

## **THE RIVER AND THE SOURCE**

Doctor Margaret Atieno Ogola was born on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1958 and passed on on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2011. She was a doctor by profession, a trained pediatrician and a great literary icon.

Margaret Ogola has advocated for women empowerment and she comes out empowered herself. This is seen as she was the best student in Thompson Falls High School; she then went to Alliance high school and later earned a degree in medicine from the University of Nairobi in 1984 and later a master's degree in pediatrics in the year 1990.

In addition to her writing career she worked at the Kenyatta National Hospital until 1994 before she ventured into private sector. As a woman of high position she held various prestigious positions. This is seen as she was the medical director of Cottolengo Hospice for orphans with AIDS. She also held the position of the Executive director of the Family Life Counseling Association of Kenya. She was also the director of the institute of HEALTH Care Management at Strathmore Business School.

Apart from *The River and the Source* she has authored; *I swear by Apollo*, *A Place of Destiny*, *Mandate of the People*, she also co-authored *Educating in Human Love* with her husband Dr. George Ogolla

Of her first novel Ogolla says "The inspiration for this book came from my mother who handed down to me the wisdom and lives of her own mother and grandmother. This strength and support that is found in the African family is the most important part of our culture and should be preserved and nurtured at all costs. "

## **INTRODUCTION**

*The River and the Source* follows four generations of Kenyan women in a rapidly changing society.

It belongs to a growing body of literary works that follows the feminist literary criticism of literature. They address themselves to issues pertaining to the welfare of women in African societies that are seemingly so patriarchal (male dominated). It captures the Kenyan soul of the future and the need to bring freedom, equality and gender consciousness across ethnic, religious and racial lines.

*The River and the Source* is a presentation of women seeking liberation from the oppressive male dominated society. Just like a river which originates from a spring; a source of an underground water, the birth of Akoko daughter to chief Gogni of Yimbo signifies the beginning of the river. The river is threatened to drying up by hardships after hardship but the river flows on.

The novel won the Kenyatta prize for fiction in 1995 and also the Commonwealth Writers Prize for best first book in Africa in 1995.

## **THE TITLE**

The title *The River and the Source* suggests the flow of a river from some point to the sea. The novel traces the symbolic journey of women from patriarchal invisibility (where women are ignored and in the background) to autonomous existence (where women chart their own destiny). The river starts as a spring which is Obanda Akoko-the girl child. Akoko is the source of this river.

The river refers to the efforts that Akoko establishes of trying to liberate women from a patriarchal society that looks down upon them.

Akoko faces challenges as a woman in a male dominated society. She overcomes them and the river continues to flow through Nyabera.

Akoko is the source of the liberating force that flows from this oppressive and demeaning social system.

In literature, the river symbolically refers to continuity hence life is a continuum and the struggle for liberation is therefore a continuous process.

Therefore, from Akoko the river gains momentum at every stage through capable and competent women like Nyabera, Awiti, and finally Wandia.

The river and the source therefore refers to the journey of women empowerment that was begun or whose source is Akoko and the continued efforts of other women like Nyabera,

Awiti and Wandia in ensuring that women remain empowered hence the river's continued flow.

The novel is thus a message of empowerment and hope for women who must rise up and take up their rightful equal position in society.

This is summarized by Chief Odera Gogni's statement, "A home without daughters is like a spring without a source."

## **SETTING**

Setting refers to the historical moment in time or the geographical location in which the story takes place i.e. the location and time in which a narrative takes place.

The story begins 30 years before the Kenya-Uganda railway reached Kisumu. The story ends in the 1990s at the advent of multiparty politics in Kenya.

The plot covers a number of generations that oscillates between Yimbo and Sakwa Akoko's birthplace and marital home respectively in today's Nyanza Province in Kenya.

It later spread to Gem, Kisumu, Nakuru and Nairobi in succeeding generations of Akoko's family tree.

## **PLOT SUMMARY**

### **PART 1: THE GIRL CHILD**

This part of the novel introduces us to a vibrant Akoko who is vibrant, beautiful and hardworking. This part focuses on the Luo cultural practices. The naming traditions, the duties expected to be performed by the different genders, and the preference of the boy child to the girl child. Her father's expectation that a boy will be born and the view that girls will be married to go and cook in another man's house are evidence of this. The writer uses this part to highlight the importance of the girl child as we note that Akoko manages to gain her father's love and attention, something that was not usual among the Luo.

Tradition is further highlighted in the Nak ceremony, that is performed before Akoko's suitors are welcomed to present their suits. Her father's love for her is shown when Akoko's father turns down 12 suitors. He purposely did so because, in the men who flocked his compound, none reached the standards he had set. He wants the best for his daughter thus wants her to get married to a chief as a mikai. It is for this reason he readily accepted Owuor Kembo's proposal.

The Girl Child surprises us with the immense strength of a woman. Akoko Obanda is an epitome of wealth. She works hard to set a pedestal that was previously unimaginable. Akoko provided for herself and built her own family wealth. She encouraged and trained her children to be hardworking and disciplined. She promoted self-reliance and mutual relationships with her subjects.

### **CHAPTER 1 AKOKO'S BIRTH**

The chapter begins with the birth of Akoko Adoyo Akelo Obanda. Her father, Chief Odera Goggin expected a son because of the value placed by society in boys over girls. The naming of Akoko is done according to tradition and she ends up having four names. Adoyo – born during the weeding season. Obanda- according to dreams by the father and grandmother. Akelo after a step grandmother who had died. Akoko is given to her as she is noisy. The traditional values of the community like polygamy and preference for the male children are also brought out in the father's desire to have a son. There is insight into the naming rituals of the community as Akoko is given several names. The belief in superstition is also reflected on in the way Akoko's illness is dealt with and results in Akoko's final name, Akello. Akoko proves to be uniquely determined as she is able to compete with her numerous brothers. This earns her the admiration of both her

father and elder brother, Oloo. By the end of the chapter Akoko is grown and of marriageable age and known for her diligence and hard work.

## **CHAPTER 2: BETROTHAL OF AKOKO**

This chapter focuses on the betrothal and marriage of Akoko. We are introduced to the young chief Owuor Kembo, a man of Nyadhi or style, who arrives at Yimbo with his delegation from Sakwa. They are warmly received and all the ways of chik are observed. Chief odero is quite pleased as the daughter is going to be the first wife to chief owuor. According to chik one cannot be chief unless he is married hence necessitating the arrival of the delegation from Sakwa to ask for Akoko's hand in marriage. Negotiations for the bride price are carried out through their spokes people. Chief odero asks for a high bride price out of jealousy for the number of daughter to sons his daughter's suitors had compared to him. Chief owuor Kembo described as a man of style agrees to pay the bride price without bargaining, much to the protest of his brother and delegation. The negotiations are concluded by the presentation of Akoko to her future husband.

## **CHAPTER 3; AKOKO'S MOVE TO SAKWA**

A group of young warriors drive the cattle that had being agreed on as the bride price during the negotiations. They are warmly welcome and well fed according to chik. On the morning of the next day the warriors take off with Akoko after having engaged in mock battles with her brothers before they ran off with Akoko. Akoko herself is also meant to resist so that it may not be said that she went willingly. They rest for a short while before Akoko is delivered to Sakwa. The people of Sakwa admire her and agree that she was worth the thirty head of cattle. Akoko settles in to marriage life and is well accepted by the community. She soon becomes pregnant with her first child. The community is highly superstitious and do not say anything about it. Though the pregnancy is uneventful but the delivery is harrowing. The child is named Obura. However Akoko is under pressure to bear more children as the society expects her to bear as many children as her bride price. Her mother in law even urges Owuor to marry another wife. Later Akoko gets pregnant with Nyabera and then has difficulty during the birth.

## **CHAPTER 4 AKOKO'S CONFLICT WITH NYAR ASEMBO**

As a result of Owuor's refusal to marry another with and Akoko's low birth rate, conflict arises between Akoko and her mother in law. Her mother in law is also offended by the monogamous state of her son and his refusal to take a second wife. They compare him to his younger brother who already had two wives and many more children. One day as she is in the fields, she hears that her mother in law Nyar Asembo accused her of bewitching owuor Kembo so that he would not marry another wife. Akoko who is deeply offended by the accusations stays the night and on the morning of the next day calls for

the people's attention to state her case. She defends herself by emphasizing that she has always been hard-working and a good wife. After this she leaves for Yimbo. Owuor returns and is angered by the events that took place when he was away. He throttles his brother and almost hits his mother. He then starts a reconciliatory mission.

## **CHAPTER 5 RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT**

The delegation from Sakwa arrives in Yimbo and is coolly received. Being accused of witchcraft was no light matter and the people of Yimbo were not pleased. The elders are gathered and Akoko is asked to give her version of events. She presents the accusations made against her that include witchcraft, standing in the way of her husband's marriage to other women, and having given birth at a slow rate. After the presentation of her case, Owuor defends himself stating that he had not been around when the unfortunate event happened and had dealt with those responsible. The Jodongo agree to resolve the issue and warn Akoko against making rash decisions in future. An appeasement of a goat was to be given to the maro.

## **CHAPTER 6 FAMILY LIFE**

After Akoko's return to Sakwa she is soon pregnant again with a son, the delivery of the child is difficult. The child is named Owang Sino. Owang Sino is drawn to his father and they are quite fond of each other. There is a contrast between Owuor and Otieno. Owuor who is monogamous has a happy wife who he treats like a queen. Otieno on the other hand has four wives who he treated like sluts and they obliged him. There are rumours of white men (joroche) and the establishment of a colonial government. Obura gets intrigued and suggests that his mother allow him to tour the world. She reprimands for the thought and advises him to seek a wife. She also reminds him of his role as the first born son. Both his father and mother are alarmed at this new development. Chief Owuor forbids Obura from seeing Nyaroche and Ambere and has her later sent away.

## **CHAPTER 7 OBURA'S DISAPPEARANCE**

Obura disappears from his hut, and Akoko is disturbed by the disappearance. Chief Owuor sends out scouts to try and track them. They return and inform the chief that he had left in the company of Nyaroche and Ambere. Akoko prays earnestly that no harm should come to her son. The chief organises for search parties to follow them. Unfortunately they return two days later and report that the three were picked up by white men and could not be traced farther. Akoko who was devastated by her son's disappearance has a sense of foreboding and believes Obura might as well be dead.

## **CHAPTER 8 DEATH OF OBURA**

It has been a while since Obura disappeared. News of the white man and the colonial

government continue. One day two strangely dressed men come to deliver news about Obura. They draw the attention of the entire community as they make their way to chief Owuor's compound. They inform the chief of the war between jo-ingreza and joerman. They inform the chief of the death of Obura and Ambere as they inform him that Nyaroche is crippled. The chief is furious and throws away the bracelet that he was given. Nyabera picks it up as the community begins to mourn. A mock funeral is performed and a banana trunk is buried in place of Obura's body.

## **CHAPTER 9 DEATHS OF OWUOR AND OWANG**

Akoko then goes about helping Nyabera overcome her grief and continue with her life. She takes to wearing the bracelet she had picked when the white men came. Akoko works hard and instils the same value in Nyabera. Thus her herd grows so large that she has to get her own watering hole. Nyabera is now a girl of marriageable age. Suitors come in large numbers and Akoko helps her husband pick an appropriate suitor for their daughter. Okumu Angolo is picked as he comes from a neighbouring village. Their first three children live for a short time and then die. Owang Sino also comes of age and jowangyo are dispatched to look for a suitable wife for him. A suitable girl was found from Uyoma. However, Chief owuor who had been ailing for a long time dies and the marriage negotiations are postpone for the burial.

Akoko takes her husband's spear and shield and mourns him in great song and style.  
Owang

Sino who had done his best to make his mother happy dies soon after the birth of his son, owuor Sino. Alando does not stay to defend her son but chooses to get inherited soon after. The chief stool is passed to Otieno Kembo as the young owuor Sino is still a toddler and cannot rule until he is married. Akoko is devastated and Nyabera comes to her side to aid her.

## **CHAPTER 10 OTIENO BECOMES CHIEF**

Otieno takes over the chief stool with greed and arrogance. He squanders the wealth left behind by owuor and even attempts to usurp Akoko's personal wealth. Akoko feels greatly disadvantaged as she has no male sons or relatives who are of age and would come to her aid. Otieno is unwilling to relinquish the seat. He dispenses with the council of J odongo and snatches Akoko's wealth. Akoko perceives the challenge and decides to seek help from the joroche. She takes her grandchild, owuor, to her brother, Oloo. She then visits her daughter, Nyabera who had lost a number of children before she goes on her journey to Kisumu. She reveals her plans to her daughter.

## **CHAPTER 11 AKOKO'S JOURNEY TO KISUMA**

Her nephews Opiyo and Odongo accompany her. Akoko had earlier tried to send them away but to no avail. They start the journey early in the morning and Akoko takes the opportunity to educate them on the history of the community through stories. They

finally arrive in the town of Kisumu and are struck by the difference in structures and dressing of the people. There, they meet Otuoma, who helps them in by hosting them for the night as it was a Sunday and the court was closed. He also informs them that citizens were no longer allowed to carry weapons. They finally present their case to the D.O and the tribunal.

## **CHAPTER 12 AKOKO'S JUSTICE AND DEPARTURE FROM SAKWA**

Akoko presents her case to the D.O. and the tribunal. The D.O. asks that the case be postponed for three months so that the claims may be investigated. The twins embellish the story that they tell to the future generations. Akoko returns to Sakwa to find Otieno's greed having grown a great deal and her wealth significantly reduced. Investigators come to Sakwa, and the disgruntled people are only too willing to help. Akoko is summoned soon after and the case is reopened before the D.C. The D.C. Rules that Otieno Kembo be forcefully removed from the chief stool and he council of Jodongo rule. Otieno was also made to pay all that he had grabbed. Akoko then returned to Sakwa and took the remainder of her wealth. She returned to Yimbo to live as a migogo in her brother Oloo's house.

## **PART TWO: THE ART OF GIVING**

The Art of Giving is Self-sacrifice. It is putting away all you believed in and embracing the other's needs. Akoko in this chapter gives more than she receives. The part I ends when she has lost all that she could have held to in her matrimonial home. She forsakes her happy life as a married woman and goes home to lead a desolate life as a migogo. A migogo meant that, she will be looked down upon by her brothers' wife. She would be ridiculed and if we remember well; Akoko did not take lightly ridicule or sneer. There was a time she shouted down her mother-in-law (maro) for accusing her of being a witch (juok).

Akoko knew very well what she was getting into when she settled down in her brother Oloo's house. She was ready to live with them as long as her grandson Owuor Sino found comfort other than being molested in Otieno's household. She left the wealth she had built in years in Sakwa to live among her paternal household.

Giving involves denial of one's comfort for the sake of others. Nyabera tries in earnest to get and raise children for her and her husband Okumu. When Okumu dies, she tries it with Ogoma Kwach but all fails. In despair and with only one child, she joins Christianity. She leaves her mother, daughter and nephew in Aluor to satisfy her quest but returns having failed. She learns the hard way that, it's better to be content than trying to find happiness where there is none. The biggest sacrifice ever in part II however is when

Akoko blesses her grandson Petro Owuor Sino (Peter Owuor Kembo) to take on his vocation.

In accepting to this outrageous decision, Akoko loses her right to reclaim her matrimonial home and the continuity of her and her husband's lineage- given that most African communities were patrilineal. In letting Peter become a vicar, she made him and those of her keen lose the chief stool to the younger family in Sakwa.

Therefore Giving is an art since few people are ready to go to such extremes as Akoko, Nyabera and those around her, to let those they love enjoy their life to the fullest

## **CHAPTER 1 OKUMU'S DEATH**

Nyabera suffers the deaths of her children. She gets pregnant and gives birth to a baby girl. A ritual is performed to aid in the survival of the child. She is left by the entrance to the homestead and an old lady passing by picked her up and brought her to them. She is therefore named Awiti. Okumu falls ill and dies when Awiti is three years old. Nyabera is inherited by a close relative, Ogoma Kwach. He is drawn to Nyabera's wealth and hard work and foregoes his duty to his first wife. As a result he is reported to the council of Jodongo and reprimanded. Nyabera is hurt by their decision and seeks an alternate source of comfort. She has heard a lot about Christianity and seeks out Pillipo to give her more information. Nyabera gives out her wealth then travels to Yimbo to inform her mother of her decision. She leaves Awiti with Akoko then departs for Gem to start her new life.

## **CHAPTER 2. NYABERA IS BAPTISED**

Nyabera travels from Yimbo to Gem and arrives very late. She spends the night in the catechist's house. She explains herself to the catechist on the morning of the next day. He takes her to the chapel and she is inducted into Christianity. She learns the ways of the new religion quickly and thirstily. She is then baptised Maria.

## **CHAPTER 3 NYABERA'S RETURN**

Nyabera returns from Gem and goes to her mother in Yimbo. Though Akoko can tell that she is pleased with the new religion and her new name, she is able to tell that her daughter is uneasy. Nyabera opens up and admits that she felt that something was lacking as she was alone in Aluor. She asks her mother to accompany her to Gem. Akoko agrees and together with her grandchildren travel to Gem.



## **CHAPTER 4 LIFE IN GEM**

On arrival in Aluor the children are enrolled in catechism classes and reading classes where they show determination and zeal in their study. They are baptised into Christianity and they receive new names. Owuor is renamed Peter, Awiti is named Elizabeth and Akoko is named veronica. Soon after, news reaches Maria that Ogoma Kwach's wife had died. The desire to have children drives her to return to her matrimonial home without an explanation to her mother. Meanwhile peter develops an interest in priesthood and confides in Awiti. He is afraid to tell Akoko as he does not want to disappoint her. The two decide to wait for Nyabera to return so that they seek her assistance.

## **CHAPTER 5 THE VOCATION**

After a few years, Nyabera returns to Aluor, dejected and beaten by life. She confesses to her mother Akoko, before proceeding to spend the night in church. Owuor proves to be quite helpful to her and she loves him like a son. owuor takes to reading bible verses to Nyabera which she finds quite comforting. He then informs her about his desire to take up the vocation. They then proceed to talk to Akoko. Akoko agrees on the condition that he changes his name to peter owuor Kembo. Owuor is able to pursue priesthood.

## **CHAPTER 6 AWITTS EDUCATION**

Owuor joins the seminary and his cousin is enrolled into primary school. There are very few girls as the society does not value the education of the girl child. Also a lot of girls get married at a young age. Elizabeth proves to be diligent and tops the class all through. By the time she sits for the final exam she is the only girl in the class.

She excels and is invited to a teachers' training college. Nyabera fears that she might lose her and is unwilling to accept the news. Akoko reprimands Nyabera for her behaviour and urges her to allow her daughter to pursue her dreams. Akoko misses her husband and wishes he were present to help with the decision.

## **CHAPTER 7 LIFE IN COLLEGE**

Awiti work hard in college and unlike the other students, she does not engage in relationships like the other students. She turns down overtures from several men and is therefore feared. This is made worse when it is learnt that her brother is in the seminary and both her mother and grandmother live at the mission. She finally meets Mark Antony Oloo Sigu during an exeat. Mark inquires about her and informs her about himself. He mentions that he was in the army and has been called to work in Nakuru. They part when she agrees to reply to his letters when he writes.

## **CHAPTER 8 AWITTS BETROTHAL**

Awiti and mark interact through the letters they send each other. They talk about their lives, families and each other. After a few months of the engagements, mark states that he would like to meet her parents. Awiti goes to Aluor to deliver the exciting piece of news. Her

mother, Maria is a bit opposed but Akoko wins her over and preparations are made. Male relatives are sent for from Yimbo and Sakwa. Peter owuor Kembo is also sent for from the seminary. They make preparations for the day and kongó is brewed and several delicacies made. The day arrives and mark Antony arrives with his delegation. He is dressed in military fatigues a monkey head dress and bears a shield. They are warmly welcome and introductions done. To the surprise of mark and his delegation, the bride price is set at a token bull, two cows and six goats. There is much celebration after the negotiations are completed. Akoko is hard laughing with her grandson in law. She dies peacefully in her sleep later in the night

## **CHAPTER 9 AKOKO IS LAID TO REST**

Akoko is buried in Aluor in where she had spent most of life. Peter owuor Kembo is among the deacons who conduct the mass. Her death is hard to accept as she seemed to be full of life. Awiti is so devastated that she almost calls off the wedding. Nyabera comforts her by telling the life story of Akoko. She finally calms down and apologises to Mark, who had been with peter owuor.

## **CHAPTER 10 AWITTS MARRIAGE**

After the mourning period, peter goes to Rome to complete his studies. He is later ordained a priest and his first duty was to preside over the wedding between Elizabeth and mark. The newly wedded couple moves from Aluor to live in Nakuru. Shortly afterwards, Elizabeth becomes pregnant. Unfortunately she and mark misdiagnose the symptoms for malaria thus leading to the loss of the twins. It takes a long time before she can conceive again. Her mother in law start to complain about the lack of grandchildren but mark stops her from prying. Elizabeth gets pregnant again and this time the couple are happy and cautious to ensure nothing goes wrong.

### **PART 3 LOVE AND LIFE**

Love and Life yanks us from the painful oppression of death into a new realm of love and understanding. Mark Sigu, we can now imagine what they talked about with Akoko, steers his family away from tradition into the new sphere of the evolving world.

He is blessed with 7 children 4 boys and three girls. Each child has different personality. We see Mark and Elizabeth as capable parents who administer discipline and love to their children. The two parents provide education food and shelter to their new life and work best to establish family unity.

Despite her love for her children, Elizabeth keeps a straight head and clear vision not to spoil her kids. She stands behind when Aoro is punished by his father, though she knew the punishment was punitive and way above discipline, she took a back step until it was

time for her intervention. She also steps back when Mark pours his love over their last born Mary but does her best to reign him in so that Mary does not end up too spoilt.

On the other hand, we silently follow the children as they grow into adulthood. From the brave and confident Vera to her timid and self-possessed twin sister. The relationship of the two girls sours as they take on different personalities in life. Aoro and Antony also come out strongly shaping their destinies different ways though they show unrivalled level of competence. Aoro takes medicine while Anthony joins the seminary. The twins Opiyo and Odongo also manifest differently.

## **CHAPTER 1 THE YOUNG COUPLE**

Elizabeth delivers twins, Veronica and Rebecca. The two girls have varying personalities. Vera is independent, intelligent and protective of her sister. Rebecca on the other hand, is quite attractive and self-centred. When they are two years old, Elizabeth gave birth to another child, a boy Aoro. Due to the state of emergency, Mark opts to move his family back to Aluor. His mother is quite unhappy about this but he does not change his stand. Mark gets lonely while Elizabeth is away and engages in extramarital affairs. A certain girl stays with him for some time and later claims that she is pregnant. This brings Mark back to his sense and he sends her away. He then goes to Aluor to get his family. Elizabeth hears rumours of the infidelity but says nothing about it.

## **CHAPTER 2 VERA AND BECKY'S EDUCATION.**

Kenya gains independence and the citizens celebrate. The country is faced with numerous challenges but equally numerous opportunities. Mark gets promoted and moves to a bigger house as his family has grown. He now has seven children that include Vera, Becky, Aoro, Antony, Opiyo, Odongo and Mary. Vera is an excellent student in school. Becky on the other hand does not give her studies much effort. Vera excels in her primary level exam and is called to a national school which she declines as she wanted that to go to her sister's school.

Her parents are concerned but later agree to let her go to a school of her choice.

## **CHAPTER 3 AORO'S ADVENTURES**

Aoro is compared to Obura who was swift, bright, confident and curious. The company of his younger brothers makes him more adventurous than usual. One day they go fishing at a nearby river. As he and Tony are busy, one of the twins, Odongo, almost drowns. Opiyo screams alerting the older brothers who come to his rescue. They go back home wet, and shaken. The younger boys blame the older ones for the event and Aoro and Tony are punished. The older boys decide to never take their smaller brothers anywhere after the incident. Tony later develops acute appendicitis and is rushed to hospital in the night. Aoro is worried and informs his older sisters. They later receive news that their brother will be well after the operation.

#### **CHAPTER 4. AORO'S EPIPHANY**

Aoro is fascinated by Tony's stitches and gains an interest in medicine. He operates on a frog successfully. Uncle Peter comes to visit them and though every child warms up to him, Tony is particularly curious about priesthood and has a lot of questions. Mark is a bit apprehensive as he notices that Tony is eyeing priesthood. Most parents are not comfortable with their children joining priesthood. Peter is getting a promotion to bishop. He stays a while then visits his aunt Maria in Aluor. It is later on decided that Opiyo and Odongo should go to Aluor to keep their grandmother company and attend the school their mother went to. Aoro excels in his studies and is called to the best school in the country. This inspires Tony to work hard so that he can join him. Aoro has difficulty in school and is suspended for indiscipline. Mark deals with him by telling him to seek his own food and shelter. Aoro is remorseful and fears his father. He returns to school and does his best.

#### **CHAPTER 5 MARY'S BIRTH**

The chapter takes us back to the birth the pregnancy was difficult for Elizabeth. She developed high blood pressure and threatened miscarriage on several occasions. The doctors feared for both mother and child and they have to be admitted. Mary's birth had to be induced and she is named after her grandmother. Mark loves Mary deeply and gives her all the best. He sends her to private school and makes an effort to personally pick and drop her. This draws envy from Becky who was used to being the centre of attention. Becky tries to complain and gets a scathing response from her sister Vera. This results in an argument that leads the sisters to drift apart.

#### **CHAPTER 6 MARIA'S DEATH**

Examination results are announced and Vera has done exceptionally well. Becky attains a second division which she is well pleased with. Antony gets 36 points in his primary certificate examinations and is delighted as he had earned a spot in Aoro's school. Becky suggests that she would like to get a job but Mark insists that she must continue with her education. A telegram is sent from Aluor informing them that Maria is unwell. Elizabeth is picked from the school by Mark as she is beside herself. Mark does his best to leave everything in order before they leave for Aluor. Elizabeth is beside Maria when he dies in hospital later on that day.

#### **CHAPTER 7 BECKY RUNS AWAY**

Opiyo and Odongo return to Nakuru after the burial of Maria. Education is of importance to the Sigu family as examinations approach and everyone is tense as there are 5 candidates in the house. Aoro was sitting for his O-level, Vera and Becky are sitting for their A-level and Opiyo and Odongo for the certificate of primary education. Vera and

Becky are now in their prime and boys begin to pay a lot of attention to them. Vera meets Tommy Muhambe who is particularly persistent. She brings up the question on whether she can go to a movie with Tommy to her father during dinner. When the results are announced, Aoro excels with 6 distinctions, Vera got two A's and a B, Becky flunked. After the result Becky runs away from home and leaves a note stating that she had gone to try to be an air hostess. Vera tries to explain to her parents that they should let her be.

## **CHAPTER 8 CAMPUS LIFE**

Vera goes to campus and is struck by the new found freedom. Most campus girls are dating rich affluent men or other campus students. Vera maintains her relationship with Tommy but when he proposes to her she declines ending their 3 year relationship. Vera leaves with a heavy heart and decide to try and find her sister Becky. She accidentally bumps into her at the airport and leave for Becky apartments.

## **CHAPTER 9 BECKY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH JOHN**

Becky takes Vera to an affluent block of apartments. She introduces Vera to her fiancé, John Courtney, a Canadian national who was a pilot. She tells Vera about her plans to get married, but Vera insists that he must first meet their parents. Vera tries to convince Becky to go back home. On John's persistence she finally agrees to visit her parents.

## **CHAPTER 10 VERA JOINS OPUS DEI**

Vera goes back to her room on campus and tells the day's events to her roommate Mary-Anne Ngugi. Vera mentions the heartbreak with Tommy and about her twin sister. The conversation extends to the larger family. Mary Anne then invites her to attend a recollection at Parkview college, which she readily agrees. After mass on Sunday Vera begins to question her religious beliefs. She watches a lay, and goes on with her studies as exams are approaching. When the day comes, Mary-Anne and Vera board a matatu and head for the recollection. Vera is introduced to the members of Opus Dei who had different views about the church, and work challenges. She got out of the church puzzled and Mary-Anne offered to give her books which will help her understand better.

## **PART 4: VARIABLE WINDS**

Variable winds suggest the changing course of the lives that the family experiences. There are the ups and downs that characterize their lives. Their lives diverge on different paths that bring with them sweet victories like Aoro's marriage, Wandia's doctorate,

happy families among other events. There are also the difficulties like Daniel's down syndrome, Becky's death among other challenges that they encounter. There I also the frosting in the relationship between Becky and the rest of her family. The change in the way her children relate to her and the marked improvement they make under the care of Aoro and Wandia.

## **CHAPTER ONE: AORO TAKES MEDICINE**

Aoro starts medicine at the university. The study of Anatomy Biochemistry and Psychology among other subjects. Anatomy happens to be the most of the competitive subjects. In the laboratory, the students are told to the group themselves into groups of six. Group six had Aoro, Wandia, Makau Kithinji, J eremy Kizingo, Paul Omondi Rakula, and Simon Onyancha. The competition is narrowed to two members of group six. After exams, Wandia beat Aoro with a single point. Aoro takes it in good grace and invites her to have a drink. This signifies the start of a long relationship.

## **CHAPTER 2. AORO'S INTERNSHIP**

The internship is hard for Aoro. He has to work around the clock while at the mercy of the residents and doctors. His rounds include the theatre, round in the wards and filling patient information as well as taking laboratory sample. He rarely gets enough sleep. Wandia is also an intern at Machakos general hospital. They are unable to meet for long periods of time as the rarely have time to meet. Aoro is taking a break to rest when Wandia visits him. They talk about marriage and Wandia proposes to Aoro. Wandia informs Aoro that she was on her way to visit her mother who was sick.

## **CHAPTER 3 WANDIAS FAMILY**

Wandia had been raised by a single mother after her father had died while she was young. Her mother had raised money to educate them by working on her coffee farm. Her siblings were all grown up and engaged in different professions. Her sister Esther is a teacher who is married to the headmaster, Michael. Her brother Michael was a business man in Nairobi, Wandia is a doctor and timothy is described as being a good time boy. Wandia's mother suffers from diabetes and has an ulcer on her leg. Wandia's mother is still worried about her farm even though Wandia tells her that she does not need to work so hard. She spends time with her mother and even talks about Aoro. She then goes to spend the night with her sister Esther. She enjoys the company of her nieces and nephews. Later that evening they get time to talk and the topic of Aoro is brought up again the rest of her family is concern about the different tribes but Wandia is not bothered.

## **CHAPTER 4 WANDIA'S INTRODUCTION**

Aoro takes Wandia to his parent's farm in Njoro. After the visit to Wandia's family, Aoro wrote his parent a letter informing them that he would be bringing his bride to be home. Elizabeth is eager to meet them and is the one who receives them when they arrive. After the introductions, Elizabeth asks Wandia to help herb in the kitchen, giving mark and Aoro sometime to talk. Mark is concern that Aoro might have made a wrong decision by choosing to marry a kikuyu. Elizabeth and Wandia get along well and become good friends. They return with tea after they feel that the men had enough time to sort out their differences.

## **CHAPTER 5 AORO WEDS WANDIA**

Aoro and Wandia's wedding pulls the family together as that try to make it a success. Becky provides a car and Vera helps them get one of the company houses in Malindi for the honeymoon. Vera and Wandia grow very close to each other. Becky is separated from John Courtney after he discovered that she was cheating on him. She had custody of their two children, Johnny, and Alicia. Becky lived a promiscuous life and insults Vera when she was confronted about it. Wandia is pregnant with twins and had been asked to stay home due to a cough. Vera visits Wandia and voices her concerns about her sister. They discuss Becky's health which seemed to be on the decline and her children's welfare. Wandia goes into labour.

## **CHAPTER 6 DANIEL'S DOWN'S SYNDROME**

Wandia gets twins, Lisa and Daniel. Daniel has down syndrome and grows at a slow rate. Lisa grows rapidly and makes the contrast between her and her twin brother so much more glaring. Wandia is devastated by his condition while Aoro feel like he had failed. Daniel is a loving child despite his condition and draws love from all around him. Becky dies of AIDS and Wandia and Aoro take in Alicia and Johnny since Vera, who had been appointed their guardian, cannot as her calling does not allow her to have a home. Becky lives behind a

sizeable estate to ensure that they are well provided for. Daniel develops leukaemia as children with Down's syndrome are prone to it. Wandia is shocked by the turn of events.

Daniel is taken to hospital and the doctor set about treating him as it is not one of the aggressive forms. Wandia visits church and asks God to save her son and promises to visit church more frequently.

## **CHAPTER 7 FAMILY REUNION**

Wandia pursues her passion in haematology after the recovery of her son Daniel. She receives a scholarship to study in John Hopkins hospital in Baltimore, USA. She is however worried of living Aoro with the task of looking after their now large family. Alicia and Johnny loved them like their biological parents. At the end of the term all the



children wanted to show how well they were doing in school, even Daniel who had Down's Syndrome was doing pretty well. The Aoro's take measure to ensure that the family is well tended while Wandia is away. The plan was to call Mary, Aoro's sister, to stay with the children besides hiring another house help. The family goes to Njoro to visit Mark and Elizabeth. Odongo is the farm manager while his twin brother Opiyo is a manager at Mark's former farm. Opiyo visits with his family too, Edna his wife and their two children. Father Tony also drops in. Wandia tells Elizabeth about the scholarship and she readily agrees, meanwhile Aoro and Tony reminisce about their childhood.

## **CHAPTER 8 WANDIA'S GRADUATION**

Both Mugo's and Sigu's families gather to celebrate Wandia's achievement as the first Kenyan woman to get a doctorate degree in medicine. There is a large gathering at the Aoro's home as relatives and friends join them in the celebration. Alicia, a student of design and music at Kenyatta University shadows her aunt Vera. Johnny and Daniel hover around Aoro and Wandia. Johnny faces an identity crisis and wishes to change his name to Aoro's name. He keeps African friends, speaks Swahili and eats African dishes. Wandia tries to talk to him and afterwards asks Vera to write to John Courtney. Elizabeth wakes up to check on the children who are still up; she looks in on her grandchildren. She gets an attack of dizziness as she tries to adjust them. The following day Aoro receives a call from Opiyo informing him that their mother had died. She is buried next to her daughter as a large crowd comes to bid her farewell.

## **THE RIVER AND THE SOURCE THEMES**

Themes refer to the general ideas, messages or lessons the writer has portrayed in his/her literary piece of work. Therefore, under the study of themes, we particularly narrow our perspective to the main ideas in which the story is founded and on whose axis it revolves, and offers an avenue of continuity.

It is important to note that while discussing themes, it is imperative for identification and illustration of the theme to be done, to promote understanding.

A theme can simply be said to be the concern of the writer. It is simply what the writer says.

## **FAMILY RELATIONS**

The novel addresses various issues revolving around family members, their closeness and their interactions. This is seen through various instances as follows;

Chief Odera Gogni loves his daughter Akoko so much as seen through his over protectiveness. He wants the best for his daughter hence turns down 13 suitors he even mentions that a home without daughters is like a spring without a source.

Akoko's brother Oloo too is seen to be so close to Akoko and loves her so much. When travelling to Kisumu he sends his sons Opiyo and Oloo to accompany her for protection. Oloo further does the unthinkable when he welcomes Akoko back when she is a widow and suffering.

Owuor kembo and Akoko's marriage is a closely knit union. On marrying Akoko Owuor never marries any other wife despite pressure from his mother. On Owuor's death Akoko mourns him with so much dignity and with songs of praise recounting their life together and his greatness.

Nyabera on settling at the new mission picks her mum her daughter and nephew Owuor to stay with them since they were so close to each other. They stay together so happily.

Mark Sigu is a hardworking man who loves and fully provides for his family. They are all well-educated and trained on responsibility. Mark is concerned when Vera asks for permission to go out with a man and fears for her. When Becky runs away to the city he is so concerned and almost follows her to the city.

Aoro's and Wandia's family are seen to co-exist and thrive in love and friendship. They even adopt Becky's children – Alicia and Johnny and even consider them their own. "The Courtney children had become so much part of the family that Wandia never dreamed of

excluding them from her calculations” (pg 291)

## **GENDER RELATIONS**

The society in *The River and the Source* is seen to be patriarchal. We are told that: “If it was hard for a boy to get an education – it was well-nigh impossible for a girl. The purpose of female existence was marriage and child bearing.” (P 129) this shows a disregard for women in society and points out to their expectation in society which is pointer to their lowly stature in society.

Akoko is born in a family that is dominated by men and encounters many challenges. In fact the expression the girl child points to her oppressed and exploited and threatened Akoko who is growing up as a girl child. Her struggles are seen even in her assertive and aggressive stance in her first words *dwaro mara* ‘want mine!’ (pg 15)

Women are expected to be submissive in this society and it is unheard of for a woman to challenge a man. This is however seen in Akoko’s resistance against Otieno her brother-in-law who even gets to fear her. When Otieno threatens to assault her she looks him in the eyes and says, ‘just you die!’ (pg 37)

Further when Otieno takes over the chieftaincy and rules with an iron fist, Akoko seeks the intervention of the new administration to protect her wealth. She wins in this and in fact opens new vistas and opportunities for the oppressed especially the women.

Gender inequality is seen further in the sense that out of a class of thirty four, there were only two girls one of whom was Awiti and even so she later got married off at the age of sixteen.

It’s only through Akoko’s determination that Awiti is saved from such fate. Awiti is further seen to be exceptional as she maintains first position hence bringing out the success of women despite all odds. She thus wins the envy, admiration and even disapproval by some. As a teacher Awiti manages the children back at Aluor during the emergency without Mark bringing her out as a strong woman.

Furthermore from Awiti’s experience we learn of the important role of women in upbringing in that Awiti is saved from the traditional practices of marriage at seventeen through “the pioneering and daring spirit of her grandmother and mother.” (pg 129) they regarded her as their future and hoped to enhance the continuity of the family through her and this comes to fruition. Akoko and Nyabera thus overcome the obstacles that tend to degrade and suppress women.

Wandia’s mother is further brought out as a strong woman. Though single she does not become destitute and vulnerable. This is further seen through Wandia who is an epitome of great upbringing through her courage and determination and profession as a doctor. She even undertakes further studies to even acquire the role of professor.

The continuity of the river of women empowerment is thus seen through the

generations through Akoko, Nyabera, Awiti and Wandia. This is despite the challenges they faced and disregard by society where even for Awiti's case it is said "A girl! To be so clever..no man would marry her..." (pg 130) despite all these she keeps excelling.

## **CONFLICT IN MARRIAGE**

There are several instances of conflict in marriage pointed out in the novel. They are brought either from misunderstanding between the couple or sometimes from external influence.

There is a conflict in the marriage between Owuor Kembo and Akoko. This is brought out by the allegations by Nyar Asembo that Akoko has bewitched her son and cast a spell on him so that he doesn't take another wife. Further she complains of her inability to conceive regularly despite the huge bride price. Akoko decides to sever their relationship and goes back to Yimbo but not before summoning a crowd and clearing her name against the allegations. It takes the intervention of the J odongo to bring her back.

Conflict is also seen in the marriage between Elizabeth Awiti and Mark Sigu. This is over her inability to conceive after the miscarriage. She even accuses mark of having given her chloroquin to deliberately make her sterile. The issue is compounded by Mark's mother who demands an explanation for Elizabeth's lack of children. This creates so much tension and mark has to take Elizabeth's side to salvage the situation.

Becky's promiscuity leads to the break-up of their marriage with J ohn Courtney. It is said that she exchanged men at will prompting J ohn to divorce her. It is even the reason she gets infected with HIV.

There was also conflict in the marriage between Aoro and Wandia over their son Daniel's disease Leukemia. Wandia accuses Aoro of spending too much time outside working when they have children to bring up and take care of. Hi explanations are not heard and she even retorts angrily, "Don't honey me. Go to hell." (pg288)

## **RELIGION**

There are aspects of both traditional religion and Christianity in the novel.

In the traditional religion, we are told that the people believed in *Were* the god of the eye of the rising sun and ancestral spirits. They made sacrifices and poured libations. Akoko even mentions that it is *Were* who forms children in ones womb. They even believed that the spirits of the departed influenced the living so much. They could cause dreams to pregnant mothers or relatives to guide in the naming of the young ones.

With the coming of missionaries, Christianity is introduced Nyabera is attracted to this new religion and is further fascinated by various characters in the bible, the suffering of J esus and baptism through which she is named Maria.

Akoko later joins Maria in the new religion with the children too where Awiti becomes

Sacristan assisting nuns and Owuor becoming an altar boy. Owuor later becomes a priest and ascends to bishop. This even influences Tony Sigu who becomes a priest.

Awiti raises her family in religious grounds. This even sees her daughter Vera becoming a non-marrying member of the Opus Dei.

Religion impacts on the traditional aspects of life for the people and we see so much changing. Traditionally Akoko was supposed to be buried in her husband's ancestral home at the left of the entrance but due to her change to Christianity she is buried as a Christian in a church cemetery. Furthermore, marriage rites change and with the advent of Christianity has introduced church weddings as seen in the Christian church wedding between Mark and Elizabeth presided by father Peter. Vera further becomes an unmarried member of Opus Dei which would not have been accepted traditionally.

## DEATH

Throughout the plot of the book, the writer has eliminated many characters through death-some of who never even get a chance to live one day.

Akoko's son Obura Kembo, died at war in Tanganyika. He as well as Ambere K'ongoro died in the First World War between the J o-Ingereza and J o-erman. The village went into mourning for the chief's son. The mourning was worsened by the fact that there was no body to morn over and to bury. Pg 55 "The names of the three are Oura KEmbo, Ambere K'ongoso, and Nyaroche Silwal. They went to fight the J o-J erman in a place called Tanganyika.....of the three, only Nyaroche Silwal survived and he is....."

Tragedy befalls Akoko again. First, she had to contend with the death of her son Obura. Later her husband, Chief Owuor Kembo passes on after ailing for a long time since his son's death. Pg 62 '.....but before the bride price could be paid the ailing chief Owour Kembo died....." Akoko's other son Owang Sino, dies after choking on a fish bone after having a meal of fish and Ugali.

Akoko's daughter, Nyabera faces several misfortunes as well. Her entire life seems one big disaster. Her other tow sons die during an outbreak of measles. She gets pregnant again when Awiti is three years old but she miscarries. The ral disaster is when her husband, Okumu dies after complaining of severe headache, pain and stiffness in the neck and he cannot also retain any food.

After being inherited by a second cousin to her husband, Ogoma Kwachm Nyabera gets toe children who again, die of sickle cell disease. After returning to the smae man, hoping a friendship would grow, she gets a baby boy who like all the others before him die. The man's wife is also said to have died.

Akoko dies of old age peacefully in her sleep late at night, that dark hour just before dawn.

Pg 140 "That night she died quietly on her pallet in the corner....."

As a result of state of emergency, the country is becoming more and more dangerous even for ordinary people. As a result of the war between the Mau Mau freedom fighters and the white johnies. Death could arrive without warning. Things worsened day by day and lorries carrying dead purpotely the mau mau were a common sight.

Maria Nyabera, also dies after she had a stroke and was in a coma before her death early one morning. Pg 190, "At seven O'clock, just before the doctore came for his rounds, Maria

AIDS. Nyabera's daughter, Elizabeth Awiti, similary dies after she ha problems with breathing aged seventy.

## LOVE

The writer has dealt with different levels of love. For example;

- i) Love between man and woman.
- ii) The love between families and within families.
- iii) The love for material, tangible things
- iv) The love for oneself, the one that almost borders on self-centredness.

During Akoko's marriage negotiations, the spokesman for the J odongo of Sakwa, Aloo K' Olima refers to their hosts (elders of Yimbo) as 'brothers'. This is a pointer to the good dak

(neighbourliness) that existed between the two groups as well as the great 'wat' (brotherhood) they shared.

Akoko was committed to the well being of her family. When the survival of the two year old Owuor through whom her family could find continuity id threatened by Otieno, Akoko made an epic journey to Kisumu to petition the colonial government (sirikal) to intercede on her behalf.

Akoko also loved her husband Owuor Kembo. When he dies, she mourned carrying it well into the village. Pg 62-63. 'She donned his monkey skin head dress that he had and his shield in the other. She sang dirges in his honour with her powerful voice. She sang his famous courtship of her, the great honour he had accorded her throughout their life together, the friendship that existed between them.'

Akoko instilled in her children and grandchildren a strong sense of loyalty to the family. This value of love and loyalty in the family is seen in Sigu's family. They (Mark and Elizabeth) work in unison to bring up their seven children.

There also exists a relationship of love and care between Mark and Elizabeth. This is evident from the courtship the two has at the beginning of a period of six months. “pg 132.....Their courtship went on in this gentle offhand manner, but at the end of six months, they knew each other pretty well, at least she knew she liked him and he who impetuous knew that he was he was in love and wanted to get married.’

It is also indicated in the book that Sigu family was a family full of love. Pg 162 “All in all, the Sigu family was a happy one. There was money, but not too much and plenty of love -simple and unpretentious.’

There is also love between Wandia and her brother’s and sisters. “She and her brother and sisters had always been very close, a closeness born of not just blood ties, but of many hardships faced together.’

Wandia also enjoys a warm relationship with her two nephews and niece. “The other children arrived from school and Wandia was lost in hug and demands for sweets and chocolates. (pg 263)

In a show of family unity, Wandia and Aoro adopt two children who were Becky’s. These are Alicia and Jonny following Becky’s death.

## **CHANGE**

In the novel, ‘The River and the Source’ nothing remains the same. The continuous cyclic pattern of human life and nature bedecked by numerous changes of both conscious and unconscious orientation. Through these changes, life continuous or events continue at different levels affected by changes. Consider these illustrations:-

Akoko is way ahead of her time and is appreciative of the need to embrace change early enough. The author says that the clarity of vision and strength of character of Akoko could have been ‘a discomfiture to all men of all ages and she was therefore never really have fitted in that, this or any other century (pg 142)

The coming of the Jorochoere (whitemen) marked the first real threat to the formerly tranquil and cohesive traditional African society. A footloose wanderer called Ambere K’Ongoso brought stories of the white skinned people (pg 48). Similarly Nyaroche came back with stories about pesa (money) pg 49.

The effect of the coming of the white man in relation to administration of justice, enforcement of law and order, mode of dressing and language is now evident especially in

Kisumu. The clerk at the D.O.’s office could speak the language of the White man as well as his own. He wore a dazzling white shirt, a thin black tie and white shoes.

Opiyo and Odongo while accompanying their aunt Akoko to Kisumu were dressed in skins covering only their loins and Akoko was dressed in the traditional skin called “chieno.” This mode of dressing is contrasted with that of a passer-by they met on their arrival in Kisumu who wore a pair of long shorts and a singlet. The said passer-by had

also attended mission school for one year.

While in Kisumu, Akoko, Opiyo and Odongo are informed that Kisumu had been renamed Kisumu by the whiteman.

The house belonging to Akoko's host is an indicator of changes taking place in the society.

His house was a variation of the traditional hut since it had square windows made of wood and a neat wooden door, all painted bright green. Also the buildings in Kisumu looked large and most had white walls and red roofs. Others had tin wall.

Akoko's host in Kisumu advises Opiyo and Odongo to leave their weapons at home since people were now prohibited from carrying weapons since the 'Sirikal' had 'askaris' who offered protection to everyone and kept the peace.

The white DC in Kisumu listens to Akoko's position and rules in her favour. A contingent of 'Askaris' is dispatched to the village to forcibly remove Otieno from his position as chief. He is also made to return all property he had grabbed from his sister-in-law and his grand nephew. This episode shows that the influence of the 'Jodongo' in the administration of justice is gradually waning and in its place is the white man's administrative structures. In fact the author acknowledges this reality when she says "In spite of the DC's decision, it was only a matter of time before the hereditary chiefdoms were done away with totally. It was a changing world. (pg 93)

Christianity is gradually taking root. After being baptized, Nyabera acquires a new name, Maria. (pg 110)

By agreeing to accompany Nyabera to Gem (mission of Aluor, Akoko has made the decision to move from one life to another. her pioneering and daring spirit enabled her daughter Awiti to acquire education.

By acquiring formal education, Awiti is able to disentangle herself from the yoke of traditions and customs of her people pertaining to the role of women. This conservative mind set of Awiti's people is evident in the statement, "The purpose of female existence was marriage and child bearing." According to the community, it was superfluous to educate girls. Awiti's desire to acquire education was made possible through the pioneering and daring spirit her grandmother and mother had (pg 129)

The impact of formal education is evident in Mark Sigu's ability to speak fluently in perfect English. During his encounter with Elizabeth he tells her that he went to school in St. Mary's

Yala and was conscripted into the army while job hunting in Nairobi. The advent of formal employment is a result of formal education. (pg 137)

While conversing with Elizabeth, Mark Sigu switches to a combination of English and vernacular-a common manner of speech is an emerging bilingual and tri-lingual Africa.



Money was replacing barter trade as a tool of exchange of goods and services. Awiti successfully sat her examination at the teacher training college and received her teacher's certificate. She is then posted back to her old school. She earns a salary of fifty shillings a month. Maria initially opposes the idea of her daughter accepting the invitation to join the teacher training college but Akoko prevails upon her.

When Awiti informs her mother that she does not know the names of Mark's parents, an appaled Maria laments, "What do you mean you don't know! How can you even consider having friendship with a man whose roots and antecedents you don't know?" Contrary to dictates of 'Chik', Elizabeth's relatives did not send a 'J awangyo' (spy) to check out Mark Sigu's background. Akoko reasons with Maria by telling her, "Accept it Maria, the world is changing." (pg 143)

Akoko has changed the concept of bride price. Contrary to the expectations of Elizabeth's suitors from Seme that a heavy bride price was going to be demanded for Elizabeth, no price is asked except for a token bull, two cows and six goats. (Pg 148)

In a break from traditions, Akoko was not buried in her husband's ancestral home to the left of the entrance to her house but on the burial ground which the church had prepared.

Mixed (inter-tribal) marriages have started to take root. Elizabeth's flexibility and accommodating nature is evident when she convinces her husband to allow their daughter Vera to accompany Tommy Muhambe, a twenty one year old young Luhya man studying veterinary medicine to the movies. Becky's husband (John Courtney) is a white man. Wandia's sister (Esther) points out some of the challenges of inter tribal marriages that Wandia and Aoro may experience. "For example few in-laws are endearing, but I can't imagine anything more annoying than their talking to their son, and your children in a language you cannot understand." Aoro (a Luo) marries Wandia (a Kikuyu). Prior to their marriage each introduces his/her would be spouse to his/her parents.

Change is also experienced in the arena of politics. Mention is made of the recently concluded multi-party elections (1992) which marked the end of the single party rule. People hope that the new political dispensation would usher in a new era. Instead it is characterized by confusion and cries of foul by the opposition and declarations of total transparency by the winners. (pg 304)

Vera also changes from unbelieving Christian to a member of Opus Dei during her encounter with Maryanne.

The two epic journeys Akoko makes are quite significant as far as change is concerned. The first one is her journey to Kisumu accompanied by Opiyo and Odongo. This story elevated Akoko to heroine and legendary status. It was to be passed down from generation to generation. The second one is Akoko and Nyabera's journey to ALuor. "The children were the future and the future had to be protected." The writer seems to suggest the merging of the past and the present, "Akoko told them stories of the heroes

of old and the history of baby Jesus.” Father Tony, AKoko’s grandson says of Akoko, “To her life was like a river, flowing from eternity to eternity.

## TRADITION AND CUSTOMS

‘Chik’ (traditions) governed every aspect of the life of the people. It was the glue which held the people together thus preventing disintegration of the fabric of the society and chaos.

The naming system in the community is quite elaborate. The children are given more than one name. For instance, Chief Odera Gogni’s newly born child is first called Adoyo since she was born during the weeding and hoeing season. The ancestral spirits usually send vivid dreams to the new born baby’s parents and in Adoyo’s case the child’s great uncle, recently dead, a medicine man of great renown sent dreams to both the father and grandmother of the child, resulting in the baby being named Obanda. Since the baby had an extremely powerful set of lungs she was given the third name, Akoko. (pg 14)

Akoko’s son is first named Obura (the wise one). On the second night after birth the child’s father dreamt that Kembo K’ Agina the late chief was handing him a baby boy from his right hand side; therefore the child was named Obura Kembo.

When Adoyo was two weeks old, she suffered a prolonged bout of colic and screaming that went on all night. A reason and solution is sought to the baby’s crying. Grandmother - Nyar Alego implores were to spare the child’s life. She pleads with her departed mother (Achieng) to intercede. She also seems to imply that the child’s condition may be attributed to Akelo, her departed sister who died childless. (pg 12 and 13)

It was a common practice for potential suitors to send spies (jowang’yo) to check out the background of a would be bride. In the case of AKoko, they reported that she had impeccable antecedents.

Chik (tradition) dictates that a chief must be married. This is what prompted Owuor Kembo having inherited the chieftainship to get married at a relatively young age of twenty years. (pg 19)

Marriage negotiations are conducted by elders, Chief Gogni chooses Aloo K’ Olima (an accomplished negotiator) as their spokesman. They set a high bride price at thirty head which to everyone’s surprise Owuor Kembo promptly accepts without bargaining. (pg 20)

The first wife’s house (Mikai’s house) holds the centre stage directly facing the gate.

Chief Odera Gogni welcomes the visitors (prospective suitors) and offers them brew

(Kong’o) to be sipped through a long reed like straw after libations are first offered to *Were*. (pg 19) Kong’o is once again drunk after libations are poured to *Were* to signify the culmination of successful marriage negotiations. Feasting then goes on into the late afternoon. (pg 25)

Traditions dictate that a woman should present a picture of demure shyness when she encountered her future husband for the first time, but Akoko defied this practice by walking in measured steps, head held high, hands at her side. (pg 24)

Chik (traditions) did not allow suitors to spend the night at their in-laws homestead as witnessed in Akoko's case. The suitors had to leave when evening came. (pg 25)

A mock wrestling duel ensues between the young men from Sakwa and those who resist the efforts to spirit her away. Eventually the men from Sakwa succeed in grabbing Akoko and taking her to her matrimonial home. (pg 27)

Chik also dictated that men sent on a mission to deliver bride price must be granted hospitality without question. As a result when the young men from Sakwa stopped for rest and food at the nearest homestead they were warmly received. (pg 27)

According to 'Chik', if a man dies, his body lies in his mikai's hut (first wife's hut) before he is buried on the right hand side of the hut. (pg 38)

In order to pave way for elders to go to Yimbo following Akoko's decision to go back to her parent's home, four young men are dispatched with a cow and an ox, a he-goat and two nanny goats. 'Chik', also dictates that whatever the circumstances, a messenger should not be victimized hence the young men are only received coldly. (pg 40)

The traditions of the community dictated that during deliberations centering around marriage disputes, both sides of the story had to be heard before a decision was arrived at. When the Jodongo (elders of Seme) went to Yimbo to negotiate the return of Akoko (their wife), being a grave matter, kong'o was not allowed unless until an agreement was reached.

Chieftdom is hereditary, Owuor tells his son, "do not take your duty practically my son, for the chieftdom has been in my family for generations."

The role of the chief is well outlined. His main job was to lead the council of Jodongo (elders) in their arbitration and his final word was law. He was also a sort of priest who led the whole community in sacrifice and libation on public worshipping days. He also led his people to battle, and if he is too old, his eldest son. (pg 57)

The community abhorred bloodshed. To them, bloodshed even in battle was a great taboo and required much cleansing. (pg 58)

In compliance with the dictates of 'Chik' upon delivery of the message that Obura had died at war in Tanganyika, his mother Akoko came out of her son's hut with his spear in her right and his colourful ox-hide shield in her left- the traditional salute of the fallen warrior. For four days the villagers wailed, sang dirges and the young men staged mock battles. A banana trunk was symbolically buried in the absence of Obura's body. (Pg 62)

Suicide was considered a great taboo and would bring a great curse among the people. (pg 62)

Upon the death of chief Odera Gogni, the clan went into sixty days mourning mandatory for a chief. AKoko also mourned her husband, She sang dirges while donning his monkey skin headdress and brandishing his spear in one hand and his shield in the other.

‘Chik’ did not allow a mother to spend the night in her married daughter’s house. When Akoko visits her daughter Nyabera before she leaves for Kisumu, Nyabera conducts her to her mother-in-law’s house. (pg 78)

Akoko presents a petition to the white D.O. in Kisumu about her oppression in the hands of Otieno. Thereafter the D.O sends his messengers to discreetly carry out investigations to ascertain the allegations. AKoko is summoned back to Kisumu to appear before the D.C. The messenger informs the D.C that the chieftdom is hereditary and passes from father to his eldest son. In the absence of a son, the closest male relative takes over. In case the son is not yet of the age of marriage, the chieftdom is held in custody by the closest male relative with the council of elders. When the rightful heir comes of age, he ransoms his seat with twelve head of cattle, the price of a bride, payable to the custodian. In the event that he cannot raise the ransom his seat within two years of getting married, then the council of elders may decide that the seat remains with the custodian. (pg 92)

Having already lost three children, a little ceremony is performed to confuse evil spirits and enhance Nyabera’s son’s chances of survival. (pg 92)

‘Chik’ dictated that a husband had to be found from close relatives of the dead man for the widow. “His job being that of siring children to maintain the dead man’s name and to keep his widow from wandering from man to man.” (pg 99) this is called ‘tero’. Therefore, Otieno, chief Owuor Kembo’s brother should have married his brother’s widow, AKoko and become a guardian of the grandson and custodian not owner of the chief’s stool.” (pg 87).

## **DETERMINATION AND HARDWORK**

Throughout the novel, instances have been vividly brought to life of determined personalities trying to achieve one thing or the other. For example:-

Obura is determined to leave home and explore a whole new life outside that no amount of persuasion not to do so deters him. He finally flees home to unknown destinations.

Akoko is determined to find intervention of the white man’s government in a bid to alleviate the atrocities committed by her brother-in-law. To an unknown place, she sets off with hope that one day her people will be liberated.

Akoko is depicted as a hardworking and determined woman. As a young woman she is known to rise early and till her lands and uses the left over to barter in exchange for cattle, sheep and goats. (pg 35) Her house is impressive and her granaries were always full. (pg 66)

Akoko also tells her daughter that laziness opens the door for evil to rule one's mind and body. She also tells her to work tirelessly and that it is shame for an able bodied person to feed on sweat of others. (pg 86)

Nyabera is also determined to join the new faith. To the catechist at the mission, she says, “.....teacher, I have come a long way for this, I doubt there will be a going back. I have nothing to go back to.” (pg 97) She leaves behind her daughter and mother to the unknown....Nyabera left the two dearest people to her with a heavy heart but determined feet.....” (pg 103)

When they (Akoko and Nyabera together with the children) arrived at the mission, we are told that Akoko started working hard to form some kind of base for the children. “.....she had never begged for food and she was not about to begin.....she was untiring and unsparing of herself.” (pg 117)

Awiti also worked hard in school. She is given an admission to college. “.....this letter comes from a head teacher of a school called a college, where they teach teachers how to teach children. He says he is happy to offer me a place in his college so that I can also learn how to be a teacher.” (pg 123)

Peter Owuor also worked very hard. Things in the seminary were not that easy. It is said,

“.....And so he entered the vigour and splendour life in the seminary. Sometimes when things were particularly tough, he would wonder whether mere flesh and blood would survive it, but it never entered in his mind to leave.....he was no quitter. He would survive. He would see it through.” (pg 127) Peter had learnt from his grandmother that once a job begun it had to be completed.

## **CHARACTER AND CHARACTERIZATION**

CHARACTER-Are people, animals or objects taking a specific role in artistic work like a story, play, novel narrative.

CHARACTERIZATION - Is the author's presentation and development of the characters. Explaining character traits of characters is what characterization entails.

### **How to determine a character**

- What the character says or does
- What the author says about him
- What other characters say about him/her
- We describe a character using an adjective
- There also MUST be an illustration to the character identified e.g.

### **AKOKO**

She is the wife of Chief Owuor Kembo. She is the most prominent character. She is portrayed as the source of the river and the source of great successful future generation. Akoko's character can be illustrated as follows:-

#### **Determined**

She amazes everybody when she utters her first words 'dwara mara' (want mine). The author comments, "Akoko grew fairly slow but she made up for her lack of height...a determination that would be the hallmark of her entire life...everybody....she would be a very determined person someday.(pg 14-15)

Despite the many challenges that Akoko faces she is not weighed down by the she over obstacles but she overcomes them and moves forward.

#### **Hardworking / industrious/enterprising**

Akoko believes in hardwork and learns that the way to make a husband happy is by the work of her hands.

She tells Nyabera, ' My daughter, should it ever be said that you are as lazy as your mother, I will tun in my grave.'(pg 66)

Her herds at Sakwa is said to have been so vast that a special dam separate from the rest is built, "It was said of the herds that should you get to the water to drink before you drew your water then you had to wait for almost two hours before they drunk their fill."(pg 66)

Akoko's granaries are full to bursting so that during the lean season, "...people coming to barter their cattle in exchange for food were rested and fed."(pg 66)

When Akoko returns to Yimbo with all her property she has salvaged...."It was a mighty herd which moved in three cohorts." (pg 93-94)

She advices Nyabera that laziness opens the door for evil to rule one's mind and body. She says, "It is a shame for able bodied person to feed off the sweat of others." (pg 93)

When Akoko moves to Aluor mission with daughter and grandchildren, she continues to

work hard. The writer says, “She had never begged for food and she was not about to begin....”(pg 117)

“God has no time for the lazy, but the devil has , was a favorite saying of hers. (pg 145)

### **Daring/bold courageous**

She faces her brother head on when he takes something she is playing with at a very tender age. During the marriage negotiations she stares straight into the eyes of the husband to be and Otieno wonders at her courage.(pg 24)

In another incident when Otieno Kembo gets wind of some people nosing around with his affairs and confronts Akoko, she responds courageously , “Go away you fool....Are you the village chief or the village fool?” (pg 90)

It is out of courage that she dares trek to Kisumu. She is not scared of the hazards of the journey that has wild animals and worse still the killing and maiming Lang’o tribesmen.

### **Understanding/supportive/concerned**

Akoko is responsible and supportive as a mother; she understands Nyabera’s suffering after the loss of her brother Obura. She snaps out of her personal grief and pays attention to her.

She understands that people are different and accomodates Alando Nyar Uyoma’s weakness. “She leaned over backwards to accommodate her weakness some of which she found irritating like her tendency to idleness.”(pg 70)

She lets Owuor Sino join priesthood even though she has hopes that one day he would sit on the chief’s stool, she consents him to take the new path. She tells him, “I will not stand in your way .....Do whatever the spirit bids you.”

She stands by Nyabera during her trying moments and ensures that her grandchild Awiti is well taken care of.

### **Decisive/ Independent minded**

When her mother-in-law accuses her of witchcraft, Akoko takes her and Otieno head-on in front of the village. She makes a hasty decision to go back to her people in Yimbo.

Soon after Otieno Kembo takes over the chief’s stool with glee and arrogance, Akoko decides that, “...the time had come for battle lines to be clearly drawn.” (pg 73) She treks to kisumu to seek justice from the sirikal.

### **Intelligent/wise**

She grows up as an intelligent woman and is full of wisdom. “She believed that a young woman had to be intelligent....”( pg 65)

She offers wise counsel to her daughter who is mourning the loss of her sons through an outbreak of measles. She tells her, “cry my child, for one does not bury a child without burying a part of one’s soul with it,..Yesterday is not today and today is not tomorrow for each day rises fresh from the hands of Were...”(pg 75)

Her wisdom is further illustrated during her visit to Kisuma to appeal against her brother-in-law. Where else the twins are dissatisfied with the verdict of the D.O, Akoko tells them, “Do not decide the wisdom of a man by the brevity of his quiet or the multitude of his words.....A fool knows everything.”(pg 88). She discovers that she cannot physically confront Otieno Kembo who has reduced her head of cattle and decides to wait for the D.O’s intervention. She says, “There was no advantage in knocking one’s head against a tree trunk ....if you want to cut a tree, take time to sharpen an axe.”(pg 89)

She encourages Nyabera to seek a new life at the mission in Aluor with these words, “Bitterness is poison to the spirit....if you are walking along and you find your path leading nowhere, then it is wise to try other path.”(pg 103)

She plays the voice of reason when a conflict arises between Nyabera and Awiti over her fiancé whose background she has not investigated. Akoko tells Nyabera, “Accept it Maria, the world is changing.” (pg 143) She supports Peter Owuor’s decision to become a priest despite the fact that he is the chief in waiting. She says, “Things have changed and people are turning to different things.”(pg 126)

### **Kind and generous**

The people who come to barter their animals are rested and fully fed before they being dispatched to their homes. Nyabera, in lamenting her mother’s misfortunes, describes her as one who had never looked at any one with an evil eye, never denied anyone food, had been quite generous in sacrifice and libation

### **Rash/impatient/short-tempered**

Despite her positive personality, Akoko at times behaves in a rash manner. She reacts with temper when her mother-in-law accuses her of withcraft and does not wait for her husband to return. She goes home to her people in Yimbo. Chief Kembo comments, I know all your virtues, but your weakest point is your temper and impatience....you must exercise self-control.”(pg 44-55)

### **AKOKO’S ROLES**

1. She is the main character in the story. Without her there would be no story
2. She is symbolically referred to as the source of the river. She is also a symbol of change, wisdom, determination, hard work and focused people.
3. Through Akoko several themes are highlighted; Tradition, change, education, religion and death.
4. She helps develop other characters e.g. through her Owuor Kembo is brought out as loving, committed, wise. Through her Otieno kembo is portrayed as abusive, cowardly,



selfish, greedy and chauvinist.

5. Through her several aspects of style such as proverbs, similes, vivid description, songs, myths and legends are brought out

### **MARIA NYABERA**

She is the second born of Akoko, born three and a half years after Obura. She is the only daughter of Akoko and Owuor Kembo; the only surviving among the three born. She is always merry and always meets people with a sunny smile. This is how she earns her name Nyabera-meaning the good one. She can be described as;

#### **1) Hardworking**

Her husband confesses that, she never neglects her duty to go traipsing off to her home for she is industrious.

In Aluor, she would always accompany her mother to till the land and together they have granaries of food and a big herd of cattle. "The two women became some sort of a fixture on the green sloping countryside, and the locals, not as motivated as they were made endless jokes about their iron backs and caked feet." (pg 117)

Even when she is told how hard it is to master Christian concepts, she does not hesitate to go to Aluor. She memorizes all the stories which she later recounts to her daughter, nephew and mother, "After she mastered the basics of religion she started attending mass every morning before class." (pg 107)

#### **2) Likeable/Loveable/ adorable**

Due to her jovial nature, she is easily likeable. She has, ".....a personality to charm the birds off the trees." (pg 33) Right from a tender age, her mother does not have to worry about baby sitters for young girls line up to hold the baby. "Obura was very jealous for he would have liked to have more of his sister to himself." (pg 33)

#### **3) Preserving/enduring**

She undergoes a lot of suffering. Her first child dies at the age of two. The child suffers from fever, jaundice and swelling of the tummy. She loses her two sons to a ferocious outbreak of measles. She loses her father, and miscarries when Awiti is three years and soon after her husband dies. She is inherited by Ogoma Kwach and they have two children, but they both die. When in Aluor, she hears that Ogoma's wife has died so she goes back to him. They have another child who dies soon after. The man also start to court a younger girl and feeling rejected, she goes back to Aluor.

#### **4) Loving/caring**

As a sister, she loves her brother, Obura, that his death devastates her. She becomes a loner wandering away by herself, mute and quite for days.

After she settles in Aluor she remembers to go for her daughter, nephew and mother whom she loves in a special way. She loves Owuor like her own son ".....formed such a solid wall of love around the children." 9pg 116)

She supports Owuor in his decision to join priesthood. She leaves some of her cattle with her mother-in-law since she has been her friend.

#### **5) Humble /modest**

Although she marries a poor man, Okumu, and brought with her a sizeable herd of cattle, sheep and goats, she respects her husband and shows him humility although he could hardly raise the bride price. She treats him with the utmost respect and politely seeks his permission to go visiting her old home.

## **6) Secretive/Discreet**

When she decides to go back to her matrimonial home Aluor, she offers no explanation and her mother looking into her eyes, lets her go without demanding one. "There are many longings and fears which can never be put fully into words."(pg 118)

## **7) Weak-willed/indecisive**

Even after making a break with tradition to join Christianity at Aluor, she still comes back to her matrimonial home to seek her inheritor, Ogoma Kwach in order to get a son. This is a breach of the the Christian doctrine that she now professes. In most cases she depends solely on Akoko to make decisions.

## **NYABERA'S ROLES**

1. She helps in the development of the story as she is Akoko's child.
2. She brings about change by seeking the Christian religion and gives birth to Awiti who pursues the white man's education.
3. Through her the following themes are highlighted; change, religion, education, family relationships and death.
4. She helps in portraying several aspects of style like; rhetorical questions, dialogue, allusion.

She helps develop other characters e.g. through her Akoko's character traits as caring, comforting, independent minded and religious.

## **ELIZABETH AWITI**

She is Nyabera's only surviving daughter. She is also the wife of Mark Sigu. She can be described as;

### **1) Intelligent/Brilliant**

"She mesmerizes the class with her powers to recall..."(pg 115) She is good at memorizing prayers both in Latin and vernacular. The villagers wonder at her intelligence. "A girl! To be so clever.... to receive commendation after commendation!"

In class where she is the only girl, she holds her position quite well even in mathematics which she dislikes. She emerges top of her class and is invited to join the first teacher's college near Aluor.

### **2) Industrious/hardworking/determined**

She inherits her grandmother's industry and determination. While so many girls drop out of school, she reaches the top class at eighteen. She receives a certificate on passing a tough examination at the end of the year.

She works hard on mathematics which she dislikes and passes well. Amongst ten boys, she is the only girl who holds top position in class.

She does so well at school and gets admitted to a teachers training college. Upon graduation she becomes a teacher.

### **3) Loving/ passionate/caring**

She visits her mother at least once every two months, but still she feels that she has not done enough. She also sends her two sons, Opiyo and Odongo to keep her company.

She loves her grandmother Akoko and writes about her to Mark. "She had loved her grandmother desperately...Had admired her unreservedly." (pg 151)

When Aoro and Tony are punished by being denied food at night, after risking the life of the twins, Elizabeth hears them in the kitchen trying to steal food. However, she goes and gives them *chapatis* and *dengus* smiling at them.

### **4) Firm/ Decisive/Resolute**

When she gives birth to Mary, she decisively asks the nurse for water and baptizes the child in hospital, "I baptize you Mary...."(pg 194) She decides she is going to get admitted in hospital. She asks Mark to go back to the children and only come to visit her at the weekend or whenever she can.

Elizabeth ensures Mary does not get spoiled.....mother kept her head prevented the young lady from being completely spoiled."(pg 195)

### **5) Principled/ dignified/self-controlled**

Although many of the male students at the Teachers Training College are attracted to her and go to great lengths including throwing love notes wrapped around stones to her room to win her over, she does not yield. She remains the odd one out when all the other girls have paired up, either from within college outside.

She is variously referred to as the nun, Virgin Mary and church mouse. She is shunned by both men and women for being a non-conformist. She is so cold towards men that when Mark talks to her asking her why she is always alone she retorts, "What is that to you." (pg 137)

### **6) Motherly/responsible/compassionate**

When Mark feels so guilty for having been so ignorant as to give her anti-malaria drugs that makes her abort, Elizabeth comforts him. "Don't worry, God will give us another. She didn't bother telling him they had been twins. The poor man had suffered enough." (pg 160)

As a mother, she "sleeps without sleeping." Aoro's scream when Tony falls sick at night gets her out of bed even before Aoro reaches her bedroom to report his brother's ailment. Tony is taken to hospital "... Held on his mother's lap...." (pg 180)

When Aoro faints for not having eaten for long, which is a punishment for his being undisciplined, Elizabeth, "...was watching secretly....rushed out to her son." (pg 190)

## **ELIZABETH'S ROLES**

1. She helps in development of plot- She moves with her mother and grandmother to Aluor mission, gets educated, marries Sigu and together they have seven children.
2. Through her we see change- She acquires the white man's education and gets employed.
3. She helps highlight several aspects of style; dialogue and humor.
4. Through her, Akoko's river continues to flow
5. Helps develop other characters e.g. through her we see Maria Nyabera as loving, Mark Sigu is portrayed as loving, caring

## **VERA**

She is Becky's twin sister. The two are Elizabeth and Sigu's first children. She is the first born of the two twins. She is a lady with many positive points, a replica of her mother and great grandmother, Akoko. She can be described as;

### **1) Brilliant/ Intelligent**

She carries off trophy after trophy. She is into everything like debate and sports. After primary national exam, she gets an almost perfect score and wins a place at a top national school. In her secondary national school. In her secondary national exams, she gets distinction in Math, Biology, Physics and Geography. In her A-level, she gets As in Mathematics and Physics and a B in chemistry. She opts to go for engineering.

### **2) Loving/ friendly**

She has a great capacity for love. She has a passionate nature and is completely loyal and her sister is the object of her love and protection. "She was willing and ready to do battle with anyone who crossed Becky's path and was a fearless fighter." (pg 166)  
At five, she almost tears a playmate apart before anyone realizes what is happening, because she is screaming while pummeling him. She loves her sister and shows her off to all. She opts to go to her sister's school rather than a top national school. She still goes to look for Becky at the airport even when she thinks that Becky might not want to see her. She confesses to Becky that she actually loved Tommy only that she cannot marry him. She and Wandia become automatic friends.

### **3) Responsible**

She is made a captain in class seven, a position only held before by boys. Her mother allows her to join Becky's secondary school so that she can look after her twin sister. She talks to Becky until she agrees to go and inform her parents about her impending marriage. Although she is not married and does not have children, Becky entrusts the care and future of her children to her.

### **4) Hardworking/ industrious**

After form six, when Becky decides just to stay at home, Vera gets a job as a teacher in a nearby harambee school.

Her excellent grades are always due to brilliance and hardwork. With her tremendous energy, she participates in many school activities and carries trophy after trophy. She chooses engineering because she thinks it is more challenging than architecture.

### **5) Emotional**

Her tears are ready to fall at the slightest provocation. She is about to cry when her mother tries to persuade her to consider refusing to go to a national school. When she has an argument with her sister, tears well in her eyes and she dashes them away angrily with her fist. She almost engages in a physical fight with her sister.

### **6) Religious**

Although she treats church going as a formality, and is a good Christian thought her childhood, she becomes very religious while in college after Mary-Anne introduces her to a "recollection". She starts a hungry search for religious enlightenment and dedicates her life to God as an unmarried member of the Opus Dei.

### **Vera's Roles**

1. She is used to develop themes such as; change, education, women empowerment, conflict and religion.
2. Through her Becky is portrayed as jealous and hateful, while Wandia is portrayed as loving and concerned.

### **BECKY**

She is one of the twin daughters of Mark Sigu and Elizabeth Awiti. They are the eldest. Becky is brought out as follows;

#### **1) Loveable/Adorable**

She draws love from one and all from a very early stage, just plain irresistible. She has very many admirers from her childhood up to almost the time she dies. She even marries a white man.

#### **2) Selfish/Egocentric**

She is utterly selfish. Even after being informed of Tony's illness, she continues lie in bed. "Few things bored her much as sickness, suffering and death." She just".....stretched luxurious in bed enjoying the feel of her young lithe body."(pg 181)

After her a-levels, she disappears to Nairobi without informing her parents. She just leaves a note and leaves Vera to do the explanation.

#### **3) Jealous/Envious**

She is jealous of the attention Mary is given and wonders whether the latter has to murder to be punished. When Vera turns from a gawky faced teenager into a striking young woman and boys start noticing her, Becky notices this and becomes jealous. When Vera goes to visit her at the airport and she takes her to her home, she confesses that she has been jealous of Vera all her life.

## **Unfaithful/Promiscuous/ immoral**

Becky has an illicit love affair while her husband, John, is out of the country. This leads to their divorce when John finds out. Vera complains about her changing of men frequently as she changed clothes! She throws herself at every man as if she hates herself. This distances her from her children and she ends up dying of AIDS.

## **5) Materialistic**

Becky loves the things of this world. She loves money and what it can buy.

## **6) Responsible/organized**

Even if she lives an irresponsible life, she financially caters for her death; the family is surprised to find that she has left her own children very well financially off. She has left a hefty insurance, a string of maisonettes, two bungalows in Spring Valley and a block of offices and shops in west lands. She has also left clear documents and things legally tied up. She had appointed a firm of trustees to run her affairs on behalf of the children and of their benefit. Her sister Vera has been appointed guardian of the children and is allowed to choose which family member they would live with.

## **Becky's Roles**

1. She is used to develop themes such as; Education, relationships, change, immorality, conflict and materialism.
2. Through her interaction with other characters, their character traits are brought out. For instance Vera is portrayed as loving, concerned and hardworking. Her father is depicted as strict and concerned while Wandia is portrayed as concerned and selfless.

## **WANDIA**

Wandia is Aoro's wife, she is a doctor. She comes from a different community from her husband. The writer uses her to demystify inter-tribal marriages. She is developed as a character that is;

### **1) Intelligent**

The battle for the top position in the anatomy class is between her and Aoro, and she finally beats him. The writer says, "But Wandia had beaten him....she had 78 points."(pg 127)

### **2) Hardworking/ambitious/pioneering**

She portrays several incidences of determination and ambition in life, at her early age that she wants to be a doctor. She later achieves this through her determination when after her second degree; she gets a scholarship to study haematology at John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore Maryland.

### **3) Bold/courageous**

At the school of medicine, when told to stand in groups before the cavader, she is the first person to gather courage to move towards it. She courageously asks the group members to make introduction which helps them to ease the tension.

Her boldness is also shown when she takes the first step towards cementing their relationship. She goes ahead and proposes to him. She, “When are you going to propose if at all.....”(pg 256)

#### **4) Loving/caring/understanding**

Her mother, to whom she has always been close, means a lot to her. She has fond memories of her childhood with her mother. When she learns that her mother is admitted in hospital, she asks her friends to cover for her at Machakos Hospital where she is an intern so that she can visit her.

Her love, care and understanding are exhibited when she adopts Becky’s children: Alicia and Johnny. She handles them better than their real mother.

Though she is a doctor with a tight schedule her love and care for her children and husband are not affected. She finds that she has time for them and understands them well and their academic potentials.

She loves her mother-in-law, Elizabeth, and always consults her. “The relationship between her and her mother was a constant source of amusement....other’s guts? (pg 294-295)

#### **5) Wise**

Though Wandia is younger than Vera, Vera seeks advice from her due to their mutual understanding. This is seen when Vera seeks advice on Becky’s behavior towards her children after divorcing John.

She cautions Aoro, her husband, that though they have busy schedules as doctors, they have children and should not forget they need them.

#### **6) Observant/Keen**

She has observed that Becky has lost significant weight and advises Vera that they have more cause to worry due to Becky’s promiscuity.

She is the first to realize that their son Daniel, though a happy child, has a problem because at the age of four he still drools a little. He has down syndrome. Later through close observation and keenness as a mother she realizes that Daniel has Leukemia. The writer says, “But today her keen eyes watched him frantically.....”(pg 286)

#### **Wandia’s Role**

- i. She is used by the writer to portray the theme of change, Education and relationships
- ii. Through her Aoro is portrayed as determined and supportive.
- iii. She is also used to bring out humour and dialogue as a feature of style.

#### **Mark Sigu**

Mark Sigu is Elizabeth’s husband and an Ex-soldier. He studied at St. Mary’s Yala. He works as a manager in a firm in Nakuru. He is portrayed as a determined father who is ready to work hard and provide, bringing up his family in the best way possible.

#### **1) Loving/Caring**

His life revolves around his wife and seven children. Every time he attains promotion he

gathers his family protectively under his wing and resettles them to a bigger house. He also takes a helping hand in the house since, though they have a house help, his wife is overworked with seven children at home and others in school. He loves his wife and when he realizes he has been unfaithful to her, he weeps.

## **2) Firm/strict**

When Becky leaves home, she writes a note because she is scared of facing him. She also follows his father's instructions of going back to school for her A levels without much questioning. She is also afraid to introduce her white fiancé to his father for she feared him. When Aoro is sent away from school, Oloo does not only deny him food, but also gives him a month's notice to get himself a place of his own. Aoro grows up knowing that his father is a man to be respected and feared.

## **3) Respectful/Liberal/Just**

His family loves him because he is just and fair, firm but understanding. This is evidenced when he accepts Vera's vocation to the Opus Dei and Tony's vocation to priesthood. He also accepts with respect Aoro's and Becky's wish to marry out of their tribe.

## **4) Promiscuous/Unfaithful**

At the peak of the State of Emergency that brings insecurity in Nakuru, Elizabeth and the children leave Oloo in Nakuru and go back to Aluor for safety. Left alone in Nakuru, Mark develops an illicit love affair with another woman and ignores his family for some time. He gets so involved in the affair that he does not reply to his wife's letters including those that inform him of the children's illness.

## **5) Naïve**

Together with his wife Elizabeth, they wrongly diagnosis her attacks of nausea and dizziness as malaria and he proceeds to buy her anti-malaria tablets which end up causing an abortion to their twins.

## **Sigu's Roles**

1. Marries Elizabeth and together they have seven children thus he develops the plot.
2. Helps develop themes such as family relationships, change, education, sexual immorality and conflict.
3. Helps develop other characters like through him Elizabeth is brought out as emotional, wise, caring and loving

## **OWOUR KEMBO**

1. Admirable/lovable/impressive
2. Loving/caring/faithful/devoted
3. Responsible/protective
4. Wise/authoritative

## **OTIENO KEMBO**

1. Greedy/jealous/selfish
2. Contemptuous/hateful
3. Lazy/dependent/opportunistic



4. Arrogant/harsh
5. Cowardly/ timid/fearful

#### **OBURA KEMBO**

1. Admirable/lovable
2. Pleasant/cheerful
3. Loving
4. Protective
5. Industrious/hardworking
6. Decisive/resolute
7. Adventurous/outgoing

#### **AORO SIGU**

1. Responsible
2. Intelligent/bright
3. Remorseful/repentant
4. Admirable
5. Caring/loving
6. Determined/resilient

### **LANGUAGE AND STYLE**

These are techniques through which a writer communicates his/her themes. Style involves the use of artistic language or feature in a literary work for effective communication of feelings, opinions and ideas.

The novel is divided into four parts that describe the life of Akoko and the generations that follow her. The language used at each historical time is unique to that period.

Part I and II make reference to Luo expression, proverbs and words while in part III and IV there is use of modern expressions, Kiswahili words, modern way of naming, academic terms, Christian religious allusions as change is already felt in the land in different areas of life.

#### **DREAM MOTIF**

Various dreams are presented and which carry with them various messages and implications.

It is through dreams that the living are connected to the dead. This is seen for instance through Akoko's great uncle, Obanda who sends a dream through her father and

grandmother and the child is given a name.

Dreams also bring hope from the spirit world. This is seen through Maria's dream where she dreams that Obura comes to her with a beetle which turns into a beautiful bird, the colour of the sky. This is interpreted that the dead brother wants the unborn baby named after him. Dreams have also seen to influence characters action and hence build the plot. This is seen in Vera's dream after breaking up with Tommy where she feels herself moving so fast towards the horizon and hangs at the edge which falls into a bottomless abyss. Perhaps an indication that she needs to take a grip over her life. She feels empty and hence accepts to join Anne to the recollection to fill the emptiness in her life.

## **CONTRAST**

Contrasting characters and incidents are used severally in the novel There is a contrast between Owuor and Otieno. Owuor was hardworking whereas Otieno was very lazy. Otieno married many wives i.e. six whereas his brother Owuor only had one. We are further told that Otieno treated his wives like sluts and they did not fail him whereas Owuor treated his wife like a queen.

There is also a contrast in Akoko's sons. Obura was an active and inquisitive son while his brother Owang Sino was very quiet and reserved.

There is also a contrast between Vera and Becky. Vera is generous, loving and caring whereas Becky is egocentric and jealous. For instance Vera is concerned that she is not woken up when Aoro is taken ill but for Becky these are boring stories.

The marriage between Akoko and Owuor is contrasted to that between Mark and Elizabeth. In Akoko's so much bride price was paid but in Elizabeth's she is given out almost for free.

## **LOCAL DIALECT**

The author uses this style to give authenticity to the story. Examples of local dialect are;

1. J orochere- The white people
2. Were- The god of Ramogi
3. Chik- The way of the people. The laws which govern behavior
4. Dwaro mara- want mine
5. Dak- neighbourliness
6. Wat- brotherhood
7. Nak- initiation, removal of six lower teeth
8. J uok- witchcraft
9. Nyadhi- style
10. Sirikal- government
11. Turudi mashambani
12. Uhuru
13. Ruguru- man from the west( refers to a non-kikuyu, or a person outside the central province)
14. Daktari
15. Mwalimu
16. Muthoni- to mean in-law
17. Mikai- first wife

## **FORESHADOW**

This is a feeling or sign of an event set to happen in future.

“....he did an unheard of thing by taking her, a widow, beaten and bruised by life back into his house.”(pg 15) This heightens suspense as one would want to read on and find out what made Akoko go back to her brother's home after being widowed.

Obura's disappearance and death marks the beginning of a series of misfortunes that will haunt Akoko and her children. “The family had been touched by tragedy and tragedy can sometimes be a habitual drunk who keeps coming back for more.” After Obura's death, others in Akoko family who follow not so long later are;

- a) Nyabera's first born child at only two years
- b) Chief Owuor Kembo
- c) Akoko's other son, Owang' Sino
- d) Nyabera's two sons
- e) Nyabera's husband, Okumu Angolo
- f) Nyabera's two other children she had with Ogoma Kwach
- g) Nyabera's Other child

While Elizabeth and Mark Sigu are being weeded by Peter Owuor, it is said, “.....she was a radiant a bride as only that had ever walked up the aisle to begin a marriage that would last forty six years.”(pg 157)

When Obura disappears to go and know about the white man, it is said of the mother, “A low moan from the direction of the main hut was heard, the first sound in three days....The fearful premonition of doom that only a mother, closely connected as she is to the child, can sense , was in the air.” (pg 57). The premonition eventually fluids to fulfillment in the death of Obura. The family later receives the news that Obura died in the white man's war.

When Nyabera tells Akoko of her dream about Obura, Akoko tells her “I think your brother is trying to tell you something, to bring a message of hope from the spirit world.....May Were find it in his heart to fill our hearts with laughter again.(pg 76). This later becomes true or is fulfilled when Akoko and Nyabera head to the mission in Aluor together with Elizabeth and Peter. Their lives are improved and they become happy again.

When Odongo and Opiyo (Oloo's Sons) took Akoko to make an appeal before the D.O, a foreshadow into the future is given. “When my brother and I took my aunt to make an apil (appeal) to the big white chief whose name was Diyo, would begin Odongo to some round eyed grandson many years later.”(pg 89). This is later fulfilled when they visited Akoko at the mission as married men.

When Mark hands Elizabeth a telegram, “Firm, decisive Elizabeth was standing there looking confused and unsure of her next action...she had the most oppressive premonition of doom pressing in on her from all sides and she simply could not make any sensible move.”(pg 200). Eventually, just as she feared, her mother dies.

## **FLASHBACK**

Flashback refers to the author's regression to the past. Events that took place sometime ago are relived to elaborate the present or the future.

After the death of Akoko, Awiti is deeply affected and inconsolable. The mother, Nyabera, tries to console her by telling her of how Akoko grew in a flashback. “She was the most beautiful girl in the whole village and the eldest daughter of the great chief Odero Gogni and the apple of his eye. Twelve suitors came....he was a young chief and single and his name was Owuor Kembo...”(pg 154)

Another instance of flashback focuses on the difficult birth of Mark and Elizabeth's last born child, Mary. Mark was more attached to this particular child than the others because it was as if she was grabbed from the jaws of death. "This last one had come unexpectedly and has threatened miscarriage after miscarriage needing frequent hospitalization of the mother....."(pg 192)

Wandia during a visit to Aoro when he was an Intern, remembers her childhood.".....she was lost in thoughts of her childhood, running bare foot in the red fertile volcanic soil, after her mother- going home after a hard day's work. She and her mother had always been very close and having been named after her maternal grandmother, her mother had never referred to her as anything but mami..."(pg 255)

There she was a very little girl, clothed in nothing but the love of Were-the god of the rising sun; then she was sitting in the shadow of grandfather. Oloo's largest bull missing her mother who had gone away to seek the new way....."(pg 305-306)

## **ALLUSION**

This is making reference to a statement, person, place, event or thing that is well known from literature, history, religion, myth, sports or politics.

The bible has been alluded to on several occasions. For example, when Nyabera goes to the mission at Aluor to seek the new religion, she wants to go back and get her mother to as well join it. "It offered such consolation for one could identify oneself easily with the desolation of Mary(a sword shall pierce your heart), with the joy of Elizabeth (whose barrenness was removed by God), the warm love of weak Peter (Lord you know everything, you know that I love you!)"(pg 108)

Maria gets baptized and during baptism it is said, "I baptize you Maria in the name of the father, and of the son and of the Holy Spirit." There is mention of Misri (Egypt) and the bad King Herodes, plus birth of Yesu Kristo. (pg 109-110)

Akoko and Nyabera's leaving their homes to go to the mission center at Aluor is compared to the Biblical epic journey of Israelites from Egypt to Canaan, "Like the children of Israel, they left the fresh pot of Egypt for uncertainties of Canaan," (pg 113)

Maria alludes to the story of Daniel and the lions, Elias, the man who went to heaven on a bicycle of fire and great friendship of Daudi and Jonathan (pg 113)

Other quotations from the bible and the catholic belief are; "This is my body which will be given up for you." The story of the prodigal son is also alluded by Aoro when his father punished him he says, "Father I have sinned before you and God." (pg 190),

When MaryAnne and Vera attend a mass at the recollection the priest says, "The mass has ended go in peace to love Lord and serve one another."(pg 132)

The students studying medicine together with Aoro are said, "...appeared to have been turned into Pillars of salt of the Mrs. Lot variety." (pg 244)

Another example of allusion is a statement used during graduation. "By the powers conferred to me by the University of Nairobi I give you the powers to do all that appertains to this degree." (pg 300). This statement is made by the chancellor of the university when conferring a doctor in medicine degree on Wandia.

In the novel, historical allusion comes out. For example, the First World War has been

alluded to. The year is 1918 and the J o-ingresa (the English are at War with the J o-J erman (the German) for the last four seasons. The three young men from sakwa go to fight the J o-J erman (The Germans) in a place called Tanganyika(Tanzania) of a country of black people ruled by J o-J erman.(pg 60-61)

### **SYMBOLISM**

Symbolism is the use of a person, an object, an event to represent or stand for an idea . The title, “The River and The Source” is symbolic. Akoko represents the source of this river, as Chief Odera comments, “....that a home without daughters is like a spring without a source.”(pg 11)

She is symbolic of the beginning of a new generation of women in society. She is a pioneer of women’s position and change in the society. Among the many positive qualities found in her and in the women she inspires are; intelligence, hardwork, courage and determination. In the course of her life the river is threatened by obstacles among them deaths causing it to meander. However, the stream continues to flow and gains momentum. The writer comments, “She it was who had been the source of this river which at on time tricked to a mere rivulet in danger of petering out....momentum.”(pg 204) She is indeed a source of inspiration in the family for through her guidance and wisdom she counters all most all the obstacles that come her way and that of her children and grandchildren.

Akoko’s name which means “noisy one” implies that the female gender should not keep quiet when

They are denied what is rightfully theirs. Her first words dwara mara means want mine signifies that women should stand out to what is theirs.

Otieno Kembo is symbolic of male chauvinism. He is also symbol of greed, opportunism and arrogance of men who cling to tradition in the name of defending male interests. (pg 73) The journey by Akoko, Nyabera, Awiti and Owuor to Aluor mission, is symbolic of a new way of life and severance from the old way of life. They now live far away from their matrimonial homes.

Akoko and her grandchildren are also introduced to the Christian religion. Living away from home means starting life a fresh, building a new home and not much food to eat, the children also get formal education. The journey is also symbolic of the hope that Akoko’s family must have in order to survive. Having lost her husband, Nyabera has to be inherited as tradition dictated. This doesn’t satisfy her and she yearns for something different that will give her hope to live; the Christian religion. This gives them hope and as a result, Awiti acquires education and eventually becomes a teacher while Owuor joins priesthood.

At Aluor mission, it is said there was the church with its steeple bearing, a cross at the top and the school. These symbolize Christianity and colonialism. There is gradual change from tradition to modernity. Also the construction of the railway line long before the birth of Akoko is an indicator of colonial penetration and subsequent introduction of the white man’s government. This penetration has brought with it positive and negative changes in the society. There is positive in the sense that

Akoko gets justice and negative in the sense that the beautiful cultural values of the people are washed away. In addition, hereditary leadership withers when Obura Kembo dies in Tanganyika and the baby Owuor finally opts for priesthood.

## HUMOUR

This is something that amuses or that which has the quality of making somebody laugh. There are several humorous instances in the "The River and The Source." Humour makes the story more interesting and also eases tension in very serious and tragic situations.

Akoko's beauty is described in a humorous manner. The writer comments, as for her legs, *Were* must have carved them out personally rather than one of his apprentices (pg 28). It is interesting to note that *Were* did not delegate to create Akoko's legs.

Akoko's conflict with Otieno Kembo is humorous especially where he calls her she-wolf. Akoko hisses at him and he retreats. It is humorous to see a man who had dared Akoko backing off in fear.

When Akoko and her two grandsons go to Kisumu to lodge a complaint to the white chief (The D.O), the word D.O, sounded like "diyo" which to them meant to squeeze. They wondered whether he might squeeze their brains.

The people of Sakwa are amused by the god of the white man who has a son and died to save them. It is exciting that the ignoramus interprets this as sheer madness. It is also interesting that one can sleep on both ears. "I keep my ears open, my friend; I am not like you who sleeps on both your ears. I keep one open and sleep on the other one!" (pg 59)

Awiti's beauty is humorously described, "Her nose sat on her face as if the creator had really thought hard before placing it carefully in place." (pg 135) It is laughable that Awiti receives notes in college using the most unorthodox means, "a love note would come flying into the room wrapped around a stone." (pg 136)

The responses that Nyabera gets from Pilipo who seems to have some knowledge in the Christian religion introduced by the white man are humorous. She had expected to get some information about this religion so that she could pursue it. ".....They said something about God being three but only one but didn't understand that very well." ".....There were laws which said do not kill.....and to take on one wife. The laws were too hard for me so I came home. (pg 102). This humour eases the tension that is created by Nyabera's situation. She has lost hope and is interested in the Christian religion which might give her hope. This humour also points to the dilemma faces by the new converts who still wished to cling to aspects so their traditional culture and could not cope with stringent requirements of the new religion.

When Wandia enquires about the well being of her relations Kamau and Timothy, Ester tells her, "Timothy is still waiting for the beautiful ones to be born. Meanwhile he chases whatever else is available." (pg 262)

Before Elizabeth's death, she recalls her life as a child and when many suitors were pursuing her. The description of the suitors is humorous: "A love letter comes flying in through the open window; it was from a fellow student whose name was Cosmas somebody or other and like so many others it declared willingness to climb mountains, ford rivers and swim oceans in order to reach her and win her love. The guy must have drowned by now, thought Elizabeth her lips twitching. (pg 306)

## IRONY

Irony is the opposite of the expected. The writer has brought to the forth several instances of irony in the text.

It is ironical for chief Odera's spokesman, Aloo K'lina to assure the chief's in-laws that since they (in-laws) are their brothers they would not make things difficult for them during Akoko's bride price negotiations, they in fact make things difficult for the in-laws from Sakwa by setting the bride price at thirty heads of cattle which was two and half times the usual bride price. (pg 21-22)

Peter Owuor Kembo is Akoko's only living grandson. He is expected to assume the chieftainship when he grows up but he develops an interest in priesthood. The writer says of him, "he who has never really known his father or the joys of father-son relationship, now dreamt of being a spiritual father of many." (pg 127)

It is also ironical that Owuor Peter Sino expected Akoko to reprimand him and reject his proposal of wanting to become a priest and yet she accepts without any argument. She tells him to do what the spirit bids him because the world is changing (pg 126)

Irony is similarly evident when Mark Sigu tells Elizabeth, "it is easier to fight Germans and their allies than to get the courage to talk to a girl." (pg 138) He has waited to meet her for the last six weeks and this time round he had to gather enough courage to do so.

Akoko had lost her first born son, Obura to the white man's war. Before she dies, she regards her grandson-in-law as a replacement for her son; "She had lost one son to the whiteman's war; and by grace of God she has gained another from the white man's army." (pg 149)

In defiance to a sticker stuck on the windscreen just next to the driver of a matatu Vera and Maryanne are travelling in to Kangemi, the driver over speeds. One would have expected the driver to be reminded of the effects of dangerous driving by the sticker aptly entitled, "a speed song." (pg 235)

Betty confesses to Vera that she loves money and all that it can buy. Despite living a lavish lifestyle, the carpet on the floor, the pictures on the wall spelled one word-money. She ends up having affairs during the husband trips abroad and they finally divorce. She lives alone with her children, well off but unhappy.

When Obura and Owang Sino die, Otieno, their uncle is supposed to assume the chieftdom but in the custody for the young Owuor Sino. He does not keep it in custody but instead usurps his nephews chieftainship. He even grabs his brother's as well as Akoko's wealth.

When Obura and two other men are killed in a war against the Germans on Tanganyika, the white man's messenger "... presented the chief with a bracelet which they said was sent by the white people as a thank you and in memory of the fallen men" It is ironical that after a selfless struggle by Obura on behalf of the whites, through which he loses his life, they can exchange life with a bracelet.

When we study the character of Vera, we discover yet another irony. She had been brought up embracing all the basic Christian values and beliefs and we expect that she can find it quite simple to comprehend and understand the existence of God. But when she becomes opposed to this belief and fails to understand the being of God given such a background, it becomes ironical.

## **VIVID DESCRIPTION**

Owour Kembo is vividly described; “Even without his black and white Columbus monkey headdress, he stood head and shoulders above most men. He was obviously a man of nyadhi.....he has a spear in one hand, a shield in the other and splashes of white war paint across his body. His face was virtually tattooed, his head set proudly on his shoulders and he wore only a tiny piece of leopard skin.....(pg 18)

Akoko’s beauty is brought out through vivid description; “her eyes were set apart and neither too small nor too big, her teeth were white and even with a bewitching gap at the centre of the upper set. Her ears with earrings dangling from tiny holes were perfectly shaped standing just at the right angle from her head. And that neck! It was fit to inspire praise songs from nyatiti players! And were those two whole rings on her navel? .....As for her legs, We must have curved them out personally rather than one of his apprentices.” (pg 28)

## **ORAL LITERATURE DEVICES**

The writer had used some oral literature in “The River and the Source.” These include:

- Proverbs
- Songs
- Myth
- Legends

### **a) PROVERBS/WISE SAYING**

Akoko’s father said of her birth, “A home without daughters is like a spring without a source”(pg 11). This indicates the chief’s flexibility. He hears the baby cry and thinks it is a boy, “another rock for my sling.” The fact that the baby is a girl does not dampen his spirit whatsoever.

Akoko’s family spokesman, Oloo, convinces the audience about a woman’s worth to her husband during the dispute between Akoko and her mother-in-law and brother-in-law “.....who knows the goodness of a tree but he who sits under its shade and eats its fruits?” (pg 44)

Other examples of proverbs found in the story are-; “Good manners is the fabric that holds the community together used in respect to the search parties to mean that even if they did not find Obura, it was a sign of respect to the search parties to mean that even if they did not find Obura, it was a sign of respect to go and report to the chief.

“Yesterday is not today and today is not tomorrow.” (pg 75) This proverb is used by Akoko to encourage her daughter Nyabera who had suffered greatly by losing her children.

“It was disquieting to have all one’s eggs in this one tiny frail basket.” (pg 74). This is in reference to

Akoko’s family’s hopes of that long over the chieftdom which has now been placed in the hands of the little boy, her grandson.

“Bitterness is poison to the spirit for it breeds nothing but vipers some of which might consume your very self.” (pg 103) Akoko uses this proverb to encourage Nyabera to try new religion so that all bitterness in her can end.

“.....Beggars cannot be choosers.” (pg 107) Nyabera had to make do with the place shown to her to put a house at Aluor mission.



“.....you don’t have to be good, all you have to be is lucky.” (pg 281). Vera uses this saying in reference to his brother who is lucky to have a good girl like Wandia.

“Laziness opens the door for evil to rule one’s mind and body.” (pg 93). Akoko uses this proverb to chide her brother-in-law Otieno, who because of his laziness, ends up grabbing her wealth and inheritance.

## **b) SONGS**

The young men who come to escort Akoko from Yimbo to her husband’s home in Sakwa compose chants to praise certain qualities in themselves. The song also creates humour. It also breaks monotony of narration. **(pg 26) (quote the song in page 26)**

Akoko sings a dirge full of praise for her husband as she mourns him (pg 69) **.(quote the dirge in page 69)** The song breaks monotony of narration, makes the story interesting and also indicates how the two; Akoko and Owuor Kembo loved each other.

## **c) MYTH**

A myth is story that talks about the origin of a group of people or a phenomenon. AKoko narrates the story of the origin of the Luo to her grandson twins, Opiyo and Odongo as they embark in their epic journey. “In the beginning, *Were* was alone in the world which was beautiful. *Were* is a spirit and a spirit is like a flame.....so he created Ramogi and his brothers who were men.....(pg 81-82)

This myth highlights the role of elders in this community, which is to impart knowledge on the history of the tribe to all young ones. “.....How can you know where you are coming from?” (pg 81)

## **d) LEGENDS**

A legend is a story that talks about a heroic historical character. “Of the children of Ramogi many great brave men have arisen. They are called, “thuondi” the brave ones. These men of renown include Lwanda Magere. So strong and brave a warrior was he that it is rumoured that sharp spears of Lang’o warriors could not pierce his skin.

Then there was Gor Mahia, the wily one who could change his form into anything at all..... (pg 82)

***THE RIVER AND THE SOURCE: SAMPLED POSSIBLE EXCERPT QUESTIONS AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES***

***1. Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.***

Akoko returned to her village having won more than a victory for her infant grandson. She had opened new vistas for her family, which showed another world and the possibility of a different way. She talked about her journey to her daughter Nyabera, who sat on a mat nursing her newborn daughter; she **drank in her mother's every word**.

"You know my child, human beings are all the same the world over, with good ones and bad ones. The bad ones serve to highlight the goodness of the good ones. To allow oneself to sink unresistingly into evil is a bad thing. Take those white people, they are not of my colour, or of my blood but they are just, but your uncle is ruled by his stomach and directed by his loins. He forgot everything that his brother had ever done for him and his greed turned into vindictive hatred. It would have been something if he had worked to support his appetites, but he is lazy. Laziness opens the door to evil to rule one's mind and body. Work tirelessly my child. It is a shame for an able bodied person to **feed off the sweat of others**. It becomes like a sickness of the blood which transmits itself to generations and becomes a curse forever."

Akoko left the clan of her husband Owuor and returned to Yimbo with all the property she had salvaged from her brother-in-law, Otieno. It was a mighty herd which moved in three **cohorts**. Of the three children she had borne, there survived only one; of the grand children only two still lived; and she dwelt in the household of her brother Oloo. She was fifty seasons of age, a middle aged woman. Sometimes she remembered how it had been and this was painful, for now she, a migogo, was reduced to living with her brother. She

wondered how long it would be before his wives started making insinuations, but she did not allow herself to descend to bitterness; for yesterday is not today and today is not tomorrow. Each day rises from the hands of were and brings with it whatsoever it will.

- a) Outline events immediately before the extract. (4mks)
- b) In what two ways is Akoko's journey important? (2mks)
- c) How does Otieno's weakness serve to highlight Akoko's strength? (2mks)
- d) Name Akoko's children not mentioned in this passage. How did they die? (4mks)
- e) Comment on **ONE** feature of style evident in the extract. (2mks)
- f) Explain ONE theme coming out in this extract. (2mks)
- g) State and explain lesson you learn from the passage. (2mks)
- h) What does the last paragraph tell us about Akoko? Explain (2mks)
- i) Explain the meaning of the following expressions as used in the passage. (3mks)

.....she drank in her mother's every word

.....feed off the sweat of others....

.....cohorts

- j) "He forgot everything that his brother had ever done for him". What is it that Otieno forgot? (3 mks)

## Possible Responses

a) - Akoko is escorted to Kisumu by the messenger and two 'askaris' the DO has sent.

- She makes her appeal before the DC who bears the petition. 1mk

- The DC makes judgment in which Otieno Kembo is made to relinquish the stool and return that entire he had grabbed from Akoko. 1mk

Marking points

- Journey to Kisumu √1mk

- Appeal before the DC √1mk

- Judgment by the DC/verdict √1mk

- Justice √1mk

b) - It has opened way for a newness e.g leadership

- It serves to enhance the reservation of human right irrespective of gender.

e.g right to ownership

- It serves to reduce wrong doing while upholding morality e.g Otieno is punished

c) - His injustice/ 1mk greed, etc makes Akoko's decisive and pioneering ✓1mk characters to come out.

d) - Obura Kembo ✓1mk who died in the world war ✓1mk

- Oway Sino ✓1mk who died choking with ✓1mk a fish bone.

e) - Dialogue ✓ 1mk – Akoko talking to her daughter Nyabera ✓1mk who is listening...

“You know my child.....”

Comment : - Reveals Akoko's character of being wise

-Reveals the themes of justice and equality

- Reveals Otieno's character – lazy and greedy

f) - Justice – The DC gives Akoko justice by punishing wrong doing.

- Equality – The DC provides justice irrespective of gender or race.

g) - We should work hard – Akoko tells Nyabera that laziness is a disease.....

- We should fight for our right/justice. Akoko looks for justice and gets it.

- We should have hope and determination and live for have a better future/ no

Situation is permanent.

h) - She is determined/ enduring

- She is optimistic

- Despite the challenges she expects to meet in her brothers household, she braces herself and hopes that all will end one day.”Yesterday is not today....”

i) - She understood all that her mother told her

- Depending on other people for survival

- Large groups

j) - He forgot that it is his brother the late Owuor Kembo who supported him by feeding ✓1mk his entire household. ✓1mk

## ***2. Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:***

“Mother, I have decided to seek the new religion which you have heard about. You know my life is a painful wound to me and much as I try my heart fills with bitterness- for me and for you”.

“My child, do not feel bitterness for me for I am an old woman who has lived her life. As for you it is better that you seek this new way. It might give you hope and rescue you from bitterness. Bitterness is poison to the spirit for it breeds nothing but vipers some of which might consume your very self. Pain and sorrow all human being feel; but bitterness drops on the spirit like aloes- causing it to wither. I give you my blessing my child. If you are walking along and you find your path leading nowhere, then it is only wise to try some other path.”

“Thank you mother. I will bring you news as soon as I can. May We protect you.”

### **Questions.**

(i) Place the above extract to its immediate context.

- (ii) “You know my life is painful wound.” What made Nyabera regard her life as a painful wound?
- (iii) In what way was Nyabera’s life similar to that of Akoko according to the rest of the novel.
- (iv) Identify and illustrate one character’s trait of Akoko and Nyabera as brought out in this extract.
- i. Akoko ii. Nyabera
- (v) Identify **two** features of style used in this extract
- (vi) Pain and sorrow all human beings feel. Rewrite this sentence making “human” the subject of the sentence.
- (vii) Briefly explain **one** theme that is brought out in this extract.

### Possible Responses

#### i. *Before*

Nyabera had gone to Philipo to inquire about the new religion. She had then gathered her things and decided to leave her daughter with her mother N Yimbo. She informed her mother of her decision to seek the new religion. Her mother encouraged her to go ahead and join the new religion and forget her bitterness. *Immediately after* this Nyabera travelled to Aluor mission and joined the new religion.

ii. Nyabera had suffered a lot in her life because her children had died mysteriously leaving her with only a girl child (Awiti). Her husband had died. Ogoma Kwach who had inherited her had gone back to his family.

iii. (i). Both had lost their husbands through death

(ii). Their children had died

(iii). They were both sonless

(iv). (i) Akoko – philosophical/ Reasoning – Bitterness is poison to the spirit for it breeds nothing but viper

(ii). Nyabera

- Bitter – ‘You know my wife a painful wound and much as my heart fills with bitterness ‘

- Religious – Decides to seek solace in the new religion “May Never protect you”

v). Dialogue – “Mother I have decided ..... Nyabera-Thank you mother

Simile – “but bitterness drops on the spirit like aloes .....

Use of Local dialect- Were

(vi). Religion – Nyabera decides to seek new religion...

Death and suffering - You know my life is a painful wound

### ***3. Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:***

“Good. Very good. How about this marriage business-don’t you think it is too soon? I mean you’re only worked for a year– do you really have anything to offer a wife?”

.....  
Things like language to be spoken at home, the religion to be practised – and by the way to what faith does she belong?

(a) Place this excerpt in its immediate context (4 marks)

- (b) Illustrate any two themes brought out in this extract (4 marks)
- (c) Comment on any **TWO** stylistic devices used in the excerpt (6 marks)
- (d) Illustrate two aspects of Mark Sigu's character shown in this excerpt (4 marks)
- (e) Where else in the novel is Aoro in conflict with his father? (2 marks)
- (f) In about 40 words, explain how Aoro defends Wandia as his choice for a wife. (3 marks)

### **Possible Responses**

#### ***(a) Before***

Aoro and Wandia have gone to Aoro's home

They meet the parents of Aoro and exchange pleasantries

Aoro tells his father of his plans to go back to study surgery – his area of interest.

#### ***After***

Aoro's father is skeptical about Aoro's marriage to Wandia

He cites religion as one of the problems likely to arise if the two get married

Aoro tells his father they will sort out issues like religious differences and language to be spoken as Wandia is a rational person.

#### ***(b) Themes***

Religion - Aoro's father wanted to know Aoro and Wandia's religious differences could cause them problems.

Tribalism – Aoro's father asked Aoro why he could not get a nice Luo girl to marry instead of Wandia who is a Kikuyu

#### **(c) Dialogue**

Mark Sigu and Aoro are conversing concerning Aoro's intention to marry Wandia.

Mark Sigu: How about the marriage business

Aoro : I guess not –

Comment – dialogue makes the conversation interesting and lively

Use of dashes-She is a Kikuyu after all – they have a thing about money

Comment – to indicate pause or deep thoughts creates suspense

#### **(d) Mark Sigu's character**

Prejudicial/stereotyping/tribalistic-He regards all Kikuyus as money lovers

Loving -He told Aoro that he loved him and was proud of him

Caring-He told his son Aoro that he was trying to forestall any possible misery which may arise in future.

#### **(e) When Aoro and his brothers went to swim and his young twin brother almost drowned.**

When Aoro was suspended from school for being rude to the prefects in his school. His father denied him food for 36 hours and he passed out.

(f) Aoro says he doubts that Wandia, irrespective of being a Kikuyu, is materialistic; that he has feelings for Wandia which he could not transfer to any other person; everyone, irrespective of the tribe, was the same beneath the skin.

**4. Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:**

“Brothers, we greet you and bring you many greetings from the people of seme. My nephew, Oloo, son of my late brother Sigu, came to me and said: ‘Father, I have found a girl and I want to get married. Now I am a reasonable man and I know the ways of *chikso* I asked him: ‘Son I asked him one does not just find a girl in the air. One sends *ajwanyoto* go and spy a girl and find out her antecedents and character. Is she a thief or a witch? Is she lazy or shiftless? Might there be consanguinity between you and her? Who is her mother and father? I tell you my brothers that I was flabbergasted to hear that none of these things had crossed his mind. He knew that her mother’s name was Maria and her grandmother’s name was Akoko and that was all. You will therefore forgive us because we do not know you and you do not know us. We only came because we have faith in our son who has always been a reasonable man. We therefore wish to introduce ourselves before we go on. I am SemoRakula of Seme,our village is near that strange rock- upon-a-rock,*Kit-Mikai*. We are the descendants of that wear warrior, NyagudiKogambi.Oloo and these young men are my sons and nephew .Oloo is a man of learning and what is more a soldier who has fought for the white man in distant landa Now he is a clerk with a big *kamb*(company)inNakuru, where he gets a good salary. So should this suit be acceptable to all you need have no fear that your daughter will starve. I tell you these things because there are things *jawang’yo*would havefound out for you. Thank you brothers.” A pot of *kong’o*was moved near him and he drew a long refreshing draught. Some things never change-a spokesman needs to irrigate his throat.

“Brothers, people of Seme. My name is OyangeSilwal The girlAwiti is the only child of my late brother Okumu. We are from Sakwa from the village of Gombe, The girl has group in Gem because her mother being a widow and having converted to Christianity decided to settle here which a good thing is because now she is like light for the rest of us. She is highly educated and a teacher of children.

(a) Place this excerpt in its immediate context. (4marks)

(b) Identify and illustrate any **three** thematic concerns evident in this excerpt. (6marks)

(c) Describe the character of Awiti as brought out in this excerpt, (2marks)

(d) Apart from the case in this excerpt, explain where again there is a compromise in the bride

price later on in the novel. (2marks)

(e) In one sentence,paraphrase the statements below (2marks)

“Brothers, people of Seme. My name is OyangeSilwal The girl Awiti is the only child of my late brother Okumu. We are from Sakwa from the village of Gombe.

(f) ‘You will therefore forgive us brothers because we do not know you and you do not know us.’ In light of what happens in the novel, why is the speaker begging for forgiveness. (2marks)

(g) Identify and illustrate any **two** stylistic devices evidently used in this excerpt. (4marks)

(h)Give the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the excerpt. (2marks)

Consanguinity;

irrigate his throat;

**Possible Responses**

a.Awiti Elizabeth begins a relationship with Mark Sigu; she introduces the matter to Akoko and Nyabera; Akoko invites her relations and negotiation is fixed .Mark Sigu comes also with his relations. They meet, talk and are entertained. They agree on just a token as a bride price. The talks are concluded and akoko calls Mark for a close talk, they joyously talk. Later on in the night Akoko dies.

b.Love and friendship: Awiti and mark fall in love and marry; Family ties and relations: Akoko’s close relatives must be invited for the negotiation so is the family of Mark

Sigu.Changes; mark and Awiti want to marry yet they do not know one another's family background; religion: Awiti's mother is said to be converted to Christianity and went to live in the mission; Education: Awiti is said to be an educated girl and is a teacher.

C Hardworking; she studies very hard and becomes a teacher

d. Wandia's mother does not demand any bride price but only asks Aoro to stay in peace with her daughter.

e. Oyange Silwal tells the people of Seme that Awiti is the only child of his late brother Okumu and that they are from Sakwa from the clan of Gombe

f. Because it is not customary to get into marriage negotiations without full knowledge of one another's background.

g. Rhetoric questions: Is she a thief or a witch? Is she lazy or shiftless? Might there be consanguinity between you and her?

Direct address "Brothers we greet you and bring you man greetings.

h. **Consanguinity**; close relationship **To irrigate his throat** – to take a drink to so as to talk with ease.

***5. Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:***

My fathers, "It is a shameful thing for my wife to leave her husband's house and return to her father's house. This outrageous thing had occurred only because I was not here to prevent it."

"Our chief, we are saddened by this unfortunate state of affairs, but you must admit that your mother has a point or two. Long have we pleaded with you to take another wife for two. Long have we pleaded with you to take another wife for yourself and you have adamantly refused. Now she has left you, you are like a misumba, a bachelor which would not have been the case if you had another wife. We beg you take another wife for yourself." This was from Oyier, a grizzled old man who had been his mother's greatest champion in her quest for a wife for Owuor. He realized that the old geezers were going to give him a hard time of it, so he changed his tactics. "Fathers, you are the wise men of this community. That is why you sit in the council. Is it that you have forgotten the ways of chik or that your determination to get me to marry other wives has clouded your judgement? Do you not know that a man's mikai is the greatest jewel that adorns his compound? That her position is maintained and protected by taboos imposed by the ways of chik? That if I die, Were forbid, my body can only lie of her hut? And this would do so even if she herself were dead? To lose one's mikai is to lose one's right hand."

The J odongo nodded sagaciously at the wisdom uttered by the chief. It is true that the mikai is the centre post that holds up a man's hut. Without her, or if she were stupid, only Were could rescue such a man from being blown away from among the people like so much chaff. She it is who saves a young man from the follies and stupidities of youth. Indeed the people of Ramogi has a saying which declared that 'The medicine for stupidity in marriage'. Yes, the chief had spoken wisely. But Oyier would not give up so easily

(a) Explain what happens just before this excerpt (3mks)

(b) What is the bone of contention between Akoko and her mother-in-law, Nyar Asembo (3mks)

(c) "The girl child" briefly explain the relevance of this sub-heading to the whole novel (2mks)

(d) Oyier sounds sarcastic in his speech. Identify and explain the sarcasm (2mks)

(e) From the excerpt, contrast the character of Owuor with that of his brother Otieno (4mks)

(f) Explain the meaning of "It is true that "Mikai" is the centre post that hold up a man's hut" (2mks)

(g) Identify parenthesis in the last paragraph of this excerpt (1mk)

(h) Explain the main theme that comes out in this excerpt (2mks)



- (i) From your knowledge of the novel, describe the role of 'J odongo' in the community represented in this novel Write your answer in note form (3mks)
- (i) Local language is used in this excerpt. Give two examples and explain its significances (2mks)
- (k) Discuss the mood that is prevalent in this extract (1mk)

### Possible Responses

- (a) Owuor returns his journey only to find an empty house  
He tries to inquire from neighbours and from his children what had happened  
He gets very angry/locks himself up in his 'simba'  
He sermons the council; 'jodongo' to convene the following day (3mks)
- (b) Nyar Asembo alleges that Akoko is unable to conceive regularly/ her rate of procreation is slow  
She accuses Akoko of practicing witchcraft against her son  
She also accuses Akoko of standing between Owuor and his marriage to other women by casting a spell on him
- c) 'The Girl child' This refers to AKoko  
She is the source of the family tree (river) that extends for many generations for her, Nyabera, Elizabeth and her great grandchildren. Akoko is the source of life. She represents women as natia, Awiti, Vera and Wandia  
As a source, her family survives due to her determination, wisdom, hardwork and clarity of vision as a girl-child  
She plays a role of those who have been wise in their time, pioneers through whose daring actions bring progress to the whole society (2mks)
- (d) Oyier says that they are saddened by the disappearance of Akoko but in the real sense he capitalizes on this opportunity to advance Owuor's mother's quest of getting him (Owuor) marry another wife. Oyier calls him a 'misumba'. This is meant to hurt and humiliate Owuor so that he can marry another wife
- (e) Look for the following points

### Owuor Otieno

- (i) wise Foolish  
(ii) Reasoning Irrational  
(iii) Faithful Immoral  
(iv) Responsible Irresponsible  
(v) Generous greedy  
(vi) Tactical tactless (4mks)

NB- Contrasting words and phrases must be used.

One character trait of Owuor must come from the excerpt but that of Otieno from elsewhere in the novel

- (f) It expresses the importance of the first wife (Akoko) to Owuor Kembo. Just like a central post holds up a hut, the 'Mikai' prevents a homestead from falling apart. Akoko supports her husband and gives dignity. g) Without her, or if she were stupid only we could rescue such a man from being blown away from among the people like so much chaff (1mk)
- (h) Tradition-If a man dies, his body lies in his house before burial in the right hand side of Mikai's house

The council of 'J odongo' arbitrates in marriage disputes

Position of 'Mikai' is protected by taboos

Losing a 'mikai' is like losing one's right hand

(mikai referred as a 'jewel')

The society is polygamous

It was a taboo for a man and such a chief to be a 'misumba' bachelor (2mks)

(i) Involved in marriage negotiations/solved marriage disputes

Arbitrate in social matters/judges cases

Assists the chief in running the affairs of the community

Assists in the removal of a bad chief (3mks)

NB- Notes are shown through letters, arrows, a star, a dash, a dot and use of incomplete sentences.

(j) :’Mikai’, Chik’, Misumba,

Has aesthetic value

Gives the story its local flavor thus providing variety

Add colour and flavor to the novel

It authenticates and pin points the setting of the novel as Kenyan

It injects life in the narration thus making the story enjoyable

It provides a social and geographical setting (2mks)

(k) Solemn/serious /grave/somber/melancholic mood. “My fathers..it is a shameful thing for my wife to leave....prevent it” (1mk)

**6. Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:**

“wolololoyaye

“Mama yoo!”

“Biuru une! Come and see!” The strangers were taken to the chief’s house and the older people saw that their faces were solemn .they couldn’t be bearers of good news.

“We greet you, o chief Owour .We are people sent by sirikal, the government, with a message for you.” The white garbed one who was obviously the spokesman declared.

“And who, may I ask, is this sirikal? I’ve never heard of him.” Said the chief baffled.

“You may have heard that the country is being ruled by white people now .They, with the help of some black people, have formed something like the council of jodongo, only much bigger, to make sure that everyone lives in peace according to the new law .This is sirikal.”

“Is that so?”

(a) Explain what had caused the outburst at the beginning of the extra? (2marks)

(b) What is strange about the chief’s question? (2marks)

(c) Comment on the use of local dialect in this excerpt. (4 marks)

d) Describe the different moods depicted in the excerpt. (4 marks)

e) Identify with illustrations one theme from the excerpt. (2 marks)

(f) Illustrate a character trait of the strangers and of the older men. (4 marks)

(g) In note form state what the messengers had to say to the chief in this excerpt. (5 marks)

(h) Explain the meaning of the following words as used in the excerpt: (2marks)

(i) solemn(ii) garbed

### **Possible Responses**

a) Strange men in strange dresses .Long garb reaching his ankles and a skull cap – had arrived in the village .The children, who were naked, thought this was funny.

b) The chief thinks sirikal is a person /the chief is part of the sirikal but he does not know it .

c) The local dialect “Wolololoyaye!/ mama yoo !/ Biuru une!”

- Injects life into the narration making it enjoyable.

- It adds local flavour and provides variety.

- It provides social and geographical setting.

d) First there is excitement when people see strangers dressed in a funny attire .Then there is tenseness as the elders notice the strangers look sad /solemn (They conclude that they cannot be bearers of good news.

e) Theme of change – anew form of government is in place.

f) Strange men – respectful/ courteous – they greet the chief in a respectful manner

Wise – they first give background information before breaking the bad news.

Older men-observant / discerning – they notice that faces of the strangers are sad and conclude that they cannot be bearers of good news.

g) The message is that:

- A clan of J o-jerman and J o-ingreza had been hard at war against each other.

- Young people had joined to help and from the chief's village, Obura, Ambere Kongoso and Nyaroche Siwal, had gone.

- They went to fight J o-jerman in a place called Tanganyika

- Only Nyaroche survived and is a beggar at Kisumu.

- The government / the white people had given a bracelet as a 'thank you' in memory of the fallen men

h) Solemn-sad / serious

Garbed – dressed / adorned

### ***7. Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:***

The envelope had been addressed to Mark who opened it, read the letter and passed it to her. "At least she is from the country," he said sounding a bit odd.

She looked at him and then lowered her eyes to the letter. It was characteristically Aoro – brief and to the point. She felt kind of sorry to Mark. First there had been Becky who had left home unceremoniously only to return with a white man in tow. A very nice man but apparently not nice enough for Becky. He had found out that she was having an affair during his trips abroad and had sued for divorce. Now she was living alone with the children, financially well off, but unhappy. It was one thing to enjoy the thrills of an affair, but a different thing altogether to have a carte blanche to do exactly as you pleased. John had been terribly hurt of course and Mark had been furious with her.

Then Tony had joined priesthood – Mark resisted it at first but recently, during Tony's ordination he had been full of pride for his son – whose face had shone with joy and youthful dedication. Vera's case had been the hardest to accept. Mark thought of the world of Vera, and deferred to her in everything. Then she had arrived home one day and declared that she wanted to join the catholic prelature of Opus Dei as a non – marrying member. But he had eventually accepted because he loved her. Because she looked so radiant. Anything that could bring such joy and serenity could not be that bad. It was a pity though that she did not wear a veil or a habit. That way he could at least have bragged about her a little to his friends. His children were a source of great envy to his less lucky friends. Vera for one was a fully qualified electronics expert and had a lucrative job in the city with large salary and all sorts of benefits. Women like that tended to marry the most amazing wimps and Mark had held his breath in fear. But in the end all Vera wanted was to dedicate her life and her work to God, and there was no turning her back. So Elizabeth secretly hoped that Aoro would bring home a nice girl – naturally a Luo like himself – who would proceed to have many children – all a nice, ordinary black colour.

a) Briefly state the contents of the letter mentioned. (3marks)

b) In point form summarize why Elizabeth pities Mark in this excerpt. (4marks)

c) Discuss the irony brought out in this excerpt (4marks)

d) Identify and illustrate three character traits of Mark evident in this excerpt. (6 marks)

e) Comment on the thematic concerns that are depicted in this extract. (4 marks)

f) His children were a source of great envy to his less lucky friends.

(rewrite as an interrogative statement) (1mark)

g) Elizabeth secretly hoped that Aoro would bring home a nice girl ....., Does he? Discuss with illustrations from elsewhere in the novel. (3 marks)

### **Possible Responses**

- a) - Aoro has finished his internship successfully ✓1
- He has one month leave ✓1 and will visit home / on 28<sup>th</sup> ✓1
- He will bring along Wandia, ✓1 ( a doctor the girl he intends to marry)
- b) - Becky leaves home unceremoniously and marries a white man ✓1
- She (Becky) gets into an affair and is divorced ✓1

Vera joins the Opus - Dei as a non – marrying member ✓1

- Tony joins priesthood ✓1
- Aoro intends to marry a girl from another ethnic tribe ✓1
- c) - Mark expects Vera and Tony to marry but they don't ✓ ½
- It is ironical that John, Becky's husband is a good husband yet she gets into an affair that leads to divorce ✓ ½
- It is ironical that Becky is financially well off yet she is unhappy. ✓ ½
- It is ironical that well educated women with good jobs end up marrying the most amazing wimps instead of men like them. ( men who are well educated)
- d) i) Accommodating ✓1 – “Mark resisted it at first .... He had been full of pride for his son but he had eventually accepted ....” / He eventually accepts Tony's and Vera's choices ✓1
- ii) Concerned – “women were like that.... Mark held his breath in fear;” /
- He fears that Vera might marry a wimp like the other educated women.

iii) Supportive – “...anything that could bring such joy and serenity could not be that bad” He allows Vera to join the Opus Dei because she is happy there.

iv) Loving / caring - “...he had eventually accepted because he loved her;”

v) Boastful – “That way he could at least have bragged about her a little to his friends,”

e) i) Religion - Vera joins the catholic prelature of Opus Dei as a non – marrying member.

- Tony had joined priesthood

ii) Betrayal / unfaithfulness / immorality – Becky moves around with other men when her husband is not around.

iii) Gender parity / equity – Vera is a fully qualified electronics expert (works in a male dominated career)

- Vera does not marry.

iv) Love – Mark loves his children and wants the best for them, which makes him accept the choices they make in life.

f) Were his children a source of great envy to his less lucky friends?

g) Yes, ✓1 ( Aoro brings home a nice girl ) for Wandia is:

i) Respectful - during her first visit, she interacts with both Mark and Elizabeth with lots of respect ✓1

ii) Dependable – Takes care of Becky's children after her death. ✓1

iii) Friendly – she becomes very good friends with Elizabeth and Vera. ✓1

v) Loving/ caring – She takes good care of her large family despite being a career woman ✓1

**8. Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow**

“Thirty head!” exclaimed Aloo in disbelief.

“Yes, thirty head!” declared the uncompromising chief.

“But that is two and half times the usual bride price.”

Even for Akoko, it was too much.

“Let them show us that my daughter is not going to starve in that wasteland they call a home”. They trooped back into the hut and the negotiations began in earnest.

“Brothers, people of Sakwa, we are pleased to welcome you to Yimbo. It is customary, because of the good *dak* between us, for you to marry our daughters and we yours. We are therefore more than neighbours, we have great *wat* between us because of the intermingling of blood though this has not occurred between our two lines so there is no danger of brother marrying sister - great taboo. Since you are our brother, we will not make things difficult for you.” Here he stopped to take a sip of kong’o and you could have heard the ants talk, so great was the silence. However, nobody was fooled by his sweet words. He continued, enjoying immensely the tension he was creating. “Our daughter, Adoyo Obanda is a great beauty whose assets have been praised and sung by many a nyatiti singer from here to Chumbu Kombit, from Sakwa to Loka Nam. She is as fleet as a gazelle and her flying feet have been incorporated into the saying of our village so that mothers sending their daughters on errand tell them to run like Adoyo of the flying feet. She has been carefully brought up and has been taught all the requirements of chik. She is a very apt pupil and will therefore not bring shame and ruin to her husband by improper conduct.

Her antecedents are peerless for she can trace her blood line clear to Ramogi our great father and her blood is pure for we have always taken care to marry correctly. She is also the eldest daughter of our great chief, a man of whose fame is known throughout this land. After careful consultation, we have therefore decided that thirty head of cattle should be the proper bride price.” Was that an inaudible gasp from someone at the back? Chief Owuor Kembo signaled to his uncle and the old man spoke.

a) Explain briefly what happens first before this excerpt. (2Marks)

b) State briefly what happens after this excerpt (2Marks)

c) Briefly describe the nature of the ceremony going on in this excerpt (3Marks)

d) Identify and illustrate two character traits of Aloo K’olima in this excerpt. (4Marks)

e) Identify and illustrate any two themes evident in this excerpt. ( 4Marks)

f) Make notes on the qualities of Adoyo Obanda as revealed in this excerpt. (5Marks)

g) Identify and illustrate any two features of style used in this excerpt. (4Marks)

**Possible Responses**

a)

- Chief Odera Gogni calls the councils of J odongo from Sakwa outside his house for consultation about Akoko’s betrothal
- Chief Odera Gogni discloses to the council of J odongo that he has already sent away 12 suitors
- Chief Odera Gogni discloses that he likes this group of suitors because the bride is of a good stock and his uncle a good spokes man
- Chief Odera Gogni tells Aloo K’ Olina to set Akoko’s bride price at thirty head

b)

- Elders from Sakwa ask to be allowed to consult with each other outside chief Odera's house Akoko watches what is going on from her mother's kitchen, asks to be given a piece of land to settle for she feels she might never get married
- Otieno Kembo argues against the high bride price
- Owuor Kembo accepts to pay the thirty head of cattle as bride price

c)

- Formal negotiations of Akoko's bride price between the people of Sakwa and the people of Yimbo
- The bride price has to be set depending on Akoko's outstanding attributes

#### **d) i) Tradition**

- Akoko has been taught all the requirements of chick (tradition)
- Traditionally a brother marrying a sister is a great taboo
- Traditionally elders drink Kong'o during marriage negotiations. Aloo K'Olima stopped to take a sip of Kong'o

#### **ii) Role of elders**

- The council of J odongo (elders) from Sakwa and that from Yimbo negotiates for Owuor Kembo's and Akoko's marriage
- Chief Owuor Kembo's uncle (an elder is the spokesman for the council of J odongo from Sakwa).
- Aloo K'Olima (an elder) is chief Odera's spokesman.

#### **iii) Marriage**

- Akoko's marriage negotiations begin in earnest
- Aloo K'Olima sets Akoko's bride price at thirty head of cattle
- It is customary, because of the good *dak* between us, for you to marry our daughters and we yours.....There is no danger of brother. Marrying a sister – a great taboo.

#### **e) Aloo K'Olima**

- Considerate – exclaims at the high bride price (thirty head) chief Odera wants set for Akoko
- Respectful – Address the people of Sakwa as; 'Brothers, people of Sakwa
- Informed - quotes from Chik that brother marrying a brother is a great taboo and Akoko has been taught all the requirements of chik
- Intelligent / skillful – skillfully addresses the people of Sakwa using sweet words.
  - Skillfully describes Akoko's attributes to the people of Sakwa.

f)

- A great beauty – is praised by many Nyatiti singers
- Fast / swift – she is as fleet as a gazelle
- A good role model – mothers sending their daughters on errands tell them to run like Akoko
- Apt – she is very apt pupil
- Pure – her blood is pre.....

#### **g) Direct address – brothers .....**

- Local dialect – da, k wat, kong'o, nyatiti, chik

- Suspense ..... So great was the silence
- Simile ....as fleet as a gazelle
- Personification – you could have heard the ants talk ....
- Metaphor – her flying fleet