

# THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

*IN ASSOCIATION WITH*

## PAGLORY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

---

**NAME:** FWALO INESS

**COURSE:** SECONDARY TEACHERS DIPLOMA

**SUBJECT:** ENGLISH METHOD

**COMBINATION:** ENGLISH/RE

**LECTURER:** MR.BWACHA

**ASSIGNMENT QUESTION:**

From any novel of your choice, novel of your choice, write down the plot. Who is the main character or protagonist, who is the antagonistic? Is the theme a novel universal? Describe the beginning, the middle and the end .Make a list of other themes you learn about the society were it is set (the story) choose one character and write as much as you can about the character.

- Physical appearance
- Manner or speech.

**DUE DATE:** 9<sup>TH</sup> July, 2012

**LECTURER's COMMENTS**

.....

.....

.....

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper discusses “Weep Not, Child” in which the plot summary of the novel has been discussed, protagonist and antagonistic has been discussed. Weep Not, Child is Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's first novel, published in 1964 under the name James Ngugi Weep Not, Child was the second novel Ngugi wrote and his first novel to be published. Set in Kenya in the turbulent 1950's, the novel tells the story of a family and how it is affected by the open antagonisms between natives and colonists. When the novel opens, the family is poor but happy and harmonious; the course of the novel traces the disintegration of the family. Thiong'o's works deal with the relationship between Africans and the British colonists in Africa, and are heavily critical of British colonial rule. Specifically, Weep Not, Child deals with the Mau The protagonist, Njoroge, is a young boy who wants more than anything to receive an education and is thrilled to attend a missionary school.

## **PLOT SUMMARY**

The book is divided into two parts and eighteen chapters. Part one deals mostly with the education of Njoroge, while part two deals with the rising revolutionary, anti-colonist turmoil in Kenya.

Njoroge, a young boy, is urged to attend school by his mother. He is the first one out of his family who is able to go to school. His family lives on the land of Jacobo, an African made rich by his dealings with white settlers, namely Mr. Howlands, the most powerful land owner in the area. Njoroge's brother Kamau works as an apprentice to a carpenter while Boro, the eldest living son, is troubled by his experiences while in forced service during World War II, one of which was witnessing the death of his elder brother. Ngotho, Njoroge's father and a respected man in the surrounding area, tends Mr. Howlands' crops more to preserve and keep an eye on his ancestral land, than for any compensation or loyalty (Blamires,1983).

On the first day of school, Njoroge meets Mwihaki, who is the daughter of Jacobo. She is one year ahead of Njoroge in school. Njoroge admires and befriends her. Njoroge's family likes to sit together and tell stories. One time Ngotho, Njoroge's father tells the story about how the land,

which is now owned by the landlords originally belonged to their ancestors. Njoroge is very successful in school and soon catches up with Mwihaki and goes to the same class with her.

One day, a strike is called for higher wages for the black workers. Ngotho does not know if he should participate at first, because he would likely lose his job. Finally, however, he decides to go to the gathering, although his two wives do not agree. At the demonstration, there are calls for higher wages. Suddenly Jacobo, the father of Mwihaki, appears with the white police inspector. He tries to put an end to the strike (the police brought him there to pacify the native people). Ngotho attacks Jacobo. The result is a big tumult with two people being killed. Nevertheless, Jacobo survives and swears revenge. Njoroge's family is forced to move and Ngotho loses his job. Njoroge's education is thereafter funded by his brothers who seem to lose respect for their father (Hummy, 2009).

Mwihaki then goes to a girls' only boarding school, leaving Njoroge relatively alone. He reflects upon her leaving, and realizes that he was embarrassed by his father's actions towards Jacobo. For this reason, Njoroge is not upset by her exit and their separation. Njoroge stays close to home where he switches to another school.

For a time, everyone's attention is focused on the upcoming trial of Jomo Kenyatta - a revered leader of the movement. Many blacks think that he is going to bring forth Kenya's independence. But Jomo loses the trial and is imprisoned. This results in further protests and greater suppression of the black population.

Jacobo and a white landowner, Mr. Howlands, fight against the rising activities of the Mau Mau, an organization striving for Kenyan economic, political, and cultural independence. Jacobo accuses Ngotho of being the leader of the Mau Mau and tries to imprison the whole family. Meanwhile, the situation in the country is deteriorating. Six black men are taken out of their houses and executed in the woods (Zell, 1971).

One day Njoroge meets Mwihaki again, who returned from boarding school. Although Njoroge thought he had needed to avoid her, their friendship is not affected by the situation between their fathers. Then Njoroge passes a very important exam that allows him to advance to High School.

The whole village is proud of him. They collect enough money so that Njoroge is able to attend High School.

After a few months, Jacobo is killed. He is murdered in his office by a member of the Mau Mau. Mr. Howlands has Njoroge removed from school for questioning. Both father and son are brutally beaten before release and Ngotho is left barely alive. Although there doesn't seem to be a connection between Njoroge's family and the murder, it is eventually revealed that Njoroge's brothers are behind the assassination. Boro, the real leader of the Mau Mau. Ngotho soon dies from his injuries and Njoroge finds out that his father was protecting his brothers. Kamau has also been imprisoned for life. Only Njoroge and his two mothers remain free with Njoroge left as the sole provider to his two mothers. With no hope of making ends meet, Njoroge gives up all hope of going further in school and loses faith in God.

Njoroge now hopes for Mwihaki's support, but she is angry because of her father's death. When he finally pledges his love to her, she refuses to leave with him, realizing her obligation to Kenya and her mother. He finally decides to leave town and makes an attempt to take his own life; however, he fails at even this because his mothers find him before he is able to hang himself. The novel closes with Njoroge's utter sense of hopelessness and his own feelings of cowardice.

## **MAIN CHARACTERS**

**Njoroge:** the main character of the book whose main goal throughout the book is to become as educated as possible.

**Ngotho:** Njoroge's father. He works for Mr. Howlands and is respected by him until he attacks Jacobo at a workers strike. He is fired and the family is forced to move to another section of the country. Over the course of the book his position as the central power of the family weakened, to the point where his self-realization that he has spent his whole life waiting for the prophecy( that proclaims the blacks will be returned their land) to come true rather than fighting the power of the white man, leads to his depression.

**Nyokabi and Njeri:** the two wives of Ngotho. Njere is Ngotho's first wife, and mother of Boro, Kamau, and Kori. Nyokabi is his second wife, and the mother of Njoroge and Mwangi.

Njoroge has four brothers: Boro, Kamau, Kori and Mwangi (who is Njoroge's only full brother, who died in World War II).

**Boro:** Son of Nyokabi who fights for the white man in World War II. Upon returning his anger against the white man is compounded by their stealing of the Kenyan's native land. Boro's anger and position as eldest son leads him to question and ridicule Ngotho, which eventually defeats their father's will (upon realizing his life was wasted waiting and not acting). It is eventually revealed that Boro is the leader of the Mau Mau (earlier alluded to as "entering politics") and murders Mr. Howlands. He is caught by police immediately after and is scheduled to be executed by books end. It is highly likely that it is also Boro who kills Jacobo.

**Mwihaki:** Njoroge's best friend (and later develops into his love interest). Daughter of Jacobo. When it is revealed that his family killed Jacobo (most likely Boro), Mwihaki distances herself from Njoroge, asking for time to mourn her father and care for her mother.

**Jacobo:** Mwihaki's father and an important landowner. Chief of the village.

**Mr. Howlands:** A white Englishman who came to Kenya and now owns a farm made up of land that originally belonged to Ngotho's ancestors'. Has three children: Peter who dies in World War II before the books beginning, a daughter who becomes a missionary, and Stephen who meets Njoroge in High School.

### **Themes and motifs**

Weep Not, Child integrates Gikuyu mythology and the ideology of nationalism that serves as catalyst for much of the novel's action. The novel explores the detrimental effects of colonialism and imperialism. Njoroge's aspiration to attend university is frustrated by both the violence of the Mau Mau rebels and the violent response of the colonial government. This disappointment leads to his alienation from his family and ultimately his suicide attempt.

The novel also ponders the role of saviours and salvation. According to Glasgow (2007:24) The author notes in his *The River Between*: "Salvation shall come from the hills. From the blood that flows in me, I say from the same tree, a son shall rise. And his duty shall be to lead and save the people." Jomo Kenyatta, the first prime minister of Kenya, is immortalised in *Weep Not, Child*.

The author says, "Jomo had been his (Ngotho's) hope. Ngotho had come to think that it was Jomo who would drive away the white man. To him, Jomo stood for custom and traditions purified by grace of learning and much travel." Njoroge comes to view Jomo as a messiah who will win the struggle against the colonial powers.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, despite all this *Weep not Child* is also a novel with many strengths, among them beautiful descriptions which, even in a story with so many plot holes, still managed to move us and wonder what could have been if Thiong'o had written this at a later point in his career. The autobiographical context surrounding the novel was not lost on us and we noted that Thiong'o was studying in Leeds whilst writing this novel and that members of his family had fallen victim to the Mau Mau. Like his protagonist Njoroge, Thiong'o was strong on education, and Christianity. But three years later Thiong'o begins to move away from Christianity and write in his native Gikuyu.

*Weep Not Child* is Thiong'o first novel written in English (his second language,) written in his early 20's at a time when African stories were beginning to be told to the West in the 1960's.

## References

- Blamires, Harry (1983). **A Guide to Twentieth Century Literature in English**. Methuen. pp. 198.
- Cantalupo, Charles (1995). **Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: Texts and Contexts**. Lagos, Africa World Press.
- Hummy Robert (2009) **Weep Not, Child, Plot summary Analysis**. London, McGraw Hill
- Glasgow, Jacqueline (2007). **Exploring African Life and Literature: Novel Guides to Promote Socially Responsive Learning**. International Reading Association. pp. 123–124.
- Wakeman, John (2002). **Kenya; Is It Politics Or Myth**, Nairobi, Wilson Publishing.
- Zell Hans M. (1971). **A Reader's Guide to African Literature**. Nairobi, Africana Publishing Corporation.