks, he melts them making Odenigbo angry. After Odenigbo leaves the house, Ugwu becomes convinced that evil spirits must have compelled him to iron the socks. Afraid that Odenigbo will not want him any longer, he cooks a stew and puts in a special herb that is supposed to soften a man's heart. That night when Odenigbo eats the stew there is no more mention of the burned socks,



so Ugwu is convinced that the herbs worked. He loves working for Odenigbo as he knows from talking to other houseboys that he has it better than they do in that Odenigbo sends him to school and allows him to sleep on a bed.

On the weekends the Master has friends from the University. They sit in the parlor and talk about politics. Ugwu has to serve them drinks and try to stay out of the way. He makes a point of knowing their names, however. There is Professor Ezeka, the poet Okeoma, and Miss Adebayo. Ugwu is shocked by Miss Adebayo as she argues with Master the loudest. Ugwu is afraid that maybe Odenigbo likes this and will marry her, which upsets Ugwu. He thinks that if Master marries that things will change for the worse for him. However, a few months later Ugwu learns that Odenigbo is already seeing a woman named, Olanna, who will be visiting shortly from London.

Ugwu is anxious about her visit but when he sees her is is captivated by her beauty. He thinks to himself that she is so beautiful that she should be kept safe under glass. Ugwu is so taken with her that he calls her 'nkem' which means 'my own.' He remarks that at night she moans in Odenigbo's room.

## Chapter 2

The narrative shifts to focus on Olanna, who is going to the airport with Odenigbo. She's on her way back to her family's home in Lagos. After Odenigbo says good bye, Olanna sits waiting for her flight to board and can't help overhearing a family talking next to her. The grandmother is worried that the plane won't stop. It is evident from the conversations that this is most likely the first time any of them have ever been in an airport. Olanna moves over to comfort them and answer any questions they may have. Once aboard her own plane Olanna thinks back to when she met Odenigbo. This is prompted by a man complimenting her on her beauty. She had been in line to see a movie with another man named Mohammed when white movie-goers were allowed to skip ahead of many of the black movie-goers who were also waiting in line. Odenigbo had spoken up and given the usher a tongue lashing. Olanna had admired his fire and his courage. Since then they'd only dated long distance, and only spent one or two days at most together. Now, she will be moving in with him and she is nervous about it.

She arrives at her family's home and later that night she has dinner with her parents and some of her parent's influential friends, namely the finance minister, Chief Okonji. Olanna's father has invited him to dinner, Olanna's twin sister, Kainene tells her, because their father hopes to get a huge contracting job out of him. Many things have changed since Olanna has been in London. She finds out that her sister is now the head of the family business in one of the larger nearby cities. As the evening winds down it becomes apparent that Olanna's father has made an under the table agreement with the Chief and that one of the main requirements by the finance minister is to have an affair with Olanna. She is appalled and tells her father that this is not going to happen.

Chief Okonji is not used to being rebuffed and later on the balcony he tries to force himself on her. She pushes him away and goes to her room. Her parents both let her





know how disappointed they are in her. Kainene comes to her room and teases her about the whole ordeal. Olanna learns that Kainene has a boyfriend, and Englishman, named Richard. Having had enough of her immediate family, the next day Olanna decides to go and visit her aunt and uncle in a village outside of town.

The village is in the north and her aunt, uncle, and their children all live simply together in a one room hut. They all seem so happy, though, and Olanna begins to contrast her parents and all of their wealth to her aunt's happiness. Her parents don't even sleep in the same bedroom, she muses. A family friend, named Abdulmalik, drops by. He is a Hausa man and he gives Olanna slippers and an invitation to come see him. She knows that she won't do that. However, she does go the next day to visit Mohammed, her old boyfriend in his family's home. They live outside of town on a large plantation style estate. She is quick to assure him that though she was in London she is not like the whites. He assures her that he knows that.

Olanna goes back to Nsukka, which is where Odenigbo lives. She decides to get an apartment so that she will have someplace to retreat to if needed. However, she plans to stay most of the time with Odenigbo. When she arrives back he is readying himself to leave to attend a conference. He urges her to stay in the house anyway and she agrees. This upsets Ugwu who doesn't like that she immediately begins to change things around in the home. The next day Odenigbo arrives back home and they make love. Later that evening his usual political visitors come to the house and she is introduced to them. It is clear that Miss Adebayo is upset at her presence and calls her 'illogically pretty,' then goes on to prove her intellectual prowess by discussing topics that Olanna knows little about.

Several weeks later finds Olanna enjoying the relationship with Odenigbo, but rejecting his offer of marriage. She claims that she just wants more time to decide, but in reality, she's just enjoying herself too much and is afraid that the fun will end if they are married. She gives up trying to make friends with Miss Adebayo, and it is clear that Adebayo resents Olanna's English accent.

## Analysis

### Chapter 1

In the beginning of the book the character of Ugwu offers a comedic and naive view of the world. The contrast between his living situation and that of his new Master is so vast that his reactions are genuine and emphatic. His new Master, Odenigbo, seems like a god to Ugwu and he is overwhelmed when the man offers to send him to school and insists that he sleep on a real bed. The reader sees early on that Odenigbo is not only a college educated man, but that he is politically vocal about the treatment of blacks in Nigeria.

Ugwu is told upon arrival to go and have something from the refrigerator, anything he wants. He does and when he realizes that no one is watching him he pockets portions



for his mother and brothers back home. This indicates the level of poverty that he comes from, and establishes that he is a kind and compassionate person. When Odenigbo discovers the chicken that Ugwu has stuffed into his pockets the boy is afraid that he is going to be fired. Instead, the reader sees a compassionate person in Odenigbo who tells the boy that he can have it, but must put it in the icebox until he goes home. The author demonstrates the theme of Race and Culture in this section with the contrast between Odenigbo and Ugwu. Both are a part of the Igbo culture, but the disparity in their wealth and education is striking. Odenigbo has adopted many English ways and phrases, whereas Ugwu has not. Additionally, Ugwu believes in evil spirits and witchcraft, while Odenigbo is educated and does not ascribe to any religion.

It becomes clear that while Odenigbo is being generous in sending Ugwu to school, he is also doing it to make a point to the white establishment. He tells Ugwu that the way to throw off colonialism is through education. He allows Ugwu to become a part of the family. Odenigbo refuses to acknowledge that the name of the country is Nigeria, as he does not recognize a country created by whites. Ugwu admires this.

As a 13 year old boy, Ugwu is beginning to deal with his own puberty and sexual longings. When Olanna comes to visit Ugwu is beside himself because of her beauty. He fantasizes that she is his and makes up a nickname in his mind to call her. The author is demonstrating one of many facets of the theme of Love. In this case, it is the emergence of first love, first sexual attraction for Ugwu. Later, there will be other aspects of love explored.

## Chapter 2

The themes of Love, Race and Culture, dominate this chapter. The reader learns that Olanna, too, is Igbo, like Odenigbo and Ugwu. However, her former boyfriend Mohammed is from the Hausa tribe. This chapter is focused on Olanna and the reader gains insight into her thoughts. At the airport, where she will catch a plane to see her parents, she comforts a family who have never been to an airport before. The reader sees that she is genuinely a caring and kind individual. She muses about how she met Odenigbo and the reader learns that she is attracted to educated, opinionated men. She had been at a movie with Mohammed at the time that she met Odenigbo and the reader sees that she can also be impulsive when it comes to loving someone. The author demonstrates the theme of Love in this scene and illustrates the point that Love can often be irrational and impetuous. Through her actions the reader also sees that though she presents herself as confident and educated, she suffers from an identity crisis. This is another reason why Odenigbo's vocal declaration stirs something in her. The theme of Colonialism surfaces when Olanna remembers how Odenigbo berated the Nigerian who was obviously flattering the white man who'd treated them so shabbily at the movies.

The reader learns that Olanna comes from a very wealthy family. Their wealth exceeds that of Odenigbo by far, and the reader also learns that Mohammed was also from the same social and financial status as Olanna. Her parents lack the refinement of those who come from 'old' money and they often act in affected ways around company.



However, both Olanna and her sister, Kainene have gone on to study at university and don't seem to have adopted their parents selfish and shallow ways.

The author uses the sisters as foils for one another, as well as a statement about the duality that exists in Nigeria at the time. Olanna is treated as 'sex bait,' as her sister reminds her, and the reader sees that where Olanna strives to be the good daughter and do what her family asks of her (within reason), her sister is just the opposite with her sarcasm and rudeness. When Olanna leaves to see her aunt and uncle she is relieved to leave her immediate family behind. She feels more at ease around her aunt and uncle in the village, who live simply and without affectation. It is important to note, at this point in the book, that Abdulmalik, who is a Hausa, living peacefully in the Igbo village. There are many from other tribes living in and amongst the Igbo. The theme of Prejudice is offered in this chapter as the reader learns that Mohammed's mother deeply resented the relationship that Olanna had with Mohammed simply because she was Igbo and they were Hausa. Later, this theme is reintroduced in the form of Miss Adebayo who clearly dislikes Olanna and considers her uncultured and ignorant.

The idea of genocide is foreshadowed in this chapter. Now it is just a philosophical discussion, but its reality will hit them hard in future chapters. Once again, the reader sees Olanna's insecurity about her own self-identity in that she is embarrassed by her English accent and adopted Western ways. In some ways she feels as if she has betrayed her country by receiving an education from their oppressors.

## Discussion Question 1

Compare Mohammed to Odenigbo.

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Prejudice as it is discussed in Chapter 2.

## Discussion Question 3

How is Ugwu representative of many of the country's citizens?

## Vocabulary

saliva, expectation, lorry, bungalow, heady, corrugated, oblivious, lustrous, raffia, corridor, brisk, balmy



# Part One: Chapters 3-4

## Summary

### Chapter 3

This chapter focuses primarily on the thoughts and actions of Richard Churchill, an Englishman. In this chapter the reader sees him living with his English girlfriend, Susan, who is constantly dragging him to society parties, which he hates. Part of the reason that he finds the parties detestable is because they find it humorous to make racial jokes and make fun of the Nigerian people, as if the country didn't originally belong to them. Susan is also the jealous type and so Richard is confined to conversations with men at these parties. The only difference, he notes, is when he speaks with Nigerian women, and Richard realizes that it is because Susan views them as so inferior to her that they are no threat. He'd met Susan through his Aunt who'd learned he was going to Nigeria and wanted him to have a friend there when he arrived. Susan, originally, acted as his tour guide to the city, flirting with him openly, which initially delighted and shocked him.

The reader sees Susan pressuring him to move in with her and his capitulation just to keep the peace between them. It is at one of these parties where Richard first meets and speaks with Kainene. He can't fathom why she would be at one of these parties, since people of color are so obviously disliked. It becomes clear when she is introduced as an important businessman's daughter. She has just completed her degree from London, and as such, is an instant curiosity to the whites. Richard becomes enamored of her and makes excuses during the evening to speak with her. Later, after the party, Susan tells him that Kainene and her family are newly wealthy and are gaudy and pretentious.

Richard tracks down Kainene's phone number and they have coffee. Then, later they meet at a hotel and talk about their childhoods. The reader learns that Richard's mother and father died when he was very young and he was raised, mostly, by his nanny, Molly, in his Aunt's house. He tells Kainene that he hated it there and often ran away. He tells her that he's always admired the Nigerian people and their culture, speaking about the antique roped pot that he'd seen as a younger man in a museum. She asks why he is in Nigeria and he tells her that he came to be a writer.

They continue to meet throughout the weeks until it escalates into a sexual encounter which Richard can't participate in because he fails to become aroused. Kainene does not ridicule him for it and simply says that there is a time for everything. A few days later they try again and this time Richard ends the session quickly because he is too aroused. He apologizes, but Kainene, again, is kind. She invites him to have dinner and meet her family. After spending the evening with her family Richard realizes that he needs to break things off with Susan. It takes some time before he is able to work up the courage, but in the end, they part amicably.



He immediately tries to have sex with Kainene but, once again, is not able to become aroused. He considers finding some sort of African herb to help. They both leave Lagos and Richard decides that he will go to Nsukka to continue writing and seeing the rest of the country. Kainene lives in another city, but it is not far from Nsukka and she tells him to please come and visit her there. She also tells him that Olanna and Odenigbo live in Nsukka and that he should look them up. When Richard tells her that he has left Susan, Kainene is uncharacteristically silent, and then she spontaneously hugs him. He is ecstatic.

A week or so later finds Richard in Nsukka where he stops at a place called Igbo-Ukwu which is where the roped pots that he once saw in the museum were found. He is actually able to speak to a relative of the actual man who first found the pots. Richard learns that the man had found the pots nearly 20 years previously, but that when the white men came and saw the pots, they started to excavate extensively where they found a burial chamber that had many such treasures. As Richard shares his awe and respect for the civilization of the people who created those works, the reader sees that Richard is truly an anomaly compared to his English compatriots. When the old man is done speaking he poses waiting for his picture to be taken. Richard tells him that he doesn't have a camera and the man is shocked since that has always been the routine with white people.

Richard goes on to find his small home, where he is introduced to his houseboy, a man in his early forties named Harrison. Harrison is not happy with Richard when he discovers that Richard only wants Harrison to cook Nigerian traditional foods. He keeps telling Richard that he knows how to make English food, but Richard does not back down. Harrison feeds him beets for days in a row until Richard tells him to stop. Richard goes over and introduces himself to Odenigbo and Olanna, who welcome him to the city. Odenigbo tells him that they can share the gardener.

The gardener, Jomo, tells Richard, after Richard has gotten him alone in the back yard one day, that special herbs for men only work for African men, and won't work on whites. When Richard goes back into his house he can tell that Harrison is sullen. He finds out that Harrison and Jomo don't like one another. He makes a mental note to keep them apart. He continues to spend time with Odenigbo and Olanna though he is worried about Odenigbo's radical political ideas, especially when his guests come in the evenings.

Richard meets Madu Madu, a solidier and childhood friend of Kainene's. Richard finds himself incredibly intimidated as well as jealous. Richard also becomes irritated when Madu acts as if he is the man of the house when he so clearly was the invited guest. One of Madu's subordinates, who came with him, has too much to drink and openly insults Kainene for taking up with white men. Madu apologizes and they leave.

Once again the narrative is interrupted by an excerpt from the book, 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' The author writes about an incident where a grief stricken woman carries around the severed head of her daughter in a basket. He writes that this has become a common practice among grief stricken mothers because of the war. The



front part of the book is described, which features a map of Nigeria with a line stricken through it right in the area that used to be known as Biafra.

#### Chapter 4

This chapter focuses on Ugwu whom the reader sees has adapted to living with Odenigbo very well. He is doing very well in school and will be skipped forward a grade because he is such a good scholar. He still fantasizes about Olanna and is very glad that she lives with them. Odenigbo's mother is coming to visit and Ugwu is helping to make the house ready for her. During preparations his Aunt comes to the door to tell him that his mother has become very ill and that he must come back to the village immediately. Odenigbo learns of this and offers to drive them both to the village, then pick up Ugwu's mother and take her to the doctor. Once they arrive Odenigbo decides that they need to take Ugwu's mother directly to his house, which they do. The doctor comes to the house to treat her. Ugwu's mother is suffering from a slight infection, which the doctor treats. Grateful, but also embarrassed, Ugwu's mother makes a point of leaving the next day.

Odenigbo's mother, whom Odenigbo calls Mama, arrives and she is not alone. She has brought with her a young girl named Amala. Mama immediately goes into the kitchen and takes over the cooking duties which irritates and upsets Ugwu. Then, when Olanna comes in the first phrase out of her mouth is the fact that Olanna did not breastfeed at her mother's breasts. She tells her that this makes her a witch and then begins screaming and yelling to the neighbors that there is a witch in the house. Overcome with horror, Olanna leaves to go and stay at her apartment on the other side of the city. As soon as Ugwu can he slips out to find Odenigbo who was not home when the confrontation took place. Ugwu finds him and tells him what happened.

## Analysis

#### Chapter 3

Richard is an interesting character, not only because he is atypical of other English whites in Nigeria, but because the author uses him as a vehicle to attack the notion of the white man as savior. By making him impotent and sexually inept, she is making the point that as a stereotype, as a reality, the whites that came into the country were just as impotent and unable to deliver up to expectations. Through Richard's experiences when he first arrives, the reader gets to see the attitude that most whites have of the indigenous population. Richard's reactions and discontent at the parties that Susan attends and throws also aids in setting the tone for Richard's character development.

He never admits to having any sort of feelings for Susan, and it is shown to be more of a relationship of convenience and comfort for them both. Since he tends to be shy, Richard welcomes Susan's forwardness and assertiveness. However, it isn't until he meets Kainene that he falls in love. In an interesting parallel the pairing of a shy and



insecure person with an outspoken and opinionated person once again occurs in the pairing of Kainene and Richard, just as it has happened with Olanna with Odenigbo.

As Richard shares about his childhood it becomes evident that his lack of English superiority towards the Nigerians comes from a lack of personal identity himself. This lack of identity and low self-esteem shows up dramatically when he is unable to become aroused when he and Kainene attempt to have sex. The theme of Betrayal is demonstrated in this chapter with the sexual encounter Richard has with Kainene, when Richard is still supposedly with Susan. Later, when Richard tells Kainene that he has broken things off with Susan, she spontaneously hugs Richard, which shocks him. She is normally not a dramatic or overly emotional person, so her hug after his announcement said volumes to Richard, and attested to the depth of her feelings for him.

The discovery of the excavation site for the roped pots is significant as the roped pots and Richard's deep admiration for them is symbolic of not only the uniqueness of Nigeria, but also of Richard among his English compatriots. Harrison, his houseboy, is also full of meaning. Here is an older Nigerian gentleman holding all things English as the standard of excellence, fully illustrating the domination and colonization of his country. In this chapter, the various scenes with Harrison demonstrates the theme of Colonization, and how through exploitation entire cultures can be devastated.

The inclusion of an excerpt from the book 'The World Was Silent When We Died' offers a harsh jolt to the reader, to serve as a reminder of the theme about war, and how it destroys things of beauty, love, and families.

#### Chapter 4

This chapter focuses on Ugwu and his burgeoning understanding of the world around him. The author shows that Ugwu has taken advantage of his opportunities and has made a success of himself at school and at home. The scene with Ugwu's mother serves to juxtapose the dramatic differences between classes living in the same area. To Ugwu's mother and the people in the village, such an infection is life threatening. To those living in the city, possessing medicines and education, it is nothing more than a mild infection. The entire ordeal makes Ugwu realize how good he has it and he feels badly that he can't share the luxuries that he has with the people in his village. The theme of Loyalty is demonstrated in a couple of ways in this chapter. First, there is the loyalty that the reader sees is extended not only to Odenigbo, but now, also to Olanna, by Ugwu. Then, there is the loyalty to his mother and to his village.

The theme of Betrayal also surfaces when Mama arrives with Amala. Instead of being nice and welcoming to Olanna she instantly accuses her of being a witch and drives her out of the house.

## Discussion Question 1

Describe Mama's character.



## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Betrayal and Loyalty as they are represented in Chapter 4.

## Discussion Question 3

What is Mama's ulterior motive, most likely, in bringing Amala with her to visit Odenigbo?

## Vocabulary

expatriate, cricket, aesthetics, baffled, unimaginative, presumptuous, surly, haphazard, mockingly, inflated, enlarged, inchoate, suffocated, exhilarating





# Part One: Chapters 5-6

## Summary

### Chapter 5

This chapter centers on Olanna and her reaction to Odenigbo's mother. Odenigbo goes to Olanna's apartment and tells her that his mother is just a superstitious old woman who isn't adjusting well to modern times. Odenigbo says that he will stay the night with her, in a show of solidarity against his mother. She tells him that she doesn't want him staying there and to go home. Feeling rejected Odenigbo and Olanna fight. It ends badly and he storms out of the apartment. Through some soul searching and many drinks alone in her apartment, she realizes that she truly does love Odenigbo and wants to start a family with him. Before she goes to bed that night there is a knock at the door. It is Odenigbo coming back to apologize for his behavior. She lets him stay the night.

When Mama leaves a few days later, Olanna returns, but Ugwu tells her that he thinks that Mama might have tried to curse her. He points out as evidence the fact that there was a black cat lurking near the house. Olanna tells him that she doesn't believe such nonsense, but deep down wonders if there's any truth to the old ways. A few weeks later Richard comes to the door while Odenigbo is gone and he and Olanna sit to talk for a little while. She finds it rather difficult because he is so shy. He leaves and the next day, out of the blue, Odenigbo tells Olanna that he wants to start a family. Olanna is elated as she hadn't said anything to him about her earlier inclinations towards a family as well. After they have sex that evening she is worried that maybe Mama did curse her and that her body might not be able to become pregnant.

### Chapter 6

This chapter focuses on Richard. In the opening scene Richard is enjoying one of his favorite traditional Nigerian meals, spicy pepper soup, at Odenigbo's home. This is a dish that most Englishmen can't stomach as it is too spicy, and Odenigbo remarks on his ability to eat it and enjoy it. Later, they all move into the living room where they discuss politics, as well as a new type of music called High Life, which is a where Western instruments are used to play traditional Igbo music. One of the dinner guests asks Richard how his writing is coming along. Richard is embarrassed and says that he's hardly had time to write anything, but that he somehow wants to work in the roped pots and the Igbo-Ukwu setting into his book. He starts to talk enthusiastically about the roped pots, claiming that it was an incredible feat of artistry. One of the guests accuses him of acting as if he is surprised that the lowly Igbo could be capable of such a thing. This is not what Richard meant at all, but he is upset that they think so and he leaves shortly after.

When Richard gets home he is still so upset that he rashly seizes his manuscript and throws it all away. The next day he goes to visit Kainene and he tells her that he's not



sleeping, and that he's not able to write. He tells her about the dinner party comment about the roped pots and she tells him that it is possible to love something and still be condescending toward it. Richard becomes even more despondent and claims that he doesn't know what he's doing with his life. They had plans to have dinner with Madu Madu, but Kainene cancels them and they have a quiet night at her house. Later, he tells her that his parents didn't seem to love him very much, that they loved each other more. He wants to tell her that he feels that way about her, but he is too shy to do so.

Another section from the book, 'The World Was Silent When We Died' is inserted. The author states that when Nigeria was formed the British divided its provinces so that the Hausa would have control of most of the government. This was because the Hausa were easily controlled, whereas the Igbo and Yoruba tribes were often want to question things.

## Analysis

### Chapter 5

This chapter sees Olanna and Richard beginning to gain confidence in themselves, acting in ways that they might never had a few years previously. In this chapter the reader sees Olanna claiming the right to be upset at Mama's accusations and her treatment of Olanna. Yet, even though she's acted as she felt compelled to do, she reaches out to her sister and Mohammed (or tries to call them on the phone) for moral support.

When Odenigo returns after angrily storming out earlier, it indicates his willingness to commit to her. This section demonstrates the theme of Love and that they now have a deeper type of connection than before. As a result both find a new level of compassion for one another and mutual admiration. The theme of Race and Culture is demonstrated in this chapter, as well, when Ugwu tells Olanna that he believes that Mama cursed her. At first Olanna laughs it off, but then begins to worry that there might be something to it. This shows that despite having a high level of education, her cultural roots still have her worrying about local superstitions.

### Chapter 6

The mention of Richard's ability to eat the pepper soup is significant in this chapter as it again reemphasizes his desire and ability to assimilate and appreciate the culture. In this he is as unique as the roped pots he adores. Additionally, another symbolic offering is indicated in the discussion about High Life music. This is representative of the blending of the two cultures. Using Western instruments to play the traditional Nigerian songs indicates a desire to preserve the culture, but at the same time, altering it slightly.

Richard has a major setback in this chapter when at the dinner party it becomes apparent to him that he hasn't completely escaped his English elitism, though it was inadvertent. He is appalled that it is so firmly entrenched in his nature and he has a crisis of conscious, questioning why he has come to Nigeria. He has used his writing as



a type of self-help to bring some sort of meaning to his life. When he throws away the manuscript it is apparent that he has decided that he's been deluding himself all along. When Kainene tells Richard that he can love a thing and still be condescending she is referring to the statement he made about the roped pots, but on a deeper level she could be referencing herself and Richards's ongoing inability to have sex with her. It is evident from Richard's discussions with Kainene in this chapter that his entire sense of self and identity are wrapped up in his relationship with her.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the symbolism of the High Life music.

## **Discussion Question 2**

Compare Odenigo to Richard.

## **Discussion Question 3**

What does Richard's ability to eat the pepper soup indicate?

## **Vocabulary**

fancied, monstrous, dowry, enticement, mimicked, mishmash, puzzlement, momentarily, non sequitur, picturesque, excavations, insufferable



## Part Two: Chapters 7-8

### Summary

#### Chapter 7

This chapter focuses on Ugwu's story line. A few years have gone by and the reader sees Ugwu visiting his family in the old village. It is clear that Ugwu is now so far removed from living with them that he is uncomfortable being there. He has come to visit, in particular, with his sister, Anulika, who is engaged to a man in the village named Onyeka. Ugwu isn't sure how he feels about his younger sister being married and the thought of any man being intimate with his sister makes him angry. As he walks with his sister to the edge of the village he complains about the food. She states that he has been gone too long from the village and that if he doesn't watch himself he will forget where he comes from all together. Ugwu asks her if she's been sexual with her intended husband and she tells him that she has. Then she asks him if he's sleeping with anyone. He says that there is a house girl in the home next to Odenigbo's that warms his bed from time to time, but that it isn't anything serious.

As they are standing there they see Nnesinachi, his former childhood crush. She is happy to see him and hugs him. Suddenly Ugwu has feelings that he hasn't had before and isn't sure what to do about it. He leaves. When he arrives home the reader sees that Odenigbo and Olanna have a child whom they've all nicknamed, 'Baby.' Olanna tells Ugwu that her cousin Arize is pregnant and will be coming to stay with them until she has her baby. Odenigbo is in the next room with a large number of guests and, as usual, they are talking politics, drinking and smoking. Suddenly the volume on the radio goes up with an announcement. Everyone grows quiet as they learn that there has been an attempt to overthrow the government. They learn that all of the previous people in power have gone missing or are presumed dead. The announcer states that the military are temporarily taking over the running of the government until the new leaders can be installed.

The guests in Odenigbo's house erupt into cheers, excited about the coup and the possibilities that it opens. Ugwu realizes two things. First, Olanna is quietly playing with Baby, not rejoicing with the others. Secondly, he notes that Richard is not among the guests in the den with Odenigbo. He recalls some sort of argument that took place many months prior that embarrassed Richard and as a result he hadn't come back. When the house girl knocks on his window to come in, he lets her, but as they are having sex he imagines that she is Nnesinachi. He wonders if she fantasizes about him as well.

#### Chapter 8

Olanna feels that it is safe enough to travel to Kano and she goes to do some baby shopping with her cousin, Arize. Before they go Olanna feels ashamed that she is



disgusted by the other children in the village that Baby wants to play with. She scoops up Baby and while she makes ready to go, sees some people bleating like goats. When she gets closer she sees that they are talking about a religious leader who'd been killed recently. They were singing a song about the sound that the man made when he was killed. Olanna notes that everyone laughs as if it is some great joke. Her aunt tells Olanna that the religious man deserved to die as he was an evil person and not fit to be a spiritual leader. Still, Olanna finds it disturbing.

In town, Arize tells her that she hopes that when her baby is born that the baby is smart like Olanna. She hopes that her baby will be able to be educated as well. Olanna tells Arize that her parents are no longer in the country, but have left to go to London. They have told everyone that they are on 'holiday' but Arize and Olanna know that they left because they were afraid.

Olanna sees that another crowd of people have crowded around a man and are harassing him because he is Igbo. In order to protect themselves, the women start speaking Yoruba. Baby becomes frightened and starts to cry. Arize tells Olanna as they head home that most likely the flare ups are small and won't amount to anything.

## Analysis

### Chapter 7

In Part One the author laid the foundation for the tensions to grow in proportion into Part Two. The reader sees that Ugwu is still very immature and believes that there is only one reason for women to exist. He is fully into puberty and sexualizes everyone woman he sees. Likewise, Ugwu's perspectives have shifted as far as the way that he lives, and his return to the village indicates that he views his home village as inferior and dirty. He has grown used to the types of foods eaten in Odenigbo's home and doesn't care for his family's food any longer.

The reader is also introduced to a new character, named Baby. This isn't her real name, but a nickname that Olanna has given her. The reader doesn't know if the child is Odenigbo's and Olanna's or if the child has come from somewhere else. It is apparent that the child has been there for some time. When they hear the news of Biafra's claim for independence it marks a high point in the book. However, even in the middle of this, Olanna is guarded with her joy. She is able to see that it will not be as easy a process as the rest of the men in the front room. She is fearful for what it might mean for all of them.

Ugwu mentions that Richard no longer attends the parties at Odenigbo's home, but can't quite recall what happened. All that he does remember is that there was some sort of argument about Olanna. Later that night the reader sees that Ugwu has become sexually active with the girl from next door. It is also apparent that neither of them see it as anything more than comfort and a good time.



The theme of War begins to suggest itself in this chapter as the groundwork has been laid. With the declaration of their intentions to secede from Nigeria, the Biafrans are on their way to freedom, or so they think. This indicates that the author is suggesting that War deceives those who participate in it, as all go to war justifying the act.

## Chapter 8

Olanna returns to Kano and it is easy to see the theme of Prejudice showing itself as she becomes uncomfortable allowing Baby to play with the children in the village. Likewise, the split between the two sisters has happened, and it is symbolic of the split that is about to occur within Nigeria, itself. When Olanna sees the women and men laughing about the torture and execution of the holy man, she understands that they have dehumanized those not in their tribe, making it okay to perpetrate such acts of violence. Because Olanna has distanced herself from a large part of it, and due in large part to the fact that she is an educated woman, she is able to see that things aren't always as clear cut as good and evil.

In order to protect themselves, both Arize and Olanna have to pretend to be someone that they are not. This will not be the first time that Olanna has to pretend to belong to another ethnic group in order to survive. Arize's hopes and dreams for her baby are juxtaposed with the beating of the man in the town square, something that is a hallmark of Adichie's style.

### **Discussion Question 1**

Why doesn't Olanna want Baby playing with the village children?

### **Discussion Question 2**

How is the theme of Prejudice exemplified in Chapter 8?

### **Discussion Question 3**

How can the people in the village laugh about the death of the holy man?

### **Vocabulary**

monstrosity, phantasm, conflagration, humiliated, efficacy, belligerent



## Part Two: Chapters 9-10

### Summary

#### Chapter 9

In this chapter the reader sees Richard and Kainene attending a party where many of the influential and wealthy will be. Kainene's parents are there, too, and when her mother sees Richard she tells him that the unrest has left them unsettled and that they are thinking of going to London until the unpleasantness is over. Richard looks around for Kainene who has missed the entire exchange and he finds her on the balcony with Madu.

Jealous, but masking it well, Richard speaks in the Igbo language (which he has mastered) and greets Madu. Madu, however, responds to him in English and refuses to engage Richard unless he, too, is speaking English. Kainene talks business with Madu and Richard interjects to ask Madu about the governmental unrest. Madu tells him that there is no way that it will happen.

A few weeks later Richard is vindicated when a servant of Kainene's comes in to tell them that there had been another coup. Richard quickly turns on the radio and learns that rebels from the North overthrew the Igbo officers and murdered them. Kainene is very upset at the news since Madu is living somewhere in the North. She continues to listen for any news of Madu, but only receives rumors that he was the sole escapee from the massacre. Rumors also include torture and rape that is occurring.

A few weeks later Kainene's wait is over as Madu stumbles into her home half starved. He tells her that he was saved by a friend of his living in the North who was a Hausa, and he warned Madu to hide since the coup would be imminent. He hid him in a chicken coop for several days until it was safe to try and make his way back. Madu is not well and nearly collapses from a fever. Before he lies down to rest, he tells them that he'd often feared that this would happen since the ethnic balance policy that the government ascribed to promoted northern soldiers who were unqualified just because of their ethnicity. This bred discontent. Madu seems to be making a pointed statement at Richard.

#### Chapter 10

In this chapter the focus is back on Ugwu and a few weeks have gone by since the uprising. The meetings at Odenigbo's house continue, but they are less joyous and more troubled. Ugwu shares that he is worried for Olanna who has gone to visit relatives in Kano. Odenigbo listens to reports of many dead in a town in the North, but states that it is just propaganda and not to be trusted.

Ugwu spends time taking care of Baby, who says that she had a dream where there were baby chickens. She asks for her mother, and Ugwu tells her that she will be home



soon. A knock on the door sends everyone scurrying for cover. Ugwu takes Baby and hides. Men come into the house and report straight to Odenigbo reporting that the reports about the massive amounts of deaths in the North are true. Most of it happened in Kano. Ugwu cries out when he hears this. The radio's report is turned up and everyone listens intently as the reporter tells of a pregnant woman being cut open and a church being burned to the ground. Hundreds of people were fleeing the region to get away and the railroad stations are full. Feeling as if he should do something for the refugees who are coming into their city, Odenigbo sends Ugwu with tea and bread to meet the refugees as they get off the train. Ugwu goes, not because he wants to do anything charitable, but because he's hoping that Olanna will be on board. What he sees once he is at the train station horrifies him so terribly that he quickly hands out the supplies and runs home.

## Analysis

### Chapter 9

When Madu refuses to speak Igbo to Richard he is making the point that Richard, despite his attempts, will always be considered an outsider there. Additionally, it is highly ironic that while there is death and dying going on in some of the outer provinces, the wealthy are not touched by it personally and so, for them, it is just an unpleasantness. As later chapters will show, this divisiveness between the haves and the have nots will come back to face them in cruel and harsh reality. The author's purpose in doing this is to show that regardless of ethnicity, the wealthy of the cities do not view the riots and uprisings as anything they should be concerned about.

The entire uprising has been caused because of the English policies of affirmative action, promoting because of ethnicity instead of talent or merit. This is a direct nod to the theme of Colonialism, and indicates that any country that proposes to subdue and conquer another region must keep in mind some of the cultural structures that have been in place for thousands of years. Any attempts to tamper with that structure or mindset can often lead to unrest and bitterness, as evidenced in this second coup.

Madu's friend, a Hausa, shows that many of those involved in the war are unwilling participants, doing so only out of fear for their own safety, or that of their family. The theme of betrayal happens a couple of times in this chapter, with the first betrayal being that of Madu's friend. Madu's friend betrayed the side of the war that he was fighting for in order to save someone who should be his enemy. On a larger scale the British have assisted Nigeria in betraying its own people and condoning the casual cruelty that Madu recounts. All of this is shown to be backed by the British and the Americans whose oil interests drive their continued interference.

### Chapter 10

The contrast between the horrific and the innocent continues as Baby's discussion of her dreams coincide with the massacre that takes place in Kano. The massacres of





innocent villagers examples the theme of Betrayal as the governments use them as pawns and acts of terrorism to throw the organizers into chaos. In this situation, once-peaceful neighbors are now killing one another. The theme of Colonialism is also chronicled in this chapter as the anger of the mobs are fueled by the information given to them by the British government, as well as the military backing.

## **Discussion Question 1**

When Madu refuses to speak Igbo to Richard, what is he suggesting to Richard?

## **Discussion Question 2**

How did Madu survive the massacre and what does this indicate about the situation in the villages?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does the author present the contrast of the innocent with the profane in these two chapters?

## **Vocabulary**

demeanor, fawning, vigorously, ingratiating, frail, decree, opportunists, suffocating, gloat, plastered



## Part Two: Chapters 11-12

### Summary

#### Chapter 11

The focus on this chapter is on Olanna in the days before the massacre. She is visiting Mohammed's home when he enters the room, a worried look on his face. He tells her that the village is no longer safe and that she should go home. She asks him to take her to her Aunt's house but he doesn't think that even there it will be safe. He says that he will do so only if she will dress as a traditional Muslim woman so that she will be safe. She agrees, but when they reach one of the villages before her Aunt's village it has already been burned to the ground. Olanna, foolishly, gets out of the car and walks around. She sees the dismembered bodies of her Aunt and Uncle who must have sought refuge in the nearby village. She doesn't see her pregnant cousin Arize, but she assumes that she is dead as well.

As she is standing there in shock, Abdulmalik, their old friend, walks up with a machete and tells her that he and his rebel group slaughtered the entire village per Allah's will. Olanna can't speak at the unfathomable notion of her relatives' deaths and their betrayal at the hands of someone they called a friend. Mohammed puts her quickly back into the car and they leave. He takes her immediately to the train station where she is able to get a seat. Seated next to her on the floor is a woman holding a calabash basket. The woman has urinated on the floor and when she sees Olanna looking at her she opens the basket to reveal the severed head of her five year old daughter. With insane eyes the woman tells Olanna that the head belonged to her daughter and that it took her so long to properly braid her daughter's thick hair.

#### Chapter 12

Richard is the focus of this chapter and he has just returned from London. He has been instructed to go straight to Kano to report on it for the BBC. As the plane makes its final approach to land near Kano, Richard reads a note that he's received from Kainene telling him that she loves him. Richard makes up his mind that he will propose to her that night. His plane is diverted to another airport and he's told he will have to catch a different plane. While he's waiting in the bar area soldiers enter and identify all of the Igbo speaking people in the bar, then execute them. Richard barely makes it out of the bar alive. He is so upset by the senseless violence that he vomits. The plane will only go as far as Lagos, so Richard goes straight to his old girlfriend's house.

When Richard tells Susan about the violence, she remains calm and aloof stating that it has little to do with the whites in the country and that he shouldn't take it all too seriously. She says that the Igbo brought the unpleasantness upon themselves and were acting 'the Jew' with their attempts to control all of the markets. Richard is



appalled. He goes to the restroom to wash up and looks at himself in the mirror. Richard is ashamed and cries.

The World Was Silent When We Died offers another section where the author talks about the series of events that led up to the massacres in the villages. The British, thinking only of the oil reserves, pressured Nigeria to place the North in charge so that there wouldn't be a secession and the oil rich lands in the South would remain protected. Nigeria was united under British rule, but the unrest that began with the rigging of the elections (to favor the North) laid a sickness in the marrow of the bones of the country that quietly spread.

## Analysis

### Chapter 11

The reader sees that Mohammed, though he is a Hausa man, is as appalled at the violence as Olanna is. While Mohammed has seen some of the violence first hand, Olanna hasn't. Her first view of it also involved seeing the dead and dismembered bodies of her aunt and uncle. The theme of Betrayal is demonstrated in this chapter when Abdulmalik, a family friend, confesses gleefully that he was the one that killed them and did so with a clear conscience. The Igbo and Hausa animosity is shown to be a partially religious-based hatred, fueled by the propaganda from the government. However, the author is quick to indicate that not all Hausa believe this way, as indicated by Mohammed's condemnation of Abdulmalik's actions.

The theme of War is also demonstrated in this novel as the horrors and violence of war are starkly offered to the reader. The horror that Olanna feels as she sees her aunt and uncle's bodies is made worse by the knowledge that it was their friend who did it to them, without remorse. This indicates the nature of war, which is destruction.

### Chapter 12

As another contrast by the author, the reading of the love letter by Richard and the thoughts of marriage are marred by the massacre in the bar at the airport. By putting these two particular scenes together the author would seem to be indicating that love is important during war time because often it is what gets a person through it. Just when Richard feels as if he has been accepted into the Igbo world, due in some part to Kainene's letter and the bartender's willingness to speak in Igbo to him, it is removed by the gruesome horror that takes place. Had he truly been one of them, he realizes, his life would not have been spared either.

The scene with Susan is most telling in that she blows off the tragedies as if they were somehow justified and the result of savages doing what savages do. She views the massacres with the detachment of someone who believes that she has an elevated status next to those living around her in the area. But Richard's eyes are wide open now and hearing Susan speak like this has brought things fully into focus for him. He now understands why he can never be considered fully Igbo, and why Nigeria will always



have an air of tension about it. Artificially created, the nation of Nigeria was constructed by Britain so that it could control the natural resources of one area without trouble. Richard knows, because of his studies of the country that each individual region had its own laws, cultural mores, and belief systems and that trying to mash them all together in a one size fits all type of Colonialism, which is a major theme in this chapter, has laid the foundation for all of the chaos that has erupted.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What does Richard realize has caused most of the internal conflict in Nigeria?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does the massacre in the bar indicate to Richard that drives him to tears?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How is Susan's attitude a satire and commentary on the British government and their rule/view of Nigeria?

## **Vocabulary**

lingering, elaborately, absurd, manageable, tarmac, scandalized, incident, uxorious, bliss, delirious, enigmatically



## Part Two: Chapters 13-14

### Summary

#### Chapter 13

Olanna just makes it back to Odenigbo's home, where she collapses in the doorway. It is Baby who finds her and goes to get help. Odenigbo carries her to bed and calls the doctor. As he's doing so, she tells him about the atrocities and death that she witnessed. The doctor gives her something to help her sleep, and that night she feels as if she is being smothered. When she tries to get out of bed the next day she can't more. Dr. Patel is called back and he tells Odenigbo that her problem is psychological and not physical.

Odenigbo has sent word to Olanna's family about her condition and they come the next day to visit. Kainene cries when she sees her sister, but it is clear that whatever the quarrel was that they had, it is not forgiven. Olanna tells them about the horrors that she witnessed, condemning the Hausa for their role in it.

Odenigbo has guests down below, as he usually does on the weekend, and Olanna decides that she needs to go to the bathroom. Without thinking she gets up out of the bed and once she is in the bathroom realizes that she's just walked. She doesn't want to disturb the men's meeting so she waits until he comes in later after everyone has gone. He is overjoyed and immediately wants to contact Dr. Patel to tell him. Olanna clings to him and they begin to make love. Before it goes too far, however, Olanna starts sobbing deep, gut-wrenching tears of sorry. Odenigbo holds her and lets her cry.

Later that night, as Ugwu brings them their evening meal the entire household learns that the secession has begun and that the eastern section of Nigeria will now be its own nation, called Biafra. Everyone is overjoyed and begin celebrating. A few hours later there is a gathering in the square where everyone is rallying and singing. Olanna is elated and for the first time in her life she feels as if she knows who she is now. She is a Biafran.

Odenigbo is asked to give a speech, which he does, waving the Biafran flag. The flag is red, black, green, and has a striking half yellow sun in the middle. At that moment, Olanna says that everyone in the square feels hopeful and invincible all at the same time.

#### Chapter 14

Richard has gone to comfort the family of the man killed at the airport. They thank him but it is apparent that he's forgotten the traditional practice of bringing gifts to the grieving family. He is embarrassed and leaves. He wonders how he could have witnessed such a thing, such as happened at the airport, and still remain relatively sane.



Once he arrives back home he sees that he has a letter from his Aunt Elizabeth. She's sent newspaper clippings about the massacres and he's astounded to hear them referred to as ancient tribal animosities. He is angry that most of the articles are so grossly inaccurate in almost every way. He begins to write an article of his own, correcting what the English writers had stated in the newspaper. He explains the distrust between the Igbo and the Hausa, but that it was the British who'd really stirred things up. When it is finished, Richard asks Kainene to read it and give him her opinion.

In response Richard starts writing an article, and he explains that there was no "age-old hatred" between the Igbo and Hausa people, but rather that Hausa's distrust of the Igbo was stirred up by Britain decades before as part of its "divide-and-rule" policy. Kainene reads it and tells Richard that it is very good and she is proud of him. Richard beams and sends off the article to the Herald, which is a British paper. They promptly reject it because they want more gory information about the massacres.

The secession is broadcast on the radio and Richard finds himself trembling. He feels as if he has been allowed to be part of something momentous. He decides that he will, once again, attempt to ask Kainene to marry him. He chickens out.

Later, when politics are discussed and next steps, it is clear that most believe that the massacres would be the end of hostilities, which Nigeria won't want to be bothered with the Igbo any longer and will actually be glad that they are gone. Some think that Nigeria will never let Biafra secede. There is a large gathering to decide next steps at the University where Odenigbo teaches. Richard goes and he sees Olanna there. They speak awkwardly to one another, as if there is something between them that neither wants to speak of. He tells her that the new name of his book is 'In the Time of Roped Pots.'

To everyone's surprise one of the Biafran war generals makes a surprise appearance at the gathering. He stirs everyone's patriotism and warns them that he believes that it will be a long, drawn out war. The people are whipped up into a frenzy, however, and they begin declaring that they are ready to fight.

## Analysis

### Chapter 13

It is clear in this chapter that Olanna has been traumatized by what she witnessed in Kano. Ironically, the fact that she had a safe sanctuary and medical attention readily available set her apart from many of the victims that she saw. The quarrel that kept the two sisters apart seems to have taken a backseat to her almost untimely demise, and Kainene as well as their parents come to see her. They all agree that there's no place that seems completely safe these days.

The theme of War as a destroyer is indicated in this chapter in the fact that Olanna can't have sex with Odenigbo, even though she initially wanted to. The trauma of what she



saw is still so freshly ingrained in her mind that she can't even enjoy being with her lover any longer. This shows the destructive and invasive nature of war.

With the decision to create a new and independent country of Biafra, Olanna feels a sense of optimism that she hasn't felt in a very long time. In addition, she begins to feel a sense of identity, something she's struggled with throughout her adult life. The split between Biafra and the rest of Nigeria is also reminiscent of the split between the two sisters, one that is only temporarily healed, and is understood to be ephemeral. The rising sun on the background of flag indicates and symbolizes hope for the people, but in reality it upholds the theme of Betrayal as the reader learns that no matter how hopeful the Biafran people are, the English and other countries whose oil interests are represented in the nation of Nigeria, will never allow this secession to last.

#### Chapter 14

Richard, for all his attempts to be anything but English, still has the mindset that his assistance on any level towards the Nigerians should be viewed as monumental and worthy of praise. Ironically, what comes out of this chapter is the fact that while the British are focused on painting the rebels as savages, in reality it is they, themselves, who have made them the savages they report about. As Richard points out, the tribes lived in peace for centuries before the British decided they needed civilizing. Thus the theme of Colonialism is touched upon and shown to be a destroyer of tradition and peace.

This chapter shows the Biafrans being whipped into a frenzy with the hope and optimism that they will be able to defend and sustain their new country. The speech given by the rebel leader only serves to continue this belief, ramping up the audience's fervor and to make them eager for war. Kainene, like her sister, is not easily swayed by the emotions of the events and is able to see things from a clearer perspective than, even, Richard.

### **Discussion Question 1**

Why is Richard so wrapped up in the Biafran independence, since he is an Englishman?

### **Discussion Question 2**

How is the theme of War depicted in Chapter 13?

### **Discussion Question 3**

Why is Olanna happy with the Biafran declaration of independence?



## Vocabulary

railings, crumpled, calabash, sallow, liquefied, blockade, furtive, refugees, unity, diminished, reneging, caressed, static





## Part Two: Chapters 15-16

### Summary

#### Chapter 15

The focus of this chapter is on Ugwu as he delivers food with Odenigbo to the refugees. When they reach the train station the officer tells him that they no longer give out food because war is coming. Odenigbo becomes angry and tells him that there will be no war. This mirrors the angry conversations that have been going on, Ugwu shares, at their home in the evenings. Many of the guests who used to come and discuss politics are leaving upset and Odenigbo's refusal to acknowledge that war is coming.

One of the guests, a poet named Okeoma, decides to recite one of his newest poems. This seems to give everyone some hope that it won't come to war. Later, the house girl from next door comes by to tell Ugwu that her master and all of his household are leaving the country and that she has come to say goodbye to him. Suddenly the possibility of war seems very likely to Ugwu. His aunt comes to visit and tells him that his sister, Anulika is going to be married shortly because they want to do so before the war begins. Ugwu makes plans to go home for the wedding, fantasizing about finally getting to sleep with Nnesinachi.

That evening, via radio, Ugwu hears a chilling announcement via the BBC. It states that beginning the next day there will be a 'police' action to bring the rebel terrorists of Biafra to justice. As they are finishing up the dishes and preparing to go to bed one of their friends pounds on the door and tells them that they need to evacuate the city immediately. They quickly gather up some things and leave to go to Abba. As they pass by the Biafran soldiers Ugwu wishes that he was old enough to be a soldier and wear one of the uniforms.

#### Chapter 16

Focusing on Richard, this chapter shows him frightened and shocked at the radio announcement about the police action. Kainene tells Richard that he shouldn't be so surprised since all the British are focused on is the oil. Any threat to that would obviously meet with harsh responses. However, she reassures Richard that the Biafran army is ready and trained for the fight and that it will be over quickly. Richard tries to get back into the city to get his things from his home but he isn't allowed past the gates. On his way back to Kainene's home Susan calls him to see if he is okay. He is shocked and pleased that she would care to check on him, but then this quickly fades as she continues to insult the Nigerians and the Biafrans as inferior warlike apes. He hangs up on her.

Though he is safe enough at Kainene's he is worried about Harrison whom he'd left at the house as well as the fate of his manuscript that he's left behind. Back at Kanene's



home she rants about how the new temporary ruler of Biafra has been giving food and resources to the army while the people around them go without. Richard says that some sacrifices for the cause have to be made, but Kanene warns him that after speaking with Madu about the war effort that her former optimism is gone. Madu has said that they have no weapons and that the provisional rebel leader that they were blindly following had hoped to secure backers for the rebellion. There were none.

## Analysis

### Chapter 15

This chapter shows Odenigbo blindly adhering to his belief in a new Biafra and denying the truths as they begin to pile up in front of him. Many of his former political friends have abandoned their optimism and have urged Odenigbo to consider changing his position. He becomes angry and rude toward them when the suggestion is made. Okeoma's poem symbolizes the desire for the Biafran people to be free of British rule, and embodies Odenigbo's blind optimism.

The announcement about the police action shares with the reader that the Nigerian government isn't going to let Biafra become a reality, especially when oil is concerned. This continued denial of reality by Odenigbo is finally shattered when someone comes to tell them that they must evacuate or lose their lives. The theme of Colonialism is again demonstrated in this chapter as its effects are shown through the police action being declared. The constraints placed on the culture of the area and the British policies and agendas have set the tone for the civil war to begin.

The theme of Love is touched upon in this chapter, briefly, as it is his love for his family that finally snaps him out of his belief in a peaceful Biafran secession. He believes the warning when it comes to evacuate, and he takes his family and runs. The theme of Love is shown to overcome and sustain in times of trouble.

### Chapter 16

Kainene has the most realistic view of the situation compared to the others. Perhaps it is her personality that allows her to be this way, or maybe her background in business. Either way, initially, she is filled as everyone else is, with the confidence that Biafra will be free. However, the reader sees that she changes her mind with the announcement of the police action and she urges Richard to be careful.

Richard, recalling and worrying about his manuscript, is now facing the loss of yet another 'roped pot' manuscript. The roped pots, in and of themselves, have long been a symbol of Richard's love affair with the region. Each time he believes himself to be close to achieving an African identity, it is taken from him. It is at this point that Kainene is able to see the reality of the rebel leader and to understand what Madu has said....they cannot win.



## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Colonialism as it appears in Chapter 15.

## Discussion Question 2

How is Odenigbo acting during all of these announcements and what changes his mind?

## Discussion Question 3

What are Kainene's thoughts about the impending Biafran war?

## Vocabulary

police action, nail-studded, demeanor, checkpoints, peered, vandals, vigilance, evacuated, extortion, barracks



## Part Two: Chapters 17-18

### Summary

#### Chapter 17

This chapter is shown from Olanna's viewpoint. She has arrived at Odenigbo's home in Abba and his mother is there. Earlier, Odenigbo's mother had openly disliked Olanna, but with Baby in the picture, she is more than civil. Olanna has a hard time ignoring the fact that she was the one that had her handmaid seduce Odenigbo in the first place, a seduction that resulted in Baby's existence. Olanna shares that they will not be staying long in Abba, but will continue to move to Umuahia as Odenigbo is going to become more active in the win-the-war campaign. Olanna is not thrilled with the prospect as it will mean a reduction in means, and she worries that Baby will have to play with the 'wrong' sort of children in the camps.

Odenigbo, Olanna notes, is in his element with the rebellion in full swing. He comes in that evening and asks her, once again, to marry him. Olanna does not answer him. The next morning Olanna's parents surprise her by driving up to the house. Her mother tells her that the war is going badly and that they fear for their lives. They are leaving for London that very day. She hands Olanna her passport and tells her that they both hope that Olanna and Kainene will come, too. Olanna tells her mother no, but thanks her for the opportunity. She knows that her sister will also reject the offer.

There is a meeting in the town square the next day where the local religious leader gives an inspiring speech which thrills Olanna and makes her think that independence is possible. However, these feelings of hope and peace are shattered when Odenigbo tells Olanna that her beloved aunt and uncle, and cousins, in Kano had been brutally murdered and raped. Olanna is upset at the nonchalant way that Odenigbo delivers the message to her. She leaves for her grandfather's home without telling him.

#### Chapter 18

The focus is on Ugwu in this chapter as he watches all of the activities revolving around the war in Abba. He can't fathom why Odenigbo and Olanna are being so distant with one another. Odenigbo's mother refuses to leave Abba when it is decided that they should all leave for a safer place. In fact, Mama, screams at all of them and calls them cowards. Olanna tells him later that the place they are going is nice enough, but Ugwu knows that it will not be. Ugwu is saddened to learn that Olanna and Odenigbo are going to get married in a quiet ceremony once they reach Umuahia. He is disappointed that it won't be a lavish affair.

Once at Umuahia they settle into life there. Odenigbo starts having guests as he once did, and mostly the conversations are about the war effort. Ugwu overhears one of the generals telling Odenigbo that they had built and successfully launched their first rocket



missile. From all of the conversations that Ugwu overhears, he begins to fantasize about being a brave soldier himself. He has heard that local families were offering their unmarried daughters to those who were soldiers in the Biafran army.

The wedding takes place and only a few guests attend, which saddens Ugwu. One of the guests is one that Ugwu recognizes from their first home, the poet and professor, Okeoma. He notes that even the poet is now dressed as a soldier. At the reception they had no sooner cut the cake, but the entire assembly hall begins to shake and bombs begin to drop. Okeoma is standing nearest to Olanna and throws his army jacket over her to keep debris from falling on her. The planes finally move on and in defiance, Odenigbo and Olanna force themselves to eat cake.

And excerpt is offered from the book, 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' It talks about the Nigerian economy and how dependence on foreign loans had crippled the country and allowed it to lose its own identity to its creditors. The suggestion is that the Biafran massacre was a direct result of foreign interference and cultural insecurities, namely colonialism that came along with the loans.

## Analysis

### Chapter 17

What is evident in this chapter is that the once peaceful coexistence between groups in Nigeria is over. The lines have been drawn and the reader sees Olanna and her family lose all of the rank and wealth that they previously enjoyed. The theme of War is demonstrated highly in both chapters as the reader sees the reality and brutality of it. Odenigbo and Olanna's wedding is fast-tracked because of the war, and instead of being the lavish affair that Ugwu feels it should be, it is quiet and poorly attended.

Additionally, War destroys. In this chapter Olanna receives the worst possible news. Her relatives in Kano have been brutally murdered. She confirms this with soldiers who were there, and later Odenigbo confirms it. When Olanna must go to her grandparents and tell them what has happened, they don't want to believe her, which underscores how news that is too awful to contemplate is met with hostility. They, at first, accuse her of lying, which shows that often War not only destroys the physical, but also the emotional and mental as well.

### Chapter 18

Odenigbo's mother refuses to leave Abba and accuses those who are leaving of cowardice. Her limited worldview still guides her and she refuses to acknowledge the bigger picture. She simply believes that nothing will reach them all the way out in Abba. Additionally, Ugwu hates that Olanna and Odenigbo will have to live more simply. He feels custodial and familial toward them and wants the best for them.

The children playing in the street are dressed up like soldiers which foreshadows the time when all of the new recruits will be just that: children. Also notable is the fact that



nearly everyone has joined the war effort, even the poets and the teachers. A prime example of this is the poet, Okeoma, who has joined the fight. This underscores the theme of War and suggests that war not only destroys lives, it can result in lost art, or art that never has a chance to be produced.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the theme of War as it is offered in both Chapter 17-18.

## **Discussion Question 2**

How does Olanna feel about marrying Odenigbo and moving away from Abba?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why won't Mama leave Abba?

## **Vocabulary**

extortion, plantains, basins, vantage, slanting, mechanically, veranda



## Part Three: Chapters 19-20

### Summary

#### Chapter 19

The timeline jumps back to where it was in Part One, before the war. The point of view is that of Ugwu. He is trying to talk Harrison, Richard's houseboy, into getting him some tear gas. Ugwu has heard that tear gas knocks people out and he's thinking that he can use a small portion of it on Nnesinachi when he takes Richard to the annual festival. Harrison has no idea what tear gas even is, so Ugwu heads off to find Jomo, whom he's sure will know where he can get the gas.

Jomo tells Ugwu that it would be better if his sexual conquest were awake for the entire thing. He doesn't get a chance to see how it would work out as he learns, when they arrive for the festival, that Nnesinachi and her family left for a safer place a week earlier. Ugwu thinks that things are safe pretty much everywhere and thinks that they left for another reason.

They return back to the house in Nsukka and Ugwu finds that Odenigbo's mother is there, as well as many of his usual guests. They are talking about politics as usual, and all Ugwu can wonder about is why white people keep trying to take things from people who are black, without reason or cause. Ugwu doesn't trust Odenigbo's mother and when she tells him that she will cook for her son, Ugwu is incensed. He believes that she is up to something, and he doesn't like the handmaid Amala. He is afraid that there is witchcraft involved. Later, he sees her dropping some sort of potion into the soup that she has fixed for Odenigbo. Later that night, unable to sleep, he gets up and goes to the restroom. On his way back he sees Amala leaving Odenigbo's room. Ugwu is upset and hopes that Olanna won't find out.

#### Chapter 20

Olanna's point of view is featured in this chapter. It opens with Olanna listening to her mother complain about her father cheating on her. He has been so blatant to bring his mistress to gatherings, which are highly insulting to Olanna's mother. Olanna agrees that it is in bad taste and says that she will speak to her father. Olanna calls to talk to Odenigbo but finds him distant. She can't fathom why. When she returns home she can tell that there's a heavy sort of tension in the air. When she observes Odenigbo as he tries to avoid Amala, she immediately knows what must have happened. She confronts him and he does not deny it. Olanna goes outside to catch her breath and observes a kite swooping down to carry off a chick. It sickens her.

She leaves and goes to Kano to be with her aunt and uncle. She tells Arize about what happened, and she advises her to never behave as if her life belonged to a man. She realizes that her cousin and aunt are right, takes their advice and goes back to Nsukka.



She goes straight to her old apartment. She decides that she just wants to get drunk and forget things for a while and goes down to the liquor store. She runs into Richard while there. He agrees to come over and have a few drinks, but they end up having sex as well.

## Analysis

### Chapter 19

In this chapter the horrid realities of the war haven't happened, and the worst thing in Olanna or Ugwu's life is that Odenigbo is unfaithful. There is a foreshadowing of the violence that will occur, however, in Ugwu's attempt to secure tear gas so he can rape a girl that he desires. The reader sees the theme of Racism demonstrated in this chapter as Ugwu wonders why blacks and whites have such a hard time getting along. From his viewpoint the whites continue to take from the blacks simply because they can. He doesn't see why one race should feel the need to subject or oppress the other.

The theme of Betrayal is demonstrated in this chapter as Odenigbo succumbs to his mother's handmaid, and sleeps with her. The reader is lead to believe, through Ugwu's eyes, that Odenigbo was influenced by Mama's magic, but in reality, it was just something that Odenigbo wanted to do. Just like the small betrayal that occurs that night, so, too, will the Biafran rebellion start with a small incident.

### Chapter 20

The theme of Betrayal is very prominent in this chapter. The reader sees not only Olanna's father cheating on her mother, and openly flaunting it. But, the reader also sees Olanna, herself, succumbing to cheating on Odenigbo. The betrayal is handled differently by mother and daughter. Olanna's mother is upset about the adultery because of how it impacts her standing in the community. Olanna is upset because she is in love with Odenigbo and expected more of him. She is faced with the possibility that he doesn't love her as much as she loves him. The theme of Love is also to be found in this chapter as Olanna must determine just what it means to her, a definition that she's not sure Odenigbo shares.

When Olanna sees the kite, which is a bird of prey, swooping down and carrying off the chick, it is symbolic of the death of her burgeoning love for Odenigbo. It was something innocent and new being betrayed and killed by its own innocence and trust. She comes to the conclusion that to assert her independence is one way to her own happiness. This precipitates her affair with Richard. This is also the event that caused the sisters to split from one another. On a larger scale, the author is comparing the love affair that with outside forces that split Nigeria in two, just as the two twin sisters are now divided. Betrayal, Love, and War all end up in a big mixture in this chapter, as the reader now sees what laid the groundwork for the animosity between the sisters, as well as the animosity between factions in Nigeria.





## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the theme of Betrayal as it is portrayed in both chapters.

## **Discussion Question 2**

What did Olanna finally conclude about her situation?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Odenigbo feel entitled to her forgiveness?

## **Vocabulary**

tonic water, imported, muted, dabbed, gynecologist, dulled, lustrous



## Part Three: Chapters 21-22

### Summary

#### Chapter 21

From Richard's viewpoint, the reader learns that Winston Churchill has died. He uses this as an excuse to avoid Kainene and takes off for Lagos where there will be a memorial service to commemorate the leader. Richard contemplates his one night stand with Olanna. He'd fantasized about her for so long, but now that the reality of it had come and gone, he realizes that he does not care for her, that he is truly in love with Kainene. He is determined that she should never find out about his encounter with Olanna.

Susan is at the memorial service and Richard sits with her. Afterwards they go to have lunch and she says that she has heard bits and pieces about his love affair with the natives. She calls it his 'dusky affair' and says that she will amuse herself with expat husbands until he comes to his senses and comes back to her.

#### Chapter 22

Ugwu is featured in this chapter. He is very upset in this chapter because Mama has returned triumphantly parading Amala and her swelling belly around for all to see. Mama fully intends to leave Amala at Odenigbo's home, but he is adamant that she not stay. Mama ignores him and leaves without Amala. She tells her son that she will come back at the end of the week to get her.

Ugwu finds Amala in the garden picking and eating hot peppers. When he asks her why, she tearfully tells him that she's heard that eating hot peppers in great quantity will prevent a pregnancy from continuing. Ugwu is confused as to why she would go along with Mama's plans if she hadn't wanted the child. Amala does not answer him, but keeps eating.

Olanna comes to visit and they go into Odenigbo's room. Ugwu can hear loud voices and arguing, but then the sounds of sex drown out everything else. Ugwu is hoping that it means that they are back together again. Later, when Olanna leaves, he asks Odenigbo if it means that Olanna is coming back, but Odenigbo does not respond.

### Analysis

#### Chapter 21

Richard's indiscretion with Olanna bothers him more than it bothers Olanna. For Olanna, the encounter was a tool for asserting her independence. But for Richard, he



felt it as a betrayal, and it drives home the point to him that he is who he wants to be only when he is with Kainene.

Susan's discussion with Richard after the memorial shows that she hasn't changed at all. The theme of Prejudice rears its head in this chapter as the reader sees that Susan still considers Richard's involvement with Kainene as an adolescent curiosity, from which he will soon wake up. Her view toward betrayal is interesting as it is an almost accepted rule that when outside of one's home country, one can have sexual encounters without repercussion. Richard is sickened by her casual disregard for people's lives or feelings. This mirrors the English sentiment toward Nigeria, in general.

## Chapter 22

From the interaction between Mama and Odenigbo, she cares little for her son, or Olanna's feelings in the matter. She is all about tradition and culture and does not embrace a larger picture attitude. This also parallels many of the political notions that most of the population have in regards to their allegiance to their own country, or to England. Many live an isolationist's viewpoint, and so when war approaches, they believe that it won't affect them.

Olanna accepts Odenigbo back into her life by having sex with him, but then leaving. She is making the statement that she is her own woman and that she is choosing to make her own happiness on her own terms. This is something that Odenigbo apparently finds alluring and they have love.

The theme of Love and Betrayal are interwoven in this chapter as the reader sees Olanna and Odenigbo both still refusing to admit their betrayal of one another, accepting the responsibility for the act, and either forgiving or leaving the situation. Thus, the reader knows that this is not over yet. Ugwu wishes that it would be over, so that things can return to normal.

## Discussion Question 1

What did the tryst between Richard and Olanna mean to each of them?

## Discussion Question 2

What is Mama's viewpoint of the whole situation between Olanna, Amala, and Odenigbo?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Susan's attitude mirror the English attitude towards Nigeria?

## Vocabulary

subdued, flat-bellied, radiogram, nauseated, mournfully, huddled, audible



## Part Three: Chapters 23-24

### Summary

#### Chapter 23

Olanna and Richard agree that their encounter can never happen again and that they should do what they can to keep it from Kainene. Olanna moves back into the house with Odenigbo, which she does. She tells him about her encounter with Richard and it shocks Odenigbo to the point that he doesn't say goodbye when she leaves to go and back her bags to come back.

Olanna moves back in and the conversations between them are terse and polite. They discuss politics, and the weather, but then finally they break down and have an honest discussion. He apologizes to Olanna and she to him. He tells her that he ran into Richard in the street and told him never to come back to the house. Olanna says that she understands. They go to bed and have sex.

Amala has a baby girl and she and Odenigbo go to visit the baby in Abba. When they get there the look on Mama's face says it all. Something is amiss. Olanna finds out that Amala is refusing to have anything to do with the baby. Olanna holds the baby and wonders how Amala can reject the child. Mama is unhappy, not only about Amala's attitude toward the child, but that the child was not a boy.

On their way back home Odenigbo and Olanna discuss the entire situation and they decide that they will adopt the child. At first everyone, except Odenigbo and Olanna, thinks it is a bad idea. Kainene thinks she is crazy, and Mama thinks that it will be a drain on their resources. Olanna is adamant and the baby comes to live with them. Kainene comes 'round and offers a name for the baby, Chiamaka, which means 'God is beautiful.' This is the last time the sisters will be close, as the next day Olanna calls to speak to her sister and all Kainene says to her is, 'You fucked Richard.' She hangs up on Olanna.

#### Chapter 24

Harrison has spilled the beans about Olanna's visit, and Richard is more than upset at him. When Kainene asks what he's talking about, Richard confesses everything. Kainene is so wounded that she stops eating, throws Richard out of her bedroom, and tells him that if it had been anyone else but her sister, she might have been able to forgive it. Richard worries that he has given her good reason to run into the arms of Madu.

Olanna shows up on Kainene's doorstep the next day to apologize profusely, but Kainene won't even let her in the door. When they leave Kainene tells Richard that she took his precious manuscript and burned it. He is upset at the loss but is also ambivalent because he knows that if she was angry enough to burn the manuscript,



then she still cares and they most likely will get back together. He wonders what kind of writer he actually is that he is not more upset at the loss of his only copy of the manuscript.

There is an excerpt from 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' The author shares that despite the articles that were out there describing the war, most countries decided to stay out of it. Those that spoke up in support of Biafra didn't back them with weapons or money, so it was hollow. Other black countries decided to support Nigeria as they feared uprisings of their own if they didn't.

## Analysis

### Chapter 23

The theme of Betrayal is explored in this chapter as the reader sees Olanna contend with the encounter with Richard. On the one hand she is not sorry as it has placed her and Odenigbo on equal ground with one another. She regrets that she has betrayed her sister, but as long as Kainene doesn't find out, then it was merely a tool to establish her own power and self-confidence.

In earlier chapters Ugwu states that Richard had stopped coming to the house, but that he didn't know why. Now the reader knows what the cause was that prevented him from ever coming back to the house. The theme of Betrayal shows up again when Kainene finds out about Olanna and Richard. Their relationship is irreparably damaged.

Meanwhile, Olanna has to contend with the birth of Odenigbo's daughter, whom neither the mother, nor Mama, wants. To Mama it is a lower status because the baby is female, and Amala wants nothing to do with the child. Olanna takes a bold step in asking to adopt the child. It is, however, an assertion of her independence in taking this action and is a selfless act on her part.

The split between the sisters is meant to mirror the split between Biafra and Nigeria. Both are deeply wounded. Kainene feels the betrayal most deeply because it was her own sister who slept with Richard. The betrayal happened on several levels as she feels betrayed by her lover and her sister.

### Chapter 24

The differences between the two sisters is evident in their reaction to the discovery of infidelity. Kainene reacts unemotionally, while Olanna shows up on her doorstep, hysterical and regretful. Both are deeply hurt. Kainene's way of dealing with the hurt is to hurt Richard back, which is what she does by burning his manuscript. It is at this point that Richard has an epiphany and decides that his love for Kainene supersedes his love of being a writer.

The theme of Betrayal is continued in both the ongoing saga between the sisters, but also in the small excerpt from the book, 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' The



explanation of the book's title is offered to the reader, as the author states that many countries of the world stood by and watched Biafra struggle with the war, and the subsequent massacre.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the theme of Betrayal in both chapters.

## **Discussion Question 2**

How does the two sister's relationship mirror the split that happens in Nigeria?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why won't the other countries of the world become involved?

## **Vocabulary**

contempt, vulnerabilities, flagrant, incredulous, liberated



## Part Four: Chapters 25-26

### Summary

#### Chapter 25

The timeline jumps forward to the action that was taking place in Part Two when Odenigbo and Olanna's wedding reception was bombed. Fearful, both Odenigbo and Olanna draw all of their money and assets out of the banks. Odenigbo tries to remain cheerful and confident, but Olanna cannot. There have been reports of soldiers kidnapping children to make them work for the war effort and this makes Olanna fearful for Baby and Ugwu. She has them guarded night and day. Baby comes down with a cold and Olanna takes her to the hospital where she's taken ahead of many others there because she speaks British English. However, she doesn't get much satisfaction from the doctor who tells her that Baby needs some antibiotics and that they don't have any. She will have to get them from the black market. Luckily, through a friend of a friend, she obtains them.

Olanna consults a local woman, named Mrs. Muokelu, who brings some dried egg for Baby to eat, since the child quits eating anything, even candy. Olanna and Odenigbo thinks that dried egg looks repulsive, but Baby eats the entire thing. Later, Olanna finds herself standing in a food line at a relief center. There is a riot and a stampede when the workers open the door. By the time Olanna manages to get into the doors, there is no more food. Despondent, she is about to leave when one of the relief workers motions her over. As it turns out, he was one of the family members who'd been at the airport the day that Olanna had comforted the grandmother about the plane arriving. He slips her some dried egg yolk.

When Olanna returns for food the next day, there is nothing at all, but the man slips her a tin of corned beef and she is overjoyed. Unfortunately, a soldier sees her get the can and follows her home. Other soldiers join him and they take the tin away from her. She races home. Mrs. Muokelu teaches Olanna how to make soap and bake bread, something that most of the women in the compound already know how to do. Air raids begin happening and one time when they race into the bomb shelter, she can't see that Odenigbo has come with them. Terrified she races back outside to see him standing over someone who has been hit. It occurs to her just how easily they could die.

Eventually, Olanna's fear turns to anger and she figures that if she is to die, then her life must have stood for something. She begins teaching the children, despite the loud noises and air raids. She describes the flag and what each of the colors mean. She tells them that the green is for prosperity, the red is for those who lost their lives for independence, and black for mourning their deaths. She says that the important part to remember is the yellow sun, which is rising and gives hope for the future.

#### Chapter 26





Ugwu is featured in this chapter. He is unhappy at the conditions in the refugee camps. The food, when they get it, is bad. And he can't go out and hang with others his age because Olanna is afraid he will be conscripted into the army. While Olanna and Odenigbo are gone for the day, a former friend of theirs, who has been made a director for the resistance, leaves a note for them. When Olanna returns she thinks that the note is fairly contentious and arrogant. Ugwu agrees to help Eberochi (the girl he wanted to drug with tear gas in an earlier chapter) fixing her family's roof. From his vantage he can see into the refugee camp that is situated near the school. He is glad that Olanna and Odenigbo's home is outside of the camps now as the conditions in the camp have worsened.

Ugwu and Eberochi start to grow close. He is angry when she tells him that her father offered her to one of the soldiers. Ugwu can't help thinking that when and if he has sex with her, that he will be a gentleman. He wonders if Odenigbo has any books in the library that will help him be a better lover. Many weeks pass by and eventually Ugwu admits to himself that he loves Eberochi. One day while he is teaching a class with Olanna, Eberochi is there watching. An army truck rolls up and a soldier approaches her. As Ugwu comes over to see what is going on, the soldier tells him that Eberochi has been given to him. Ugwu stands there in shock as she is taken away.

Later that night he sees Eberochi coming home and he runs to talk to her. She tells him that she told the soldier that he was her brother so that they wouldn't make him fight in the army. Ugwu grows angry about it and quits speaking to her. He goes inside the house only to learn that Odenigbo's mother has been killed in her village near Abba. Ugwu worries about his own mother. The next day Odenigbo determines that he must make a trip to Abba to try and reclaim his mother's body. Olanna begs him to stay, but he leaves anyway. Two days pass and Odenigbo still hasn't returned. They fear the worst.

## Analysis

### Chapter 25

The contrast between Olanna and Odenigbo is significant in terms of how each views the war. Odenigbo is still highly patriotic and optimistic, whereas Olanna sees the misery that the people are suffering as a result. Her faith in the independence movement is practically nonexistent now. In addition, she's learned that children are being kidnapped and forced to work, which indicates that the war has taken an unethical turn, in her mind. At first the war was about succession and defending themselves against an oppressive regime, but now, the ends don't justify the means in her mind. This is a direct parallel to her affair with Richard, in that in an attempt to obtain her own sense of independence, she'd also destroyed her relationship with her sister, irreparably caused a rift, and as a result much of what she held dear has been destroyed.

The fact that Olanna now has to beg and trade to get food and medicine shows how quickly things deteriorated where she is living. There is no real safe place to live, and as



her own act of defiance, Olanna starts holding informal school sessions. Mrs. Muokelu serves as a voice of reason and truth in the midst of the turmoil. She aptly notes that the Biafran army is corrupt and gluttoned on its own power. The bombings and the food blockade indicate that the Nigerian army not only wants to win the war, but they want the entire culture of the Igbo erased from the earth. This demonstrates the theme of War as it shows the horrible consequences. And yet, in the middle of the hardships, Olanna grows stronger and more confident in her own identity. What is particularly telling is the theme of War cropping up to show that at this point in the conflict, the Biafrans are no different than their enemies, choosing to allow corruption, starvation, and cruelty to dictate their actions.

## Chapter 26

Ugwu, in this chapter, is torn between his desire for patriotism and his love for Olanna and Odenigbo. He idolizes the Biafran soldiers, but on the same token he is guilty of the same prejudice that the Nigerians hold for the Biafrans. And, in the middle of such conflict, Love as a theme arises as Ugwu discovers that treating girls with respect and as a friend feels better than dominating and conquering them. Eberechi has taught him what it is like to truly love and respect someone, without strictly viewing them as a sexual object. Unfortunately, the old ways are still surviving as Eberechi's parents offer her as a sexual outlet for the soldiers in exchange for food and protection. This angers and humiliates Ugwu. This is made worse by her telling the guards that Ugwu is her brother. The theme of Betrayal centers around Ugwu's feeling of betrayal as Eberechi declares him to only be his brother, indicating that she most likely didn't feel the same way about him that he did about her.

Odenigbo must go to retrieve his mother's body because he feels guilty about the way he treated her on their last encounter. If he can at least be a good son by offering her a proper burial, he believes that it will absolve him of any wrongdoing towards her. However, several days pass and Ugwu is worried that he has been killed.

## Discussion Question 1

How do Olanna and Odenigbo view the war?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of War and Betrayal as they are exemplified in both chapters.

## Discussion Question 3

What is Ugwu's perception of the war?

## Vocabulary

skeptical, ambitious, bland, thatch. conscription, swathed, reveal, machetes



## Part Four: Chapters 27-28

### Summary

#### Chapter 27

Richard is featured in this chapter. He has a terrible fright when Harrison enters the room covered in what looks like blood. As it turns out, it is just beet juice that Harrison smeared on himself so that he could leave his village to come to Richard's home. He explains, as he cleans himself up, that only the wounded, women and children, were being let out of the village. Richard has had to leave his home in the city and is holed up with Kainene in Port Harcourt. He had asked Harrison to go back into the city to retrieve a few items. He asks about his manuscript, but Harrison tells him that he couldn't safely get it out, so he buried it in the backyard.

Richard is visited by Madu who asks him to write for the Propaganda Directorate, to get the real news about the war out to the international community. He is delighted but confused because he had always thought that Madu disliked him. He asks if Madu is only asking him because he is white and Madu says only to the extent that whatever he wrote would be taken more seriously. Richard agrees to write for the cause.

Richard writes about the atrocities including where some of the Nigerian soldiers had used the bathroom in a Catholic church in Onitsha. More than two hundred people had been slaughtered there. Richard continues and after two weeks has completed a number of articles which he's sent out to the press agencies. Madu is pleased. Kainene has heard from her parents, who are safe in London. Her mother continues to send her money through the mail and Kainene wonders how long it will be before that is discovered and confiscated.

Both she and Richard have been hedging their bets in case Port Harcourt fell to the army and have begun building a new home in a place called Orlu. They go to visit the site to see how construction is progressing and while they are there an air raid siren goes off. They attempt to cross the checkpoint and they see that some people are being turned away. Kainene asks the guard why this is so and is told that anyone seen trying to leave with their belongings are sent back so as to discourage a mass panic.

When they return home they find Madu waiting for them. He has come to warn Richard that anyone who is British isn't safe as the Biafrans have learned that it is the British who have been supplying warships to fight against them. A few days pass and they hear bombs landing nearby. They try to leave but they are turned back at the border by a guard telling them that there's no need for alarm. Richard and Kainene determine to get out anyway, packing their belongings in the car, and taking Harrison with them. They watch in horror as one of the other servants is beheaded when shrapnel spins off from a bomb.



They reach the home in Orlu but it isn't finished. The carpenters say that instead of money they want food as that is more important now. Kainene suddenly has the compulsion to see her sister. As she sees the injustice and the level of poverty in the refugee camps not too far from Orlu, she determines to get as much food as she can into the camps.

## Chapter 28

Odenigbo returns home, and initially Olanna is overjoyed. However, the man that has returned is a glimmer of his former self. He has seen such sights that he now knows that the war is lost. He tells her that after he tried to bury his mother he walked from bar to bar, whichever ones were open, as he made his way home. Olanna is grateful when Okeoma comes to pay his respects to Odenigbo about his mother's death. Olanna hears him confiding in Okeoma in a way that he hadn't been able to with her. Okeoma says that his commander is a devil, condoning rape and murder as they go from village to village. Olanna enters the room and asks if Okeoma has a poem to share. He says that he can't see poems in his mind anymore, just war. He drinks until he passes out, but when he does wake up he begins spouting poetry, almost uncontrollably. Bad news arrives as Odenigbo and Olanna hear that their landlord is kicking them out as someone is willing to pay double what they are paying. He tells them that they have two weeks to find another place.

They move into a single-roomed apartment, and it becomes clear that it is a den of thieves. Their neighbor, Mama Oji tells Olanna that everyone living there is looking out for themselves and will steal things without a second thought. There is no electricity and no water. The walls are paper thin and it isn't too long before Olanna knows more than she wanted to know about Mama Oji and her husband. Meanwhile, Baby has made friend with a little girl in the building, but Olanna shudders to think of what diseases Baby might pick up from the little girl, or that Baby will begin speaking in a Bush Umuahia accent.

Odenigbo's mental and emotional state continues to decline. After coming back from the market one day, Olanna finds him weeping bitterly for his mother. He finally gets it out of his system and determines that he is going to organize people to help dig a bomb shelter. Olanna continues to familiarize herself with her surroundings and the people. She meets a woman who keeps to herself and worries that there isn't enough salt, and she learns that the local pastor isn't a real pastor and just says that he is so he won't be drafted into the army. She also learns, to her horror, that the little girl that Baby has befriended is suffering from malnutrition and has a distended stomach. She sends over some of their supplies to the little girl's home. She learns that the family of the little girl has killed their family pet in order to eat. She is sickened, but cannot fault them.

Kainene appears out of the blue and Olanna is shocked. They instantly hug each other, though Olanna states it is awkward. Kainene catches her up on her activities in the refugee camps in Orlu, and Olanna tells her about her life where they are. Kainene gently chastises Olanna for continuing to call Baby, 'Baby,' and tells her that she needs to start calling the child by her real name, Chiamaka. As the day wears on it is clear that



they have come to some understanding between them. When Kainene leaves she makes Olanna promise to come and see her.

A few days later, Olanna does just that. Kainene tells her that of all of the atrocities that she has seen, including seeing the child's head in a basket, that other incidents seem to pale in comparison. It is clear that they have forgiven one another. As they tour the refugee camp the girls hold hands as they did when they were little.

## Analysis

### Chapter 27

The theme of Racism is offered with a different slant in this chapter. Madu approaches Richard to ask him to use his 'whiteness' in order to make the world press corp listen to what is going on in Biafra. One of the largest threads running through Adichie's work is that most of the world's nations stood by and let the tragedy unfold without doing anything to stop the slaughter.

After Richard gets over the shock of the racial statement, he realizes that he has now found a way to be a true Biafran as well as make a difference with his writing (which he has wanted from the beginning). In many respects, with the war effort going so badly, many who were devoted to the cause have faded away, but not Richard. He is reminded by Madu that he can't ever truly be fully Biafran because he is English and as such can really leave the country any time he wants. None of the rest of them really can.

The theme of Betrayal is demonstrated in a different way this time. It focuses on the sense of betrayal that many within Biafra are feeling. They believe that they are being sabotaged from within and as a result a high degree of paranoia has occurred. Ironically, this gives rise to a host of injustices which is just what the Biafrans were originally accusing the Nigerians of. They are essentially fighting injustice with injustice.

### Chapter 28

The theme of War is demonstrated in this chapter as friends turn upon friends. The landlord who found Olanna and Odenigbo their refuge home, is now throwing them out. Likewise, after Odenigbo's attempt to bury his mother, the atrocities that he has witnessed on his way home have upset him to the point where he has become lost in his own mind, due to the horrors and the drinking.

Okeoma's poem suggests that all beauty has been destroyed in Biafra and that in Nigeria, art and the written word will have no value. Okeoma is no longer an artist. He is just a doomed soldier like the rest of them. Likewise, Olanna's continued prejudice towards the children that Baby plays with is ludicrous given the situation they now find themselves in. The theme of Prejudice is demonstrated in her concern that Baby will pick up an accent from her playmates, and thus lower her social status (as if there is any of that anymore).



Olanna's friendship with the people in the new building sets her up for an oncoming betrayal, though the author only hints at it in this chapter. Baby's friend is suffering from Kwashiorkor's disease, which is a distention of the abdomen and is caused by malnutrition and not enough protein. The theme of War indicates that the death of children is the cost of war.

The entire bright spot in this chapter is that Olanna and Kainene reunite and reconcile. In the wake of the devastation and destruction both sisters realize that there are things that are more important than grudges. Both women have suffered extreme distress by the violence happening around them. Both sisters have decided to dedicate themselves to making wherever they find themselves better.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What eventually brings the sisters together and what do they decide?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the theme of War as it is discussed in both chapters.

## **Discussion Question 3**

What has happened to Odenigbo?

## **Vocabulary**

saboteur, vandals, glee, directorate, smirk, petrol, alliance, defiance



## Part Four: Chapters 29-30

### Summary

#### Chapter 29

Ugwu ignores Olanna's warnings and goes out one day to go for a walk. He is taken by some soldiers and is almost taken away except that he sees Mrs. Muokelu walking past them. She goes and gets Olanna who finds the soldiers, bribes them, and obtains Ugwu's release. On the way home she gives him quite the lecture about his carelessness and how it took all of her money to free him.

Olanna leaves shortly after that to visit her sister and Ugwu notices that Odenigbo is speaking with one of the women, Alice, in the apartment named. He is worried that Odenigbo will dishonor Olanna. Frustrated, he goes in the back yard where Eberechi finds him. They begin talking and for the next few days they spend a lot of time together. She finally lets him kiss her and as things heat up, she suddenly decides she needs to go home. Disappointed, but still happy that she's made her feelings know, he agrees to walk her back. On the way back he is taken by soldiers. He attempts to break away and run but when they fire their weapons he falls to the ground, too frightened to move.

Ugwu is thrown into a van with some others who have been kidnapped. Ugwu is surprised to learn that the soldier in charge of the round up is only 13 years old. His name is High-Tech and he tells Ugwu and the others in the van that they do reconnaissance for the war effort. Their job is to find out the location of the enemy soldiers and report back.

When they reach the basecamp he and other others have their heads shaved and they are put through a few hours of basic training, which consists mainly of making them run a gauntlet where they are abused and degraded. The casual cruelty of this world shocks Ugwu. No one but their commander has a uniform on.

The basecamp is located in an old elementary school and one day Ugwu finds a copy of a 'Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave: Written by Himself.' Excited, he reads it in two days, then re-reads it. High-Tech is impressed that he can read and often sits with him while he does, asking questions about the book. High Tech makes sure that Ugwu has food even when the soldiers are told that it will be a non-food day. Ugwu knows that he has had many opportunities to escape but part of him wants to fight.

His first job is to bury homemade bombs on various roads. As he huddles in a wet ditch, waiting for a convoy to come by, he thinks about Eberechi. Some soldiers on foot come down the road and Ugwu sets off the mines killing the soldiers. Instantly, he and the others scurry forward to pillage the bodies for their boots and anything else of value. Ugwu earns the name 'Target Destroyer' for his work. Ugwu settles in to life as a soldier,





making friends, playing cards, and drinking. One night they decide to go to a bar nearby and commandeer a car from a couple who are looking for their lost son. They begin to beat the man when he refuses. Ugwu steps in to stop the beatings and the soldiers all climb in the car, including Ugwu, and drive to the bar.

At the bar Ugwu sees that High-Tech is rolling a cigarette using one of the pages from Ugwu's Frederick Douglass book. He becomes angry and attacks High-Tech. The other soldiers pull them apart and Ugwu sits sullen in the corner thinking that 'he was not living his life; his life was living him'. He becomes very drunk and after he comes back into the bar after going to the bathroom he sees that High Tech and the others are gang raping a girl. They shame him into joining them. While he is participating he thinks that the girl looks familiar, but he ends up not looking at her face and instead thinks of Eberechi.

A long series of campaigns, of senseless horrors and butchery follow. It all runs together in Ugwu's mind. As a way to remain sane, Ugwu reads and re-reads the Frederick Douglass book. One night, he shares, the commander brings a goat into the camp and everyone is excited by the prospect of a good meal. They clean and cook the goat, but then the commander takes the entire goat for himself and his officers. The soldiers get nothing. Later that night they learn that Biafra's capital city has fallen to the Nigerian forces. They still go out on another mission. Just as Ugwu starts to detonate his mines, a piece of shrapnel hits him and everything goes black.

### Chapter 30

This chapter sees Richard continuing to reach out to the world community. He's taking a couple of American journalist to various places. Ironically enough, both men are named Charles. Richard is instantly disgusted by both men as they smell and they only ask about the whites who've been killed. When Richard takes them to the refugee camps the Americans are appalled to see children eating rats. The redheaded Charles makes a racist comment and it is all Richard can do not to punch him. Both Americans believe that Richard has not brought them to where the 'real' Biafrans are and demand that he take them to another refugee camp. The other Charles seems embarrassed by his redheaded colleague.

When Richard takes them back to the airport, they stop for lunch. Having had enough of them by this time, Richard gives them a piece of his mind. He berates them and America for doing nothing while thousands of Biafran people are dying each week. The redhead tells him that America is involved in Vietnam and that they have their own dead to bury.

It is at that point that Richard decides on a perfect title for his book. He will call it: 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' In it he will chronicle the cycle of disinterest by the world community and condemn them for their inaction.

Richard goes home to Kainene and tells her about his day with the Americans. He tells her about the new title for his book. Kainene reminds him, again, that he cannot truly



ever call himself a Biafran because he has the possibility of leaving it, when none of them do.

There is a small epilogue to the book, 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' It is a poem and is styled like many of Okeoma's poems in the past were. Its theme is the devastation of children in wartime, of swollen bellies, and how Westerners look at pictures of the starving black children in Africa, then without much comment return to their happy lives.

## Analysis

### Chapter 29

The climax of the book occurs in this section, as the worst possible thing has happened: Ugwu is conscripted into the army. The reader believes that he has narrowly escaped this due to Olanna's bribe and intervention. However, the constant rounding up of men and boys nearly guaranteed that he would, at some point, be taken.

Though he is frustrated that his relationship with Eberechi isn't progressing as fast as he'd like it to, once he is in the army he comes to the same conclusion as Kainene did, which is that in comparison to the suffering and death that is going on around him, anger with Eberechi is trivial. The theme of Love is exemplified in this chapter as it is shown to also be a casualty of war. Just as Ugwu is about to declare his love for Eberechi, he is taken and thrown into a place, with people, whose capacity of casual cruelty is unsurpassed. It is clear that his constant exposure to this lifestyle will change him and it will eventually stain his soul.

It is most notable that Ugwu notices that none of the soldiers now wear uniforms nor the half sun rising. Since this represented hope for a new country, it is clear that the author is stating that that hope is gone. Now, it is clear that the soldiers are lawless thugs.

Likewise, another significant symbol in this chapter is Ugwu's discover of Frederick Douglass's book. The theme of Racism is demonstrated as Ugwu reads Douglass's book and how Douglass struggled to obtain and secure his own identity and freedom. It is a message that resonates deeply with Ugwu. Ugwu becomes very aware that the soldiers on both sides of this conflict are just pawns, and that most of them simply fight only because they are told they must.

Ugwu is good at his new job, earning him the name 'Target Destroyer.' As this new 'person' Ugwu doesn't feel bound to the old conventions of Ugwu. As 'Target Destroyer' he becomes hardened to the condition of others. He becomes numb to the horrors that used to terrify him. He becomes another victim of the war in that he gives up his humanity when he joins the others in the gang rape of the hapless bar girl. Rape as the corruption of romantic love also demonstrates the theme of War, showing that it ultimately destroys everything, leaving nothing good in its wake.



In many respects, the boy that the reader has known is gone. Most likely, at this point, Ugwu is suffering from a severe case of PTSD, since all of the missions now run together in his mind.

### Chapter 30

Introducing the American journalists allows the reader to gain another perspective on the war. As Richard shows them around, it is clear that the world, especially America, views the Biafran conflict as small and insignificant. Richard is ashamed that they are white. Adichie mentions Vietnam to put into perspective America's mindset at the time. Like the situation in Nigeria, America has colonialization interests in Vietnam, just as Britain had in Nigeria. Both are losing thousands of soldiers in the conflict.

Adichie seems to suggest that Richard is the author of the book, 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' When Richard returns home, Kainene again reminds Richard that though he is sympathetic, that he can't really call himself a Biafran. The only thing that seems to be surviving the war is the relationship between the two sisters. The suffering that they are attempting to alleviate is almost overwhelming to them at times. The author is making a pointed remark that those who see great suffering and refuse to do nothing are just as guilty of the atrocities as the perpetrators.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of War as it is discussed in these chapters.

## Discussion Question 2

How has Ugwu changed from the beginning of the book?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Kainene continue to remind Richard that he cannot call himself a Biafran?

## Vocabulary

defecated, muck, hasty, census, oblivious, mercenary, stilted, dour



## Part Four: Chapters 31-32

### Summary

#### Chapter 31

This chapter focuses on Olanna. Since Ugwu's capture she despairs that one of the many bodies she sees by the side of the road will be his. Mrs. Muokelu hints to Olanna that she should be prepared to leave Umuahia quickly, that she's heard rumors that aren't good. Mama Oji has warnings of her own as she tells Olanna that when she leaves that Alice sits with her husband. Olanna discounts it at first, but then when she sees Alice she feels jealous. She goes to the gas station but they are out of petrol. She tells Odenigbo that she heard that they should keep the car gassed up, and they need to get gas on the black market. He is too drunk to care.

She takes the money that her mother has been sending her and gets gasoline from a man dealing black-market out of an outhouse in the center of the city. When she returns Kainene is there. She runs to Olanna with tears in her eyes. She tells Olanna that Ugwu is dead. She says that Madu told her about his loss and that she immediately came right over to Olanna. She tells her that there wasn't a body recovered, but that not many of the bodies from the bombing had been recovered. Those that survived the blast didn't recall seeing Ugwu.

Later that day the bombing starts. Odenigbo and Olanna, with Baby, run to get into the car, but it won't start. People are running out of the buildings in mass numbers. Many of them beat on the windows of the car begging to be let in. Finally the car starts and Odenigbo and his family drive away. They go to Orlu where Kainene lives.

The next day Orlanna and Kainene walk to the refugee camp. Baby accompanies them. Orlanna notices that many of the children are playing with the bits of shrapnel that they've found. When Baby bends down to do the same Orlanna smacks it out of her hand, but Kainene tells her to let Baby be. She says that she protects Baby too much from the real world, just like their parents did, and it was not fair. She also tells Orlanna that she has always felt sorry for people who didn't deserve it, like their parents.

Richard meets up with them on the way back to tell them that Okeoma had been killed. She is grief stricken and takes to her bed. Odenigbo comes back from the bar where he spends most of his time these days. He tells her that she is the strongest woman he has ever met. This leaves Olanna unsettled.

#### Chapter 32

This chapter shows that Ugwu is wounded, but is not dead as Olanna believes. He shares that after the bomb went off prematurely, he was taken to a nearby hospital where he feels as if he will die of thirst. A priest from Nsukka shows up to give last rights to everyone and they recognize one another. The priest quickly goes to get some milk



with sugar mixed into it, then binds Ugwu's wounds. He begs him to deliver a message to Odenigbo that he is alive. Two days pass and to Ugwu's surprise, it is not Odenigbo that comes, but Richard. He puts Ugwu in his car and they head for a better hospital in Orlu.

On the way Richard asks Ugwu if he was afraid. Ugwu tells him about the Frederick Douglass book that kept him sane. Richard asks if he can put that in his book and Ugwu tells him it would be fine. Richard tells him the title of the book will be, 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' Ugwu can't get the face of the bar girl out of his mind. Once he is at the hospital he enters into a delirium which features all of the atrocities that he'd encountered, endured, and participated in. He wonders if he will ever be worthy of Eberichi again.

As he becomes stronger Ugwu decides that he will also help at the refugee camps, then write at night. He writes poetry at first, trying to make it sound like Okeoma's poems. Then, he starts writing about his experiences, and finds that it makes him feel better to just get it out. It eases the nightmares.

Ugwu is saddened as one morning he sits out on the porch and watches some children playing war. There are four this day, but the day before there had been five. The child that was missing was killed in an air raid the day before. Ugwu gets up and goes to dig the grave.

## Analysis

### Chapter 31

The theme of Betrayal is touched upon initially in this chapter as it is hinted that Odenigbo is once again cheating on Olanna, with Alice. However, when Olanna considers the broader reach of the evil around them, she finds that she doesn't care anymore. She feels that their relationship is damaged beyond its ability to heal itself.

War as a theme is touched upon several times, most notably in the report of Ugwu's death. Olanna refuses to believe that he is dead, even though Kainene tells her that Madu himself believes it to be true. Like many others in the war, she continues to deny reality when it is too horrid to contemplate.

In a parallel to the political situation, Kainene tells her sister that her blind allegiance to Odenigbo was 'lazy,' when many of the Biafran citizens are blindly loyal to their dying cause. Both sisters are now closer than ever and they support one another. The message in this is clear....a united Nigeria is always going to be stronger than one that is divided. Kainene also tells Olanna that she must allow Baby to grow up, that allowing her to get dirty and make mistakes is part of that growing process, one that their own parents denied them.

### Chapter 32



While in the hospital, and on the verge of death, Ugwu clings to several things. First, he continues to think about things that he has read in the Frederick Douglass book. He also revisits happier times in his memories of Olanna and Odenigbo. The power of art to reach across generations is given a nod in this section, and now as he begins to recover Ugwu is washed with an intense feeling of shame and regret over what they did to the bar girl.

Acting as a lifeline before, the written word now becomes an agent of healing for Ugwu, who determines to write about his experiences in the war. Ugwu begins to see that going to war caused him to sacrifice who he was in order to survive. He understands and grieves the part of his soul that he will never recover. At this point in the book, both Ugwu and Biafra are hitting rock bottom. The difference being that Ugwu has the possibility of pulling himself out of it. Biafra does not.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the theme of Betrayal in Chapter 31.

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does Ugwu come to understand about himself?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does the relationship between Kainene and Olanna parallel the war?

## **Vocabulary**

corpse, foreboding, intact, musk, fiddled, insulted, flung, jeer, resentment



## Part Four: Chapters 33-34

### Summary

#### Chapter 33

Told from Richard's point of view, the reader sees Odenigbo, Olanna, Kainene, and Richard sharing a small meal together. Richard tells them all that the white mans' mission to capture Africa has been realized through racism. He notes that the Biafran flag was lying in the mud in the square. Kainene suggests that the only way to get food is to cross enemy lines, now. She was thinking of trying to go the next day. Odenigbo says that it is too dangerous, but she argues that many people she knows have made it there and back just fine.

The next morning Kainene sets off to cross the lines. She kisses Richard and goes quickly. Richard goes to work but by the time he returns home, Kainene still hasn't returned. He is worried and shares his concern with Olanna who dismisses it. He asks Ugwu if he can read some of the things he's been writing, but Ugwu declines, saying that it isn't good enough. Night falls and everyone is clearly worried. They go into the refugee camps thinking that maybe she had gone directly there. She's gone.

Days pass and no one hears anything from Kainene. Richard slips into despair. Olanna and Richard get in the car and drive miles trying to see if they can spot her. Richard weeps as they return without Kainene.

#### Chapter 34

The condition in the city worsens and Olanna despairs as she sees Baby's hair falling out. Ugwu comes into the room and Olanna tells him about the woman carrying her dead child's head in a basket. Ugwu asks if he can write it down in his journal and she tells him that it would be okay. Olanna likes that he is interested as it makes it seem important.

The men go out searching again the next day but, once again, return without Kainene. In the afternoon a woman runs into the town square waving a green branch and yelling that the war was over. Odenigbo quickly turns on the radio. For several days the roads are still closed, but Odenigbo urges Olanna to go ahead and pack the car so that as soon as the blockades are lifted they can go to look of Kainene. Food starts coming back into the city. There is so much that Olanna can't fathom it.

The roads open and all of them leave, Richard in his own vehicle, and the others in Olanna's car. They reach their old home, but no one is there. They are stopped at another checkpoint where a Nigerian soldier harasses them and forces them to carry wood for them. While they are doing this they observe the Nigerians flogging a man wearing glasses, accusing him of writing propaganda for the Biafrans. Odenigbo is glad that he had left his glasses in the camps.



## Analysis

### Chapter 33

A striking picture is painted from the beginning. The Biafran flag is found in the mud, symbolizing the soiling and degradation of their hopes and desires to be free. It is literally a symbol of lost hope. It should be mentioned that of all the characters in the book, who have a main part in the action, Kainene was never given a point of view or a chapter devoted to her. However, she now appears center stage as she is lost without a trace.

In many respects, the reader can see that the author is suggesting that Kainene's loss is much like Nigeria when it reunified. Peace did return, but something vital and strong had been lost. This is like Olanna's loss of her sister's courage and strength.

### Chapter 34

From Olanna's description, Baby is suffering from kwashiorkor. The reader now has enough information, too, to suspect that it isn't Richard who has written the book, 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' In fact, many of the stories that appeared in that novel are the same stories that Ugwu has been writing in his journal.

Shocking to Olanna, too, is the presence of food in the town's center, once again. She sees the starving children contrasted with the obviously well fed Nigerian soldiers. She wonders how the country will be able to reunite. The theme of Betrayal are demonstrated as the country attempts to reunite, but many who fought for freedom feel as if their leaders betrayed them, and that they invested in a lost cause.

Richard's state of mind is called into question as he breaks down when Kainene cannot be found. His identity was intrinsically wrapped up in his relationship with her and the roped pots. Divided from her he is, once again, adrift. Prejudice is also demonstrated in this chapter as the reader sees the Nigerian soldiers treating the Biafrans as they would like, including rape and other violent acts. The rage against the Igbo still exists to this day, the author writes.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the themes of Betrayal in Chapter 34.

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the symbolism of the Biafran flag in the mud.





## Discussion Question 3

Why has Kainene's disappearance affected Richard so deeply?

## Vocabulary

drenched, cashew, abruptly, rustled, illiterate, sector, finality



## Part Four: Chapters 35-36

### Summary

#### Chapter 35

Ugwu, Olanna, Baby, and Odenigbo return to their old home and find it ransacked. All of Odenigbo's books and research papers have been burned in the back yard.

Ugwu immediately goes to his old village to see if his mother and sister have survived. He finds his father's second wife who tells him that his mother has died from her coughing fits. Ugwu is devastated. Anulika won't look him in the eye, which makes Ugwu wonder about what has happened to her while he was gone. Ugwu's father is alive and pulls his son close for a hug. Later, as he is leaving the village he sees Nnesinachi carrying a baby on her hip. They stop to talk and she tells him that she was safe during the war because she agreed to go with a Hausa soldier. Ugwu asks about Anulika stating that she didn't seem the same. She tells him that during the war some Nigerian soldiers came into the bar where she worked and gang raped her. They part ways, but Ugwu is devastated, once again. Considering it divine retribution, he goes down to the stream and weeps bitterly.

Things are still not safe in Nsukka as Ugwu learns upon his arrival that all academics are being rounded up, imprisoned, or executed. That night someone bangs on their door and Ugwu is just sure that the soldiers have come for Odenigbo. He arms himself, but when he opens the door he sees Miss Adebayo. She had fled to London during the uprising and instantly Ugwu wants nothing to do with her. He leaves her to Odenigbo and the others. He hears her wail at the mention of Okeoma's death.

Richard sits in the kitchen the next day, and has taken the liberty of reading some of Ugwu's work. He looks up when he sees Ugwu entering the room and tells him that the writing is amazing. He encourages him to try and publish it so that the world will know what happened. Richard tells Ugwu that he is giving up writing and that he will continue to search everywhere until he finds Kainene. Richard tells Ugwu that the story he was going to write isn't really his to tell, and he offers the title to Ugwu to use if he wants it. Ugwu agrees.

#### Chapter 36

Richard returns to his old house, but Harrison can't find where he buried the manuscript. Richard doesn't care, and it wouldn't matter, anyway, as his house has been given to a Nigerian woman who won't let him even look for photos of Kainene to use in his search. He goes to Kainene's old house to see if he can find some photos, and while he is in Port Harcourt he looks up Eberechi for Ugwu. He finds out that Eberechi was killed in a bombing many months prior. Richard decides that the kindest thing he can do is to not tell Ugwu what he knows.



Madu shows up and they sit and talk. Eventually, the talk about Kainene and Richard asks him if he ever touched Kainene. Madu will not answer him, and in his mind, all Richard can think is if Madu's 'filthy black hands' were put on her. Impulsively, he punches Madu, who barely registers the blow. He returns a punch that puts Richard on the ground. Madu helps him up and they part. Richard begins to accept the fact that he might never see Kainene ever again. He knows that he has lost the best part of himself.

## Analysis

### Chapter 35

The theme of War as a destroyer is brought to a final climax as Ugwu sees Odenigbo crumple beside the pile of charred books and papers in their backyard. Ugwu sees that the war has destroyed and corrupted the past, something that none of them has any hope of regaining.

Ugwu's discovery of his sister's rape mirrors his own actions during the war, only now he sees it from the other perspective, that of the survivor of rape, and its effects on the family. Juxtaposed with Miss Adebayo's return, the reader sees the wide gulf that existed between those with means and those without. Adebayo freely admits that she distanced herself from everything, and her concern about petty matters galls Ugwu.

Ugwu, the reader learns, is the writer of the book, 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' His writing is seen by Richard to be the truest story of the war and he encourages him to continue. He offers him the title, and thus that mystery is solved for the reader. By this admission about Ugwu's writing, it is evident that Richard has finally acknowledged that he is not a Biafran and never was.

Thus, the reader learns that the true writer of the story was Ugwu, possibly the least educated of them all. However, his storytelling is real and unadulterated by rules and the confines of English literature. In contrast to Richard, Ugwu will tell the story from the viewpoint of those who were squarely in the middle of it, with their way of life, culture, and independence weighing in the balance.

### Chapter 36

With the loss of yet another manuscript, the reader understands that Richard is done. Nigerians have taken over all of the properties in the area where Richard used to live and there is nothing for him there. Kainene's parents, when they speak to Richard, are saddened at their daughter's disappearance, but they are just as far removed from the horrors that have happened as was Miss Adebayo.

The theme of Prejudice is demonstrated in Richard's internal dialogue about Madu and his involvement with Kainene. Richard's despair is real and bottomless, and yet, when he learns of Eberechi he decides that he would spare Ugwu the same feelings he is going through, at least for a little while longer.



Interestingly, Richard and Ugwu's storylines take different and opposing arcs. Richard starts out the story as a very privileged character, and ends in despair. Ugwu starts out impoverished, but manages to rise from that to become a man of position and hope.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Compare Ugwu to Richard from the beginning of the novel to the conclusion.

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the theme of War in Chapter 35.

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why did Richard decide that Ugwu was better suited to write the book?

## **Vocabulary**

valuation, bleached, criticism, precision, militiaman, accusing



# Part Four: Chapter 37

## Summary

### Chapter 27

This chapter sees little resolution for the characters. Kainene's fate is still unresolved, they are still persecuted for being Igbo. Olanna shares that all of their bank accounts were confiscated and that they are destitute. If it were not for their foreign friends, fellow academics, they would be starving along with the other Igbo people living in 'free' Nigeria.

Soldiers have come into their home and have commandeered what little food they did have. After they leave, Olanna takes her Biafran money and burns it. Odenigbo chastises her for doing it, claiming that it is a part of their history. She says she has more than enough memory of it all in her mind. In an act of desperation Olanna goes to see a medicine man to see if Kainene is alive. No one gives her any news. The last pages of the book are focused on Ugwu who has had his book published. It is dedicated to 'Master, my good man.'

## Analysis

That there is little resolution in the ending is fitting considering that the animosities and atrocities still continue in Nigeria to this day. Olanna burns the money as a way of letting go and of protecting her family. To be caught with the money would be to be accused of rebellion.

The only ray of hope that arises is the fact that Ugwu's book is published, and the history of the war is honestly shared with the world. Likewise, the reader is encouraged that in Olanna's belief that if Kainene is dead that when they are both reincarnated once again, they will be sisters.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Olanna burn the little bit of Biafran money that she has?

## Discussion Question 2

Why doesn't the author offer resolution and a happily ever after ending to the novel?



## Discussion Question 3

What are the only hopeful things to now remain for the characters?

## Vocabulary

surge, facile, tarnished, forcibly, decipher, seeping, oracle



# Characters

## Olanna Ozobia

Olanna is the twin daughter of Chief Oxobia, but this hasn't offered her much in the way of prestige. The reader sees that Olanna's parents are cold and indifferent, often greedy and selfish in their treatment of her and her sister, as well as others. Despite this she grew up and developed a good moral character, mostly due in large part to her desire to be the opposite of her parents. She later would go to London and study at the University.

After her graduation she moves back to Nigeria where she meets and begins dating a Hausa man named Mohammed. It seems to be more of a relationship of convenience for them both and when Olanna meets Odenigbo she falls in love deeply. This love stands her in good stead as tensions escalate in the country and war breaks out.

Olanna and her family belong to the Igbo tribes and as such are some of the most targeted groups in the war. As a result Olanna and her sister, Kainene, end up working in the refugee camps and rescuing the children who have become orphans. Both women are highly educated and yet return to their home country in order to try and make things better.

## Kainene Ozobia

Kainene is Olanna's twin sister, and is generally described as being the less beautiful of the two sisters. Kainene tends to be more serious in nature, and is often sarcastic. Both girls are highly intelligent and because of their father's business and connections, Kainene is also able to attend University in London. She returns from her schooling and agrees to take over her father's business.

Richard meets her and falls for her quickly. The reader often finds it difficult to believe that she returns his feelings, but in the end, it is evident that she does. The struggle between the two sisters, who are so similar, and yet so different, creates one of the conflicts that drives the plot line forward.

Where Olanna loves openly, Kainene is hesitant. Where Olanna smiles easily, one is hard pressed to catch Kainene with a smile on her face. Both were raised in similar situations, and yet only Olanna has not allowed it to define her or deprive her of her quality of life.

## Ugwu

Ugwu is an Igbo boy from Opi. He becomes Odenigbo's servant and is working there when Olanna meets him. After Olanna moves in with Odenigbo, Ugwu struggles to



conduct himself as a servant. He goes through puberty and deals badly with the adolescent feelings he has for all females, but in particular, Olanna.

Ugwu is also a brilliant scholar. Odenigbo notices that the boy has a natural intelligence and insists that he go to school. Ugwu obtains top marks in his classes and just when it seems he's about to lift himself out of his poverty, he is conscripted into the war where he takes part in horrendous atrocities. He goes on to write a book called, 'The World Was Silent When We Died,' which chronicles his time in the war.

## Richard Churchill

Richard is a journalist from England, living in Nigeria. He meets Kainene and it is love at first sight for him. Eventually, she comes to love him as well, but he is never able to completely integrate into the Igbo culture. This works to their advantage during the war because he is able to write openly about the Biafran war and its devastating effects on the population.

## Odenigbo

Odenigbo is a professor at the University in Nigeria. He teaches math and is, behind closed doors, a revolutionary. He admires Olanna's spirit and opinions, which she voices often. They become lovers and later marry. The first years together are good, but then, as the war begins and tensions mount, he does not remain faithful to her. Odenigbo slowly slips into alcoholism and depression at the end of the book.

## Amala

Amala is one of the girls that Odenigbo has an affair with after his marriage to Olanna. She becomes pregnant by him and has his child.

## Mama

Mama, who is Odenigbo's mother, does not understand the world that her son inhabits. She is very much entrenched in the traditions of the area, and the reader learns that she is highly superstitious. She does not like Olanna because she learned that Olanna's mother did not breastfeed her, which means that she is a witch. She plots to have Amala seduce her son and break up the marriage. Later, during the war, she refuses to leave her village to take safety with Odenigbo and Olanna in their house in the city. She is killed.





## **Madu Madu**

Madu Madu is a colonel in the army. He and Kainene have known one another for a long time. This friendship that they have makes Richard jealous on numerous occasions.

## **Susan Grenville-Pitts**

Susan is another English ex-pat living in Nigeria. She and Richard are involved for a while, but he leaves her because she is so incredibly racist.

## **Chief Ozobia**

Ozobia is Olanna and Kainene's father. He is not only the Chief, but he is also a wealthy businessman. He is often flamboyant and is very egotistical.

## **Mohammed**

Mohammed is Olanna's first boyfriend when she returned back from University. She leaves him for Odenigbo.

## **Abdulmalik**

Abdulmalik starts out as a nice person, one that Olanna finds interesting to speak with. However, when the purges begin he goes along with the slaughter, even killing Mbaezi, Olanna's Uncle, without question.

## **Nnesinachi**

Nnesinachi is a girl of Ugwu's age who lived in his village. When he comes to work for Odenigbo he is still fantasizing about her. She remains an unreachable girl. She later moves away, making this the truth for him.

## **Mrs. Muokelu**

This is an old wise woman that Olanna meets in the refugee camps. She helps her with Baby when the child becomes ill and won't eat. She also teaches Olanna how to do simple things that most of the village women already know how to do, like bake bread and make soap. She also smuggles food into the village for the people, often crossing enemy lines to do so.



## High Tech

This is the 13 year old boy that captures Ugwu and forces him to join the Biafran army. He later befriends Ugwu and the two of them go on missions together. It is High Tech that gives Ugwu his nickname of Target Destroyer.

## Anulika

This is Ugwu's oldest sister. She is engaged to be married when the reader first meets her. Later, however, after the war when Ugwu returns to the village, he finds that she was gang raped by some Nigerian soldiers, much the same way that Ugwu gang raped a bar girl with his Biafran soldiers.

## Eberechi

This is a young girl that Ugwu falls for before the war. Eberichi is the first girl that Ugwu has taken the time to get to know as a person, and as a friend, before trying to have sex with her. She is his first true love. She is killed in an air raid at the end of the novel, but Ugwu doesn't know that, and Richard decides not to tell him.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Roped Pots

In Part One, Chapter 3 this symbolism is first introduced through Richard's memory of when he first learned of Nigeria through its artwork, namely, roped pots. They were part of an ancient artifacts display in a museum. It shows that as early as the 9th century that the artisans were exhibiting complex metallurgy. Richard goes on to state that the experts believe that it is a true work of Igbo art as it was not influenced from anywhere else, but was developed right there in modern day Nigeria. These pots represent Richard's love for the area and his love for its people. He sees them as precious works of art, intelligent beyond expectation, and a true gift to the world.

## Biafran Flag

Biafra is what the locals call eastern Nigeria. Nigeria is only a name that was given to the country by the white colonials and therefore most of the indigenous people reject the name. They develop their own flag which has a half a yellow sun as one of its emblems. This represents a 'glorious future' as Olanna explains. It represents the hope of the Biafrans and contrasts sharply with the reality of the war that follows.

Later, the author shows the flag and the emblem in the mud, signaling that all hope was lost. Ugwu notices when he is forced to be in the army that none of the new recruits have uniforms and that no one wears the rising sun on their shirts any longer. This is taken to mean that there was little hope and none remained to be given to anyone.

## Odenigbo's flowers

When Olanna first arrives in Odenigbo's home, he tells her to do whatever she'd like to make it feel more like her own. While he is at a conference she removes the fake flowers from the foyer and replaces them with fresh flowers. This represents the bringing of true love and life back into the house.

## Chicken

In the beginning of the novel Ugwu eats chicken from the refrigerator and stuffs his pockets full so that he can take some home for his family. This represents and indicates how incredibly impoverished Ugwu's family is, that the opportunity to eat meat is so rare that the boy is willing to jeopardize his job at the house to take food home to his family.



## English

English represents several things in this novel. First, Ugwu associates anything English, or those who speak English, as superior and noble. He practices saying English words so that he can elevate himself. Likewise, Olanna was happy studying in London and adopted an English accent. Believing it to make her look worldly and sophisticated, when she returns home she finds that it singles her out, and in many ways makes her look as if she is siding with the English oppressors.

## Nnesinachi

Nnesinachi represents an unreachable 'other' that Ugwu will never attain. He is sexually attracted to her and in the beginning of the book has fantasies about her. Later, she becomes an idealized version and a benchmark to which he measures every other girl. When he meets Olanna, of course, this goes out of the door.

## The Camera

When Richard goes to Igbo-Ukwu to look at the place where the original roped pots were found, he speaks with an old man who was related to the original man who discovered the buried artifacts. The old man expects to have his picture taken like all of the other white tourists, but Richard tells him that he doesn't have a camera. The lack of a camera is significant because it, once again, reinforces the idea that Richard is different from the other whites in the area, and that he doesn't see himself as a tourist.

## Spicy Pepper Soup

This is a traditional Nigerian soup that Richard adores. It is extremely spicy and usually only the natives can eat it. However, Richard enjoys it heartily and often has Harrison fix it for him. This symbolizes the fact that Richard is able to internalize and metabolize and even enjoy an aspect of Nigeria that other Englishmen will never be able to enjoy.

## Richard's Manuscript

Richard has come to Nigeria to write, or so he tells everyone. For most of the novel he struggles to get anything down on paper. When he attends a dinner party at Odenigbo's home and inadvertently offends one of the guests by speaking about the roped pots, he goes home and destroys the few manuscript pages that he has written. The manuscript, itself, is representative of his desire to have meaning in his life. When he realizes that the writing isn't offering him that meaning, he destroys it. Later, after he's begun again, and has finished the manuscript, Kainene finds out about Richard's affair with Olanna and burns it in front of him. However, Richard finds that it doesn't bother him as much as he thought because Kainene burning the book meant that she wasn't going to leave



him. That matters more to him than the book does. Later, when the war hits, he has Harrison bury the newest manuscript in the backyard. However, when they return, they cannot locate it. Richard gives up writing after that.

## High Life Music

This is a new type of music that has been introduced into the region. Using Western instruments to play traditional Igbo music has created a new form called High Life Music. This is representative of the duality of cultures that exist in the region. While Odengibo and others enjoy the music, others, such as Ugwu and Harrison despise it because it is yet another way that their culture has been changed and impacted by colonialism.

## Okeoma's Poem

Okeoma is a professor at the college where Odenigbo works. When the Biafran war is about to begin he writes a poem which he shares with the gathering at Odenigbo's home. It suggests hope and optimism in the face of unbelievable odds and the indomitable spirit of the Biafran people to be free of British domination.

## The Kite and the Chick

When Olanna learns of Odenigbo's indiscretion with Amala, she gets into her car where she observes a kite (bird of prey) as it swoops down on a baby chick in the front yard. As it is carried away she feels the loss terribly. In essence, she is lamenting the loss of something innocent and young, like her relationship with Odenigbo. That it was served up to her with such swift brutality, such as with the kite, she feels numb and isn't sure what she is going to do about it.

## Frederick Douglass Book

The novel by Frederick Douglass titled, 'The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass An American Slave,' is a book that Ugwu found in an old school that the army was using as a basecamp. He clings to it and it acts like a lifeline that allows him to keep hold of his sanity while being forced to witness and participate in the barbary of the war. He says that the words in the book resonated with him and it gave him hope.

## Target Destroyer

This is the name that High Tech gives Ugwu when it becomes apparent that Ugwu is very good at his job. The name itself allows Ugwu to adopt a different, more hardened and bitter, persona. It is as Target Destroyer that he commits rape with his platoon.



# Settings

## Odenigbo's Home

This is a home in Nsukka, a city. He is wealthy and educated and his home reflects this. When Ugwu experiences it for the first time he describes it as an impossible place of wonders and riches. It has real beds, two floors, running water, and other modern conveniences that Ugwu has never experienced before.

## Olanna's family home/Laggos

This is a huge estate that her parents own. They are newly wealthy and as such have all of the money and none of the refinement that come with it. Olanna is very aware of this when her father offers her as a sexual plaything in order to seal a business deal with a potential business partner. Olanna is not comfortable at her family's home and part of her moving in with Odenigbo is her asserting her independence and desire to be separated from her mother and father.

## Kano

Kano is, for Olanna, an idealized version of how life should be. She views her poor relations (Aunt, Uncle, and Cousins) as poor but happy. She believes that they are more genuine in their affection for one another and live life the way it was intended. She contrasts her parents' estranged marriage to the open and loving relationship that her Aunt and Uncle have.

## Kainene's Home

Kainene's home is a mansion not too far from her parent's home. This is where Richard goes to stay when the police action occurs.

## Train Station

The train station figures prominently as it is the transportation of choice in the area. It brings the refugees to the city. This is where Olanna sees the mother with the head of her child in the basket. This is also where Odenigbo and Ugwu come to hand out tea and bread to the refugees on a regular basis.



## Refugee Camps

Once the war is in full swing both Kainene and Olanna live near the refugee camps. They both help out in their own capacity. Olanna teaches the children, and Kainene obtains food and medicine.



# Themes and Motifs

## Colonialism

The theme of Colonialism is at the heart of the novel, 'Half of a Yellow Sun.' Set in Africa, most notably Nigeria, during the 1960s, it chronicles the upheaval caused by colonialism in the areas of culture, economy, religion, and even interpersonal relationships. The very fabric of the Nigerian way of life was coming unraveled. The focus of the novel is on the time period of 1966-1970, and Nigeria had won its independence from British colonial rule. However, having been one of their territories for so many years, much of the old ways, the typically Nigerian ways, were challenged, muted, or banned, outright. Nearly 300 different ethnicities were brought together to form Nigeria, the largest being the Igbo tribes in the Southeast. The other major tribes included the Yoruba in the Southwest, and the Hausa in the North.

Having declared itself independent in 1960, Nigerian politics were still heavily influenced by the British, which favored the Hausa peoples in the North. This created a tension and stirred up old rivalries between the various cultural groups. At one point, Ugwu states that he doesn't understand the British notion of fairness. This was in response to the fact that many people working for the government would be promoted simply because they were from one ethnic group or another, regardless of that person's ability to do the job.

All of the main characters are impacted severely by the civil war that resulted from the clash of the various factions within Nigeria, some of those factions backed by Russia and Britain. 'Half a Yellow Sun,' the title, is a reference to the flag of Biafra, that area of land in the Southeast where the Igbo people lived. The massacres and extreme human cruelty that was experienced on both sides was a direct result of English colonization, forcing ethnic groups into molds that their cultures had no frame of reference for.

Interestingly, the author features the viewpoint of an Englishman, Richard, whose thoughts as an outsider provide a well-rounded perspective toward the entire Biafran War. He, Kainene and Olanna all represent the desire to establish an identity, but being unable to quite attain it. In Richard's case, he is English, but he wishes with every fiber of his being that he weren't. This is why he falls for Kainene, as if belonging to her will erase his own heritage. Likewise, Kainene, as well as her sister, have benefited from the educational system afforded them because of their wealth. As a result both have become both English, and Nigerian. Just as the sisters are twins, and two sides of the same coin, so, too, is the situation that Nigeria finds itself in. Is it English, or is it African? Trying to strike that balance is the problem, not only between the sisters, but also within the country and its varying ethnic groups.

Adichie's goal in this book, one of many, is to focus the attention of a Western audience on a war that most didn't even know occurred, and to suggest that these sorts of events have a ripple effect. She writes about a time in African history when the US, herself, was





involved in a questionable war in Vietnam. The casual cruelty that ensues in both places, she suggests, is a direct result of trying to force one group of people to assimilate to another group of people's culture, perspectives, and religion. In the end, it is shown that it does not work.

## Prejudice

The theme of Prejudice is rampant throughout the novel. One of the first, and most blatant, examples of prejudice is offered to the reader through the character of Susan. She is a friend of Richard's and was originally someone that Richard's aunt had hoped he would be interested in romantically.

Susan, of course, is pragmatic and elitist in her views, much like England was at the time in its views towards Nigeria. She suggests to Richard that the Nigerians are only slightly elevated above the apes, and she likens anyone dating a Nigerian to someone who is involved with someone outside of their species. Later, after the War has ended, Susan resurfaces at Churchill's memorial and she and Richard sit together. It is evident that she has not changed her perspective at all. She asks Richard if he's gotten his 'dusky experience' out of his system and is ready to act reasonable. Richard is appalled.

Prejudice happens between the various factions as well. Igbo and Hausa view each other as substandard people, each accusing the other of questionable ethics and morals. This is stirred up in part because of the colonization by the English, which essentially pitted them against one another, but is also due in large part because of the economic strife that began to be apparent because of the favoritism of the English for the Hausa. The Igbo were seen as violent, uncultured individuals. When Olanna's parents are entertaining or attending society events, Olanna and her sister are frequently embarrassed because their parents are from 'new' money, and as such have peculiar ideas about how the rich should act, or what they should own.

Prejudice is also seen exhibited by Odenigbo's mother, Mama, who does not approve of Olanna because she has been English educated in London. She views her as useless and not a real woman. She believes that the reason her son has not had children is because of Olanna and her supposed witchcraft. Mama brings another girl into the house so that Odenigbo can impregnate her and thus lift the curse from her son.

Olanna's mother is not much better than Odenigbo's mother in that Olanna's longtime friend, Mohammed, is shunned and looked down upon by Olanna's mother. Olanna's mother does not like the fact that Mohammed is Hausa, and as such she always discouraged any romantic involvement between the two. However, they still remain close, and Mohammed comes to Olanna's rescue more than once.

## Race and Culture

Race and Culture, in particularly racism, plays a big role in the novel. Most of the conflict between the groups has to do with race and cultural differences. The main



tension between the Muslim and Christians is palpable, and was fanned by the English intervention and colonization that forced groups together who were traditionally separate. Blurring the boundaries, forcing the population to conform to English idioms and culture, destroyed a way of life that had provided, for the most part, peace in the area for thousands of years.

Each of the characters that are featured in this novel come from those different cultures and races. Olanna and Kainene are upper-class Igbo, while Odenigbo represents the intellectual, Igbo middle class. Ugwu, who is also Igbo, comes from an extreme case of poverty in a village outside the city. Richard, of course, is from England, and is often assuming of his role in things, or presumptive in areas involving safety, access, and economy. What is notable, however, is that despite all of their differences, all of the characters manage to find common ground, and move forward together to try and affect positive change.

Olanna struggles the most with her dual culture. She was raised Igbo, but she is also English, as she sees it. Educated in London, when she returns to Nigeria, her accent is purely British. It affords her instant respect from those in higher society (still controlled in large part by the English), as well as indicating that she is from a wealthy family. Her sister, Kainene, also had the benefit of the English educational system, but she did not lose her Nigerian accent.

The two sisters face off throughout most of the novel, in a parallel to the escalating violence in the country. Each accuses the other of not being genuine. In the end, when Biafra declares its independence, if only for a short while, Olanna feels as if she has found her identity. Her culture had been so severely impacted, and discouraged, that embracing any of it placed her at risk for losing her social standing, for enjoying success in the business world, or of continuing the way of life she had enjoyed for so many years. There was little incentive to embrace her traditional heritage at all.

## War

The novel itself is about the Biafran War, or the Nigerian Civil War, and so, as a theme, it features prominently. The extreme violence that is portrayed, from both sides of the war, is shocking and brutal to read. Sparked by the massacres of Igbo people in the late 1960s, the Igbo people retaliated against the government coup and took to the streets killing many soldiers.

The author is quite adept at juxtaposing scenes of peace, happiness, and joy (such as the dinner parties and gatherings at Odenigbo's home, or Olanna's parent's home) with brutal and senseless destruction. She chronicles in a very personal way the spiraling decline of Nigeria as it becomes a place of casual cruelty and violence.

This casual and senseless destruction that War brings about is featured in many ways. War is shown to destroy families. A good example of this is the poor mother carrying her daughter's head in a basket. Later, the bar girl that is gang raped by the soldiers, haunts



Ugwu for the rest of his life. Even after the war is ended, the effects of the war linger far beyond their initial start. The author suggests that the tensions that created that war are still, to this day, apparent toward the Igbo tribes in Nigeria.

War was also shown to destroy relationships. Odenigbo and Olanna wanted to be married, but continued to put it off. The war to Odenigbo was everything that he pinned his hopes on, and when it started going badly, he slid into a massive depression. He did things that he might not have otherwise have done, and became very calloused toward everyone, even Olanna. Olanna's favorite aunt and uncle, and their family, were killed: one entire side of her family gone forever. Kainene, later on in the novel, disappears without a trace, indicating that there were many people who simply went missing and were never found.

Lastly, the violence of war is depicted as people begin doing things that they would not ordinarily do, but in order to survive have turned almost feral. Additionally, there are scenes where people are beheaded, raped, places of worship defiled, children destroyed and starved, and lovers separated forever. The author seems to be stating that the only way to come back from something like this is to face it and acknowledge that it happened, then take great care to make sure that it never happens again.

## **Betrayal versus Loyalty**

Betrayal happens on many, many levels in this novel. First, there is the rampant infidelity that happens between the various characters and couples featured in the novel. Olanna cheats on Odenigbo with Richard, and Odenigbo cheats on Olanna with Amala, and most likely, Alice. Richard's indiscretion becomes known to Kainene, and causes a split between the sisters that lasts until the middle of the war.

Betrayal also happens politically. The author shows that Nigeria betrayed its own people by allowing the massacre to take place. Likewise, the betrayal between friends and family members is drawn, often along political lines. This is evident when one of Olanna's Uncle's best friends, who is a Hausa, turns on them and is instrumental in their deaths. Even Ugwu betrays Odenigbo and Olanna in his refusal to stay indoors where it is safe. He had one near abduction, and still decided to disregard their wishes. His loyalty to them was deeply ingrained and rooted, but he didn't think twice about sneaking out of the house.

The author uses the tendency for betrayal to lay the groundwork for the presentation of intense and admirable loyalty. Even when it is apparent that the war will be lost, the Biafran people and the soldiers, refuse to believe that they won't win, or that they can't turn the tide of the war in their favor. Their loyalty to their notion of freedom is such that they can't believe that it won't happen.

The loyalty of their principle supporter, namely England, is called into question when they opt to back only the Hausa tribes as they fight against the Igbo secession movement. They did this primarily because they considered the Hausa easier to



influence in the region, and as such, were controllable. Their loyalty was rooted in gain and commerce, and there was little consideration given toward the impact on the people or the cultures within that country.

## Love

The novel, while focusing on a political upheaval and a historical event, is also a deeply personal novel of love and loss. The relationships between Olanna, Odenigbo, Kainene and Richard, and Ugwu and Erebechi, all are at the heart of the novel. The love of the sisters for one another, too, is central. Love seems to be the catalyst for each of these characters.

For example, if it weren't for her involvement with Odenigbo, Olanna would never have entered into the radical planning and orchestration of the civil war. In all likelihood she would have left the country with her parents and weathered the tensions out in London. It is Olanna's love for Odenigbo that keeps her in a war zone, even continuing to participate in a war that she no longer has confidence in. One of the telling scenes in the novel is when, after the war, Olanna burns the Biafran money in the back yard. Odenigbo tells her that she is burning memories, and history. Olanna tells him that she has all of the memories that she needs in her head.

Richard, the Englishman, falls for Kainene and as a result breaks many social and racial boundaries. Because of his dedication to her his own identity begins to emerge. He, at many points in the novel, refers to himself as a Biafran. Kainene often corrects him telling him that he has the luxury of simply going back to England, whereas the rest of them don't have that option. Despite this, Richard stays. He nearly loses his mind when Kainene goes missing at the end of the novel. It is his love for both Kainene and Nigeria that prompt him to realize that the story of the war is not his story to tell, and he gladly gives Ugwu the title to the book.

The love of a parent for a child is also exemplified as the reader sees Olanna's care and concern for Baby, a child that was the product of her husband's indiscretion. There is the example of the tragic scene where the mother, in her grief, still carries the lovingly tended head of her dead child in a basket.

Kainene and Olanna's love for one another, as sisters, is also exemplified in many places in the book. Their relationship with one another is often used as a metaphor for the strife going on in Nigeria. When they separate because of Olanna's affair with Richard, it is also representative of the rift that occurred between the Igbo and the Hausa. And, in the end, they realize that in the light of everything that has happened, that they are better and happier together than they are apart.



# Styles

## Point of View

'Half of a Yellow Sun' is told from the point of view of several characters, most of them identifying themselves as Igbo. Ugwu, Odenigbo, Olanna, and Kainene are all Igbo and offer their perspectives from all social ranks. The reader hears from Ugwu a perspective of a young person from an impoverished upbringing, being impacted by the war. Olanna tells the story from a woman's perspective as well as one who is in the upper part of Nigerian society. Odenigbo represents the intellectual middle class. Last, but certainly not least, there is Richard, who is English. He offers an outsider's viewpoint on the events as they unfold, and even asks the questions that the reader may also want to ask about race, culture, and prejudice.

Just as none of the characters are without flaws, so too, are the points of view being offered completely reliable. Placing a face on the various facets of the groups that were involved in the conflict, enables the author to humanize the event, to paint the vivid horrors that occurred during Nigeria's Civil War.

## Language and Meaning

Language and meaning change throughout the novel depending on which character's voice is being featured. When Olanna and Kainene are speaking, then the tone, and the language are a fusion of Nigerian words and phrases as well as English. Odenigbo's voice and language are also influenced by cultural norms, especially as they pertain to women and their role in the Nigerian culture. Ugwu, when he speaks, presents events and scenes as interpreted by an uneducated and optimistic young boy of 12, whose language is often simplistic, grammatically incorrect, and choppy.

## Structure

The story features the viewpoints of several characters, and yet each is written in third person omniscient. This flows seamlessly between all of the narratives, which begins with the youngest, and most uneducated, of the group: Ugwu. The next chapter sharply contrasts against Ugwu's view of the world with Richard, the Englishman, viewpoint of the world and his understanding of the culture he's entered in to. Each main character, with the exception of Kainene, rotate from one chapter to the next, often overlapping with events. It is at the end of the third chapter when there is also included a small excerpt from a book called, 'The World Was Silent When We Died.' For most of the novel, the reader believes that it is Richard who has written it, but in a twist it is Ugwu. These excerpts interject a flash-forward of events and how they turned out, and offer a historical structure for the reader who may not be familiar with the Biafran War at all. The book is divided into four chronological parts.



## Quotes

Education is a priority! How can we resist exploitation if we don't have the tools to understand exploitation?

-- Odenigbo (Part 1, Chapter 1)

**Importance:** This is what Odenigbo says when he realizes that Ugwu is uneducated. He believes that the only way that his people will gain their independence is through education.

There are two answers to the things they will teach you about our land: the real answer and the answer you give in school to pass. You must read books and learn both answers. I will give you books, excellent books." Master stopped to sip his tea. "They will teach you that a white man called Mungo Park discovered River Niger. That is rubbish. Our people fished in the Niger long before Mungo Park's grandfather was born. But in your exam, write that it was Mungo Park.

-- Odenigbo (Part 1, Chapter 1)

**Importance:** In this quote the reader sees the effects of colonization on the Nigerians. Odenigbo is doing his best to teach Ugwu the 'real' history, but to also give him the answers he will need in order to pass the tests he's been set. This also shows that Odenigbo is also a revolutionary and does not like the revisionist history being taught.

She doubted that Kainene ever had those flashes now, since they never talked about such things anymore. They never talked about anything anymore.

-- Narrator (Part 1, Chapter 2)

**Importance:** This quote indicates how Olanna wishes that she and her sister were closer together. It is clear that they are estranged, but as of this quote, the reader doesn't know why.

It would have been easier if Miss Adebayo showed jealousy, but it was as if Miss Adebayo thought her to be unworthy of competition, with her unintellectual ways and her too-pretty face and her mimicking-the-oppressor English accent.

-- Olanna (Part 1, Chapter 2)

**Importance:** Olanna understands and is experiencing first-hand racism in its more subtle versions. In this she realizes that Miss Adebayo didn't pay her any more attention that one would a yapping dog, and it shocks and upsets Olanna.

It was the look in Okeoma's eyes that worried him the most: a disdainful distrust that made him think of reading somewhere that the African and the European would always be irreconcilable. It was wrong of Okeoma to assume that he was one of those Englishman who did not give the African the benefit of an equal intelligence.

-- Richard (Part 1, Chapter 6)



**Importance:** Richard realizes that no matter how long he lives in Nigeria he will always be an outsider.

They repeated the news of the killings in Maiduguri until Ugwu wanted to throw the radio out of the window, and the next afternoon, after the men left, a solemn voice on ENBC Radio Enugu recounted eyewitness accounts from the North: teachers hacked down in Zaria, a full Catholic church in Sokoto set on fire, a pregnant woman split open in Kano. The newscaster paused. 'Some of our people are coming back now. The lucky ones are coming back. The railway stations are full of our people. If you have tea and bread to spare, please take it to the stations. Help a brother in need.'

-- Ugwu (Part 2, Chapter 10)

**Importance:** This quote shows the barbarity of the war that Ugwu is forced to witness, and its effect on him.

She opened the calabash. 'Take a look,' she said again. Olanna looked into the bowl. She saw the little girl's head with the ashy-gray skin and the braided hair and rolled-back eyes and open mouth. She stared at it for a while before she looked away. Somebody screamed. The woman closed the calabash. 'Do you know,' she said, 'it took me so long to plait this hair? She had such thick hair.' The train had stopped with a rusty screech. Olanna got down and stood in the jostling crowd. A woman fainted... She thought about the plaited hair resting in the calabash. She visualised the mother braiding it, her fingers oiling it with pomade before dividing it into sections with a wooden comb.

-- Narrator (Part 2, Chapter 11)

**Importance:** This is a climactic scene where a mother whose daughter has been killed has taken her child's head (all that was left of her) and has lovingly braided the hair and placed it in a large basket (calabash) to carry with her. It is easy to see that the woman's grief has made her go mad and Olanna is kind to her. The others on the train react by throwing up, running away, or screaming at the woman, but Olanna can see that is the woman's depth of despair that has caused her to do what she has done.

Odenigbo climbed up to the podium waving his Biafran flag: swaths of red, black, and green and, at the center, a luminous half of a yellow sun. "Biafra is born! We will lead Black Africa! We will live in security! Nobody will ever again attack us! Never again!"

-- Odenigbo (Part 2, Chapter 13)

**Importance:** This shows Odenigbo's patriotism for his country and countrymen. This is setting him up for the horrible depression he will feel toward the end of the war when things are going very badly.

'Happy independence,' he told her. 'Independence,' she said, before she added, 'Happy independence.' He wanted to ask her to marry him. This was a new start, a new country, their new country. It was not only because secession was just, considering all that the Igbo had endured, but because of the possibility Biafra held for him. He would be Biafran in a way he could never have been Nigerian – he was here at the beginning; he



had shared in the birth. He would belong. He said, Marry me, Kainene in his head many times but he did not say it aloud.

-- Richard Churchill (Part 2, Chapter 14)

**Importance:** This quote really indicates Richard's character well. It shows his intense desire to make Nigeria his own country, to be truly a part of it. His hesitancy in asking Kainene to marry him is also indicative of his self esteem.

Why did you do it?" Kainene sounded frighteningly calm. "You're the good one and the favorite and the beauty and the Africanist revolutionary who doesn't like white men, and you simply did not need to fuck him. So why did you?" Olanna was breathing slowly. "I don't know, Kainene, it wasn't something I planned. I am so sorry. It was unforgivable." "It was unforgivable," Kainene said and hung up.

-- Kainene (Part 3, Chapter 23)

**Importance:** This underscores the theme of Betrayal in the book. Olanna has slept with Richard, and her sister has learned about it. It is after this incident that Olanna realizes some truths about herself and determines to change them. The sisters do not manage to completely repair the damage that this has caused.

She taught them about the Biafran flag. They sat on wooden planks and the weak morning sun streamed into the roofless class as she unfurled Odenigbo's cloth flag and told them what the symbols meant. Red was the blood of the siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for the prosperity Biafra would have, and, finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future.

-- Narrator (Part 4, Chapter 25)

**Importance:** This is significant because it clues the reader in to the title's meaning for the book. The half a yellow sun is representative of a 'glorious future' for Biafra.

Of course I asked because you are white. They will take what you write more seriously because you are white. Look, the truth is that this is not your war. This is not your cause. Your government will evacuate you in a minute if you ask them to. So it is not enough to carry limp branches and shout power, power to show that you support Biafra. If you really want to contribute, this is the way that you can. The world has to know the truth of what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent while we die.

-- Madu Madu (Part 4, Chapter 27)

**Importance:** In this quote Madu is suggesting that Richard, because he is white, can use that to his advantage in the war. Whereas the newspapers would not carry an article written by a Nigerian, they would pay more attention to one written by an Englishman. It is at this moment that Richard becomes one of the largest voices in the country, and one whose voice is heard outside of Nigeria, bringing attention to the terrible atrocities of the war.