

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

CHAPTER 1: THE JOURNEY

Retrenched from his 22-year employment at Agribix Ltd, Ole Kaelo decides to relocate to Nasila- his hometown and start his own business. Having lived in the city their entire life, Ole Kaelo's daughters Taiyo and Resian find it impossible to forget their town life and forever embrace the now inevitable village life. Resian having dreams to join university decides to use her elder sister's influence over dad to get permission to return to Nakuru and join Egerton University. However, the sister, Taiyo, is reeling from the hurt inflicted by the dad who for the first time said no to her request.

Taiyo, a music lover had won a ticket to attend a music extravaganza at the Coast. Hoping to exploit her father's love, she asked confidently for permission but Ole Kaelo would hear none of it. After the dad's refusal, Taiyo feels the walls of optimism crumble and she is afraid to ask for any more favours from a father who now takes the form of an Iron fisted dictator. The three family members leave Nakuru, a town they had lived their entire life with mixed feelings. One of the most lingering torment is the fact that, having lived in the city, Ole Kaelo had turned his back to the cultural practices of his people. Now that he is going back, he is tormented by the fact that the culture he had thrown into the murk, would come back to haunt him.

The family reach uncle Simiren's homestead where they are welcomed warmly. It is now thirty years since Ole Kaelo left Nasila for Nakuru. In all this time he has been away, uncle Simiren has been representing his elder brother. Elders are not happy with Kaelo's monogamous marriage. Simiren on his part has four wives and sixteen children. Though the family is received warmly in Nasila, there are various issues that linger within the façade of celebration and happiness. For instance, Kaelo and his younger brother Simiren are reeling under the fear of power shift as Simiren had been the family's representative in the clan affairs and also the big question of the uncircumcised daughters.

Observations from Chapter One

- A shift from urban forward thinking society to the rural culturally rich society still buried in the archaic practice of female circumcision.

- Mixed expectations from Nasila as the family tries to come to terms with the urban-rural migration.

Themes from chapter one

1. Culture conflict

Culture is a way of the people, how they relate to each other and how they conduct themselves. In this chapter, the family of Kaelo has adopted and blended well with modern urban culture. Taiyo and Resian consider themselves as modern women who have a right to choose what is good for them. However, as they move to Nasila, they are threatened by the culture of the people of Nasila. Their constant fear is the female circumcision.

Mama Milanoi is excited by the fact her daughters may get the opportunity to marry descent men from reputable families in Nasila. (pg8) Mama Milanoi harbours the misconception that urban boys have loose morals and cannot make for good sons-in-law.

This chapter establishes two distinct cultures, the urban culture which blends well with Taiyo and Resian and promotes girl child education and the traditional culture whose foundation is FGM and male domination.

As the Kaelo's retire to Nasila, they confronted with the brutal reality of the culture Kaelo once described as "archaic traditions which were better buried and forgotten." Being monogamous and with only two daughters, Kaelo had been likened to a mono-eyed giant who stood on legs of straw. (pg13)

In the chapter the Maasai culture is explored. The cultural leadership starts with the family in which the elder son becomes the official representative (pg11-12). Other cultural practices include circumcision of boys, initiation of girls and intalengo-a sacred ritual.

2. Conservatism

Though societal beliefs seem to evolve, there are certain virtues that linger in people's minds. These cultural aspects are perceived to be good and should not be tampered with, some people even go to the length to advocate for such norms and some even form the social fabric of society. In chapter one, Mama Milanoi, though she has lived in Nakuru for two decades, she believes that the boys of the town have not been brought up to be decent husbands (pg8).

Kaelo believes that conservative courses and career choices are more suitable than music (pg2).

3. Insecurity

Chapter one reveals Kaelo as a hardworking employee of Agribix (pg9). Despite his industry, Kaelo is forced into early retirement termed as retrenchment. Retrenchment was introduced in Kenya in the 1990s as a factor of austerity measures to reduce expenditure and bring about economic development. This was the time when Kenya was reeling from huge external debt from the World Bank and IMF. It seems, Kaelo was a victim of such austerity measures. When he loses

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his job, Kaelo decides to move into a business so as to try and stay afloat with the harsh economic times.

While travelling to Nasila, the family which had been shielded by security of the town feels lonely and exposed to marauders in the wilderness that stretches from Nakuru to Nasila (pg11)

Characters in Chapter One

Parsimei Ole Kaelo

Married to Jane Milanoi (Mama Milanoi), Ole Kaelo is the father of Taiyo and Resian. Previously the commercial manager of Agribix Limited, Ole Kaelo is retrenched and decides to move to his hometown and start a family business. Though he has two lovely daughters, Ole Kaelo loves his firstborn Taiyo than he does the Resian. His hatred is intense that Resian instinctively notices it.

Character traits

Hardworking/industrious/competitive

Through his industry, Kaelo had risen to the ranks of commercial manager at Agribix Ltd. Being competitive, he only saw the achievements of others and not his.

Short tempered/obstinate/Domineering

Taiyo saw the directives given to the men who were loading the lorries and felt sympathy for them (pg1). When his brother told him about what the elders were saying about his monogamy, he called them megalomaniacs (pg13). Taiyo says that the father would ruin their day with his sharp tongue (pg3).

Loving/hurtful/hostile

He loves his wife and firstborn daughter so much. Taiyo felt that she could ask him for anything until he said no to her for the first time. In Mama Milanoi, he saw a precious gift (pg9).

Although he shows love and care, he has no love for his lastborn (pg10).

His sharp tongue makes Taiyo feel hurt when he denies her permission to go to Mombasa.

Mama Milanoi

She is the wife to Parsimei and the mother to Taiyo and Resian

Character traits

Religious– She prayed for safe journey before they left Nakuru. (pg 6)

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Dependent/submissive– She fully relies on her husband. After her husband had been retrenched, she was in utter shock but her husband's stoicism made her optimistic

Optimistic– Once she was assured by her husband, she became more secure. (pg 7)

Beautiful/loving– Kaelo appreciates his wife beauty which has remained so for over 20 years. (Pg9)

Taiyo

She is the first born of Kaelo and Mama Milanoi

Character traits

Lovable/Outgoing/Supportive/trusting- She trusts her father to make the right decision when she asks for permission to attend a music extravaganza in Mombasa (pg2). She has a boyfriend in Nakuru which speaks of her outgoing nature unlike her sister (pg9). Her sister looks upto her for support especially when dealing with their father.

Optimistic- Taiyo thinks positively about their future and their move to Nasila in contrast, her sister has wide ranging fears and reservations (pg 4).

Resian

Sullen/resentful/self-doubt (pg10)

Pessimist/sensitive (pg4)

Decisive/focused- She doesn't care for her father's success or business but for her dreams of continuing with her education (pg4).

Simiren Ole Kaelo

He is the brother of Parsimei Ole Kaelo

Confident/courageous– he ably represented the Ole Kaelo family in the clan activities throughout the period Parsimei was in Nakuru (pg11).

Accommodative/comfortable/submissive- he had acceptable his brother's birthright as the first born and always gave him the respect he needed(pg12).

Loyal/dependable- he willingly ran errands for his brother Parsimei without complaint (pg12).

Stylistic Devices

Description

Description is a broad stylistic device that may involve figurative language and also blunt faced creation of mental images using descriptive adjective.

For example Taiyo's boyfriend description on page 3, '... lanky dark-haired, blunt-faced young man whose big languid eyes....' Creates a mental picture of Lenjirr however not cryptic to make us see him and recognize him.

Mama Milanoi (pg9) 'She wore her dark hair in braids that accentuated her wide eyes. Her breasts were full and heavy, her waist slender....' reveals why Parsimei fell for her.

Figurative language

Figurative language involves the use of words and phrases that have meaning outside the exact meaning of the particular words used. In this case, we look at the use of similes, metaphors, personification, symbolism, and hyperbole.

Similes

It is comparison imagery that uses like or as to show the similarities in things. For instance:

- "...now like a baby who must be born at the fullness of time, this had come to pass.(pg7)" Refers to Kaelo's loss of job as something as inevitable as giving birth.
- "...to haunt her like demented spirits of a past that..." pg8. Though a simile, it ushers in the life the Kaelo's were moving to after Nakuru . Mama Milanoi knows that the 'empty words' of the villagers were now coming to pass and she dreaded the future.
- "...likened him to a mono-eyed giant who stood on legs of straw." (Pg 13)

Metaphor

The metaphor is more direct in comparison than a simile. However, it is more complex given that one thing is referred to as the other. Examples include:

- "Melting pot that Nakuru had become." Pg8

Personification

In personification, abstract ideas take up form and are given human qualities e.g.

- ... mind roaming the distant past...

Omniscient narrator

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This is more of a point-of-view an angle with which the narrator tells the events in the story. In the *Blossoms of the Savannah*, the narrator gets into the minds of the characters and reveals to us what they are thinking and their feelings towards others or certain things. Examples include; pg 8 reveals a lot about mama milanoi's thoughts, pg9-10 explores the mind of Parsimei Ole Kaelo and pg 12 navigates through the mind of Parsimei's brother Simiren.

Use of vernacular

The book revolves around the Maasai tradition. The writer has extensively explored the Maa language using words like Yeiyoi-, Intoiye nemengalana, olmorijoi, Olkunchai, Papaai within the chapter. The words domesticate the issues within the book to the Maasai as well as reveal more about the maa culture especially the Female circumcision.

Dialogue

The two daughters of Kaelo engage in a dialogue (pg 2-5) in which the view of life of the two girls is revealed. Taiyo is optimistic about life however her sister is a pessimist. The conversation also reveal the easily trusting nature of Taiyo and the skeptical Resian. As they talk we learn about their love for education and their need for their father's approval to join university which lies in the more confident Taiyo. The dialogue develops the characters of the two girls and reveals who the father's favorite is.

NB: *Revision Questions from Chapter one*

- What are some of the cultural practices in your community that you consider archaic but are still practiced?
- How do you view your parents with regards to granting you your personal freedoms?
- Though Resian and Taiyo are sisters, what differences do the two exhibit?