

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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A Man of the People (1966)

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013)

OVERVIEW

Auteur Chinua Achebe is widely regarded as one of Africa's most important literary voices, known for his ability to portray the complexities of Nigerian life. Born in 1930 in Ogidi, he died in 2013, in Massachusetts. Achebe studied at University College Ibadan, where his interest in literature and storytelling took shape. Over the course of his career, he received major national and international accolades, including the Nigerian National Order of Merit and the Man Booker International Prize, which recognized the global impact of his work. His novels include *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). In universities around the world, Achebe's writing is treated as essential reading, valued for its insight into colonialism, cultural identity, and the challenges of modern African societies.

Book *A Man of the People* is a novel that explores corruption, political ambition and the fragile hopes of a young nation. Through the rivalry between Odili, an idealistic teacher, and Chief Nanga, a powerful minister adored by the public, Achebe examines how personal desires and political interests collide. The book addresses themes such as the seduction of power, the vulnerability of democratic institutions, the manipulation of public opinion and the moral compromises individuals make when faced with privilege. At home, the novel was received with admiration for its honesty and courage, especially because it appeared just before a real military coup in Nigeria, which made its warnings feel prophetic. Critics praised Achebe's ability to portray political decay with humor, simplicity and emotional depth. *Man of the People* strengthened Achebe's reputation as one of Africa's most important literary voices.

Background The historical backdrop of the novel is the turbulent period that followed the end of colonial rule in many African countries during the 1960s. Newly independent nations were trying to build stable governments while dealing with economic challenges, ethnic tensions and the legacy of colonial administration. In Nigeria, where Achebe sets the story, political parties competed fiercely for influence, often relying on patronage, bribery and regional loyalty. Public institutions were fragile, and leaders who had once fought for independence now struggled to resist the temptations of wealth and status. The novel reflects a society where citizens hoped for progress but often felt powerless in the face of corruption. Villages depended on government favors for basic services, and the press could be easily influenced by those in power. Achebe also captures the cultural mix of modern aspirations and traditional expectations, especially in matters of marriage, education and social mobility. This historical moment created a climate in which political disappointment grew quickly, paving the way for military intervention and shaping the direction of the nation's future.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Odili An idealistic young Nigerian man who believes politics should be guided by honesty and integrity

Chief Nanga A charismatic and corrupt Nigerian government minister

Mrs. Nanga Chief Nanga's marginalized wife

Edna A young educated woman whom Chief Nanga plans to take as his second wife

SYNOPSIS

A Man of the People follows Odili Samalu, a young teacher who becomes increasingly aware of the corruption shaping his newly independent country. At the center of this corruption stands Chief M. A. Nanga, a powerful and charismatic minister celebrated by ordinary citizens as a man of the people. When Nanga visits Odili's school, the entire village erupts in celebration. Odili, who once admired Nanga as a childhood teacher, begins to see how the minister uses influence, money and public affection to maintain his position.

Odili travels to the capital and stays in Nanga's luxurious home, where he witnesses the inner workings of political power. He sees how leaders enrich themselves, manipulate the press and treat public resources as private property. His personal life becomes entangled with politics when Nanga seduces Elsie, the woman Odili hoped to marry. Humiliated and angry, Odili decides to challenge Nanga in the upcoming election. Odili joins the Common People's Convention, a small opposition party that promises honesty and reform. He campaigns in his home district, facing intimidation, bribery attempts, and violence from Nanga's supporters. His village briefly supports him, then abandons him when the ruling party restores their protracted water project.

During one of Nanga's rallies, Odili is publicly beaten and left with serious injuries. As the election unfolds, corruption reaches a breaking point. Max, Odili's colleague and co-founder of the Common People Convention, is killed while exposing fraud, and his fiancée, Eunice, retaliates by shooting a powerful politician. The unrest spreads across the country, and the military stages a coup that removes the government from power. In the aftermath, Odili recovers and reconnects with Edna, the young woman Nanga intended to marry. With the old regime gone, Odili and Edna begin to imagine a future shaped by hope rather than manipulation, leaving the story on a note of renewal after turmoil.

PLOT NARRATIVE

CHAPTER 1: Chief Nanga Seduces the Crowd

The Celebrated Arrival: Chief M. A. Nanga, widely praised as “a man of the people,” arrives at Anata Grammar School to address staff and students. The villagers flood the compound, filling the hall far beyond capacity. Dancing groups perform, hunters fire their guns, and the entire village treats the visit as a major celebration. Odili, a young teacher at the school, watches the excitement with frustration. He sees villagers honoring a politician who helped push the country into inflation.

Memories of a Former Teacher: Odili recalls that Nanga once taught him in Standard Three. Back then, Nanga was handsome, popular, and admired as a scoutmaster. Odili even felt pride when Nanga entered politics. That admiration faded after Odili witnessed corruption and political manipulation during a national crisis. Odili remembers how the Prime Minister fired honest ministers during a financial emergency and accused them of treason. Nanga supported the purge loudly, shouting phrases that later appeared in the papers. Odili watched the chaos in Parliament and saw how public opinion was shaped by propaganda.

The Minister's Grand Entrance: When Nanga arrives at the school, hunters fire their last shots and dancers raise dust in the air. The Proprietor, Mr. Nwege, introduces his teachers one by one. When Nanga reaches Odili, he recognizes him instantly and embraces him. The crowd reacts with admiration, and Odili feels unexpectedly moved. Nanga speaks warmly to the teachers, praising the profession and joking with the crowd. His confidence and friendliness impress everyone. Odili notices how easily Nanga wins people over and how his charisma softens even Odili's skepticism.

Praise and Performance: As people praise Nanga's humility and education, Odili reflects on how politicians succeed by avoiding modesty and embracing boldness. The crowd showers Nanga with admiration, and Odili sees how political theater works in real time. Mr. Nwege gives a long introduction, but the crowd grows impatient. When Nanga finally speaks, he calls the gathering a family reunion and praises national unity. His relaxed tone and confident delivery please the audience, reinforcing his image as a leader close to the people.

Celebration at the Lodge: After the speech, Nanga and his entourage go to Mr. Nwege's house. Dancers return to life, hunters wait for palm wine, and Nanga hands out money open-handedly. People praise him for treating money *"as if it were sand."* Odili observes the scene and sees how generosity strengthens Nanga's popularity. Inside the lodge, Odili notices Mrs. Eleanor John, a wealthy trader and influential party woman, as well as a beautiful young girl who seems out of place: *"... it looked as though they had stopped by some convent on their way and offered to give her a lift to the next one"* (14). Odili inquires about the young girl, but the journalist who accompanies the minister advises him not to venture near this girl whom no one really knows anything about. She might be the Minister's girlfriend or cousin, the journalist says.

CHAPTER 2: Chief Nanga Extends a Personal Invitation to Odili

Ambition and Independence: Odili explains the country's new social rule: *"it didn't matter what you knew but who you knew"* (17). He refuses to flatter powerful men, which is why he chose teaching in a rural private school instead of a comfortable civil-service job. He wants autonomy, even if it means fewer benefits. Odili has applied for a scholarship to study in London. He stresses that he earned all his previous scholarships *"purely on my own merit."* He wants to visit Europe, but he refuses to beg anyone for help. His friend Andrew once told him how thrilling it felt when a white taxi driver called him "Sir," and Odili imagines he would enjoy such small educational moments too.

Nanga's Unexpected Offer: At the end of the reception, Chief Nanga brings up the scholarship again. Odili tries to avoid him, but Nanga insists he should visit the capital and stay in his guest room. He promises a fully equipped space with *"bedroom, parlour, bathroom, latrine, everything."* Mrs. John jokingly warns Odili to be careful, calling Nanga *"a wicked soul,"* but the invitation remains serious.

Titles and Vanity: Nanga proudly announces he will soon receive an honorary doctorate in the United States: *"Doctor of Laws, LL.D."* The journalist in his entourage recites the grand future title: *"Chief the Honourable Dr M.A. Nanga, M.P., LL.D."* Everyone cheers. Nanga even compares his name to another politician's elaborate title, showing how much he enjoys these honors. Before the Minister leaves, he makes sure to give Odili his address in the capital. Odili notices Mr. Nwege's *"malevolent eyes boring into [him] as [he] wrote it down"* (19).

Mr. Nwege's Frustration: After Nanga leaves, Mr. Nwege turns his irritation on Odili. He feels he was not properly rewarded for organizing the event and complains that Odili objected to the formal teacher lineup. Odili notes that Nanga barely gave Nwege a moment to speak about his own concerns. The Principal's hopes for an appointment to a new government corporation seem to have vanished. The teachers also embarrassed Mr. Nwege. Andrew's joke calling Nanga *"M.A. minus opportunity."* angered the Minister. The Senior Tutor walked out of the lodge with two bottles of beer under his arms, which amused everyone except Nwege. Odili reflects that the Principal's disappointment, though misdirected, is understandable.

Conversation with Andrew: Later that night, Andrew visits Odili. Their banter shifts to gossip about the beautiful girl who accompanied Nanga. Andrew reveals she is the Minister's girlfriend and that he plans to marry her under customary law because his current wife is *"too bush for his present position so he wants a bright new parlour-wife to play hostess at his parties"* (23). Odili feels sympathy for the girl, saying she deserves *"to be somebody's first wife."* Odili and Andrew tease each other about Odili accepting Nanga's offer of lodging. Andrew jokes that Odili is already influenced by the Minister's generosity. Odili insists he will never seek a scholarship through underhanded means, calling such behavior *"next to impossibility."*

Elsie's Introduction: Odili begins to speak about Elsie. He warns that hindsight can distort storytelling, but he tries to stay honest. He recalls meeting her at a university party, where she was lively and charming. Their relationship began quickly, and despite her engagement to a man named Ralph, they became close. Odili remembers feeling jealous whenever she reread Ralph's letters. Elsie now works at a hospital near the capital, and Odili hopes to visit her during his holidays. Nanga's offer of accommodation suddenly seems convenient. Odili admits that bachelor friends in the city could host him, but none would provide a comfortable guest room.

CHAPTER 3: Odili Accepts Chief Nanga's Invitation

Homecoming and Hidden Wounds: Before heading to the capital to visit Nanga, Odili decides to stop by his village, Urua, to see his father and drop off his young houseboy, Peter, for the holidays. Peter's excitement and his small gifts for his parents, simple tokens bought with his modest wages, make Odili reflect on his own emptiness. His mother died giving birth to him, leaving him branded as unlucky, and his father, a man of many wives, never showed affection. Though Mama, his father's first wife, raised him kindly, Odili always sensed he was different, a child shadowed by superstition and loss.

The Father's Power and Its Curse: Odili's father had once been a District Interpreter, a man who stood between the colonial officer and the people. That role brought wealth and fear in equal measures. Their home was filled with charms to ward off enemies, and Odili grew up knowing that power invited hatred. Years later, while visiting a friend's family, he discovers just how deep that resentment runs: The friend's father threw him out upon learning he was the son of Hezekiah Samalu: "... *you cannot stay in my house ... I don't blame you ... because no one has told you. But know it from today that no son of Ezekiah Samalu's shelters under my roof*" (30). He realized how his father's influence had poisoned their family's reputation.

A Father's Decline and a Son's Defiance: Now in his seventies and still chasing young wives, Odili's father lives off a small pension and village politics, leaving his many wives to fend for themselves. Odili recalls their bitter quarrel when he condemned his father's plan to marry a fifth wife. His words, suggesting the old man might not live long, nearly earned him a curse. Peace came only after Mama intervened with gifts of schnapps and whisky. Though they reconciled, Odili knows his father will never understand his ambitions or his desire to pursue post-graduate education.

Arrival in the Capital: When Odili finally travels to Bori to visit Chief Nanga, he worries that the minister's invitation was just polite talk. But Nanga greets him warmly at the gate, embracing him and treating him like family. Odili is struck by the contrast between Nanga's polished charm and his wife's simplicity. She speaks their native language, not the English her husband and children use. Mrs. Nanga's kindness feels genuine, and Odili begins to see the household as both impressive and strangely divided.

The Poisoned Coffee Incident: Later that day, Nanga takes Odili to visit Chief Simon Koko, another minister. The meeting becomes chaotic when Koko suddenly believes his coffee has been poisoned by his cook. Panic spreads. The cook is dragged in. To prove his innocence, the cook drinks the coffee himself, revealing that the so-called "poison" was actually a different tasting coffee that the cook purchased from the government's heavily advertised OHMS (Our Home-Made Stuff) store. The irony is sharp: Leaders who preach patriotism do not consume their own national products. Odili watches the scene with disgust, seeing how fear and vanity rule these men.

Masks of Power: After the incident, Nanga mocks Koko's panic, pretending to be courageous, though Odili knows he was just as frightened. Nanga's warning, "*If anyone offers you a minister's post, run away,*" rings hollow. Odili sees that both men cling to their positions like lifelines, terrified of losing comfort and status. The laughter hides insecurity, and Odili begins to glimpse the rot beneath their confidence.

A Wife's Wisdom: That evening, Odili dines with Mrs. Nanga, who speaks with warmth and humor about her husband's demanding life. She jokes that marrying a minister is worse than marrying a night-watchman, lonely and full of sacrifice. She laughs about embassy parties where everyone pretends to be important and casually mentions, pointing to a picture, that Nanga is preparing to take a second wife, a young woman named Edna: "*Edna ... She is our wife ... We are getting a second wife to help me*" (36). Odili recognizes Edna as the young girl who caught his eye during Nanga's visit to the school.

Reflections on Luxury: Lying in the minister's lavish guest suite, Odili is overwhelmed by its comfort. The soft bed, gleaming bathroom, and fine furniture make him realize how seductive power can be. He reflects that no one who has tasted such privilege would willingly give it up. The new leaders, once poor and

oppressed, have now barricaded themselves inside the shelter left by colonial rulers, preaching unity while enjoying exclusivity. As Odili drifts to sleep, his thoughts shift from politics to desire, especially for Elsie.

CHAPTER 4: Odili Watches Nanga's Daily Interactions

A Minister's Morning: Odili wakes up in Chief Nanga's mansion to the sound of the minister's cheerful voice. Nanga, dressed impeccably and full of energy despite returning home at 2 a.m., heads off to work. Odili finds it oddly amusing that someone so charismatic and socially gifted actually goes to an office and sits behind files. Over breakfast, Mrs. Nanga tells Odili that she and the children will soon travel back to their village. She insists on taking them home yearly, so they don't grow up detached from their roots: "*Without it ... they would become English people*" (39). Odili agrees, though privately he's relieved. Her absence will make it easier for him to bring Elsie to the house without awkwardness or judgment.

Learning How Power Works: Living in Nanga's home gives Odili a front-row seat to the inner workings of national politics. He had long sensed that the country was drifting but lacked concrete examples. Now, watching Nanga's daily interactions, he begins to understand how decisions are made, how influence is traded, and how personal interests often outweigh public good. Some revelations are less shocking than he expected; others are far worse.

A Library of Oddities: Odili looks for something to read but finds the minister's library filled mostly with decorative encyclopedias and melodramatic novels. He turns instead to the newspapers and discovers a strange mix of modernity and backwardness, like a city clerk's official warning about the proper number of excrement pails per household. The contrast between such notices and the luxury of Nanga's seven-bathroom mansion is almost surreal. The mention of pails triggers Odili's memories of living as a houseboy in Giligili, where bucket latrines and rat infestations made life miserable. He recalls the nightly battles against rats and the unbearable stench during a night-soil workers' strike. That harsh year feels distant now, almost like a different lifetime.

The Road That Must Be Tarred: When Nanga returns for lunch, he is irritated. Odili overhears him arguing with another minister about a road that must be completed before the next election. An expert has advised waiting for the dry season, but Nanga dismisses the expert as a "small boy" and insists the work proceed immediately. Odili learns that the road passes through his own village and that Nanga has already ordered luxury buses to run on it, buses he is buying on installment. The urgency, Odili realizes, is political and personal, not technical.

The Americans Arrive: After a heavy meal, Odili longs for a nap but feels embarrassed to sleep in a house where everything moves at high speed. Nanga and his wife discuss finding a cook for the minister while she is away, revealing that the household has been functioning with only a steward. A young American couple arrives unexpectedly. The wife, Jean, bursts into the room with confidence, calling the minister by his Christian name, Micah. Odili is stunned. No local person would dare address Nanga so casually. But Nanga seems delighted. Mrs. Nanga, however, withdraws quickly, clearly uncomfortable.

America's Self-Portrait: Odili ends up in a long conversation with John, the husband, who speaks earnestly about America's progress and moral leadership. He claims that the United States could have conquered Russia after World War II but chose not to. Odili listens politely, unsure what to make of such sweeping statements, but fascinated by the cultural confidence on display.

A Cook Who Won't Cook: A young man arrives seeking work as a cook. He proudly lists European dishes he can prepare but admits he cannot cook local food. His wife handles that at home. His reasoning is simple: cooking traditional meals is "shameful" for a man: "*How man we get family go begin enter kitchen for make bitterleaf and egusi? Unless if the man no get shame*" (How can a man who has a family start going into the kitchen to cook bitterleaf and egusi? Unless the man has no shame) (46). Odili and Nanga laugh, but the minister ultimately rejects him because he prefers local dishes to foreign ones.

CHAPTER 5: Odili Sleeps With Jean

Instant Change of Plans: Jean and John invite Chief Nanga and Odili to a relaxed Saturday dinner. But just as Mrs. Nanga leaves for the village, everything shifts. A stylish car pulls into the compound, and out steps Barrister Mrs. Akilo, elegant, confident, and still dusty from her long drive. She announces that she has come straight from the road. Odili notices she looks beautiful even with the dust, remembering the village joke: *"You haven't seen her yet; wait till she's had a bath"* (49). Odili notes that perhaps she spent all her childhood in England. Chief Nanga's English instantly becomes smoother, almost polished. He offers her his wife's bedroom, saying, *"She travelled home today."* She declines and asks him to pick her up later at the International Hotel. Odili realizes he might end up alone in the mansion, but Nanga reassures him: He will drop Odili at Jean's dinner first, then go meet "Agnes," whom he jokingly calls *"She who must be obeyed."*

Jean's Dinner Party: Jean is disappointed that the minister cannot come, but she welcomes Odili warmly. The guests include a British couple, an American couple, and an African-American writer. Jean begins the evening by praising Nanga's unpredictability: *"If you ask him if he is coming to dinner, he says, 'I will try'"* A British woman tilts her head and says, *"How sweet! I just love pidgin English."* Odili senses she is being sarcastic. Dinner is heavy, rice and groundnut stew with chicken, but the conversation is lively. Because Odili is staying with the Minister of Culture, everything he says seems to carry extra weight. People listen closely, and that attention makes him speak more confidently.

A Debate Over Art: The discussion shifts to a controversial wooden sculpture recently installed in Bori. A British guest claims it must be bad because an old woman shook her fist at it. Odili steps in: *"Shaking the fist ... is a sign of great honour and respect."* The room pauses. Odili's explanation impresses the guests, especially the American couple, who begin asking him about his education, his travels, and his views on Americans. Odili feels his status rising in the room.

Highlife and Love: When the party ends, Jean insists on driving Odili home herself. Once the guests leave, she puts on a highlife record and they dance. She moves with enthusiasm, though she exaggerates the waist wiggle the way many foreigners do. Odili finds it charming. Then she surprises him: She says she noticed him shaking his leg earlier and interprets it as sexual restlessness. *"Was it me or Elsie (of the American couple) you wanted?"* (53), she asks. Odili admits it was her. They soon end up in bed together. In the middle of their intimacy, the bedside phone rings. Jean, still holding Odili, wriggles across the bed to answer it. It is Elsie, the American woman, calling to check whether Odili returned safely. After hanging up, Jean mutters, *"Bitch,"* and they both burst into laughter.

A Drive Through Bori: Around 1:30 a.m., Jean yawns, and Odili suggests leaving. She snaps, *"Don't be so British,"* irritated by what she sees as unnecessary politeness. Jean offers to take Odili on a nighttime drive. She knows Bori remarkably well for someone who has lived there only eleven months. They pass elegant waterfronts and filthy backstreets. Odili begins to wonder whether she enjoys showing him the city's ugliness or whether she wants him to feel ashamed of his country. She points out luxurious houses owned by ministers and rented to embassies. Odili bristles at her tone. When she asks why streets aren't named after historical figures or independence events, he replies sharply, *"Because this is not France but Africa."* She laughs, unaware that he means it as a rebuke. Odili suddenly wonders whether Jean, lover of Africa that she claims to be, would ever be seen near a Black man in her own country. Despite his irritation, Odili still wants to see her again. He asks when her husband, John, will return. She says Wednesday. He asks if they can meet before then. Jean smiles: *"Why not? Let me call you tomorrow"* (56).

CHAPTER 6: Elsie Is Thrilled to See Odili

Odili's Reason for Coming to Bori: Odili reminds us that Elsie is one of the main reasons he has come to Bori. That hasn't changed. As soon as he arrives, he writes to her and then visits her at the hospital. She is on night duty and has been woken up, *"against the rules of her hospital,"* just to see him. She is sleepy, wrapped in a head-tie, but still warm and affectionate. She even tries to fetch him biscuits and a drink, but

he refuses. Elsie's friend also appears, a young woman Odili barely remembers from a university party. She is shy, quiet, and oddly uninterested, which surprises him because, as he says, "*Strangely uncurious for one of our women.*" This friend is supposed to accompany Elsie to Chief Nanga's house for two days off, though they never say openly that she is meant for the Chief.

A Ride Filled with Teasing: As Odili and Elsie walk to the Minister's car, he jokes: "*I hope Chief Nanga won't ask for a swop.*" Elsie misunderstands the word and thinks he means cotton wool used in surgery. They laugh, and she eventually says her friend is actually more beautiful than she is. Odili refuses to flatter her, but she teases him anyway: "*Even ten Elsie's no fit belleful you.*" Their playful jealousy shows how close they are. Elsie is excited by the minister's Cadillac, calling it "*tough car!*" Odili promises to pick her up on Thursday at four.

Preparing for the Book Exhibition: On Thursday, Chief Nanga must open a book exhibition featuring works by local authors. Odili is interested because he dreams of writing a novel about the arrival of Europeans in his district. The Chief returns home for lunch carrying the speech prepared for him, but instead of reading it, he puts it aside and begins asking about their hospital visit. Odili realizes that Nanga intends to accompany him to pick up Elsie. Nanga asks bluntly: "*How serious are you about this girl Elsie?*" Odili replies that he isn't thinking of marriage and calls her "*just a good-time girl.*" He immediately feels guilty. He is speaking this way only because he and Nanga have been exchanging boastful stories about women. Chief Nanga tells Odili a story about a jealous husband who put "juju" on his wife's chest to keep her faithful. Odili laughs at the foolishness of the idea. Nanga then delivers one of his typical pronouncements: "*Any person wey tell you say woman no get sense just de talk pure jargon.*" He insists women are intelligent and make deliberate choices. Odili agrees.

The Trip to the Hospital: Odili tries to remind Nanga about his important speech by saying that he cannot read in a moving car. He hopes that Nanga will stay home to prepare for his speech. Nanga waves it off: "*Talking is now in my blood ... all na so so talk talk.*" Odili imagines how the outing will go, but Elsie's friend suddenly becomes ill and cannot come. Odili is disappointed, but Nanga doesn't mind. During the drive back, Nanga repeatedly mentions an upcoming Cabinet meeting that will last all night. Odili realizes this is the Chief's way of saying the house will be free for Odili and Elsie.

At the Book Exhibition: Outside the exhibition hall, they meet Mr. Jalio, President of the Writers' Society. Odili once knew him at the university, but Jalio now dresses in eccentric clothes he designs himself. Chief Nanga is unimpressed and asks sharply why Jalio didn't warn him that ambassadors would attend. He then scolds Jalio's outfit: "*Is that what you call national dress in your place?*" (63). Jalio replies, "*I dress to please myself, sir.*" Nanga lectures him about protocol and says that if Jalio wants him at future events, he must wear a proper suit or national attire. Odili feels embarrassed but also slightly pleased to see Jalio humbled.

100% WOOL: MADE IN ENGLAND: Despite the awkward start, Jalio praises Nanga as a champion of African culture and announces that an American university will soon award him an honorary doctorate. Nanga stands up grandly, pushes his sleeves back, and begins with a few jokes. When he forgets the title of Jalio's novel, *The Song of the Black Bird*, the audience laughs, thinking it is humor. Odili notices Jean sitting in front of him. Her husband John has returned. Elsie whispers, asking if Jean is "the famous Elsie." Odili clarifies that Jean's friend was the one he mentioned earlier. Odili barely listens to the speech. He whispers with Elsie and observes the crowd. One man is wearing a robe made from expensive wool with the manufacturer's label, "*100% WOOL: MADE IN ENGLAND*" displayed proudly on the sleeves. Odili marvels at the creativity and odd fashion choices of his people.

CHAPTER 7: Elsie Betrays Odili

A Politician Who Gets Away with Everything: Odili describes Chief Nanga's extraordinary ability to escape consequences. He notes that "*Chief Nanga was a born politician; he could get away with almost anything he said or did*" (66). People forgive him easily, even when he says harsh or ignorant things, because he has a talent for sounding friendly and harmless. Odili recalls hearing Nanga tell a colleague on the phone that he distrusted university graduates and preferred Europeans. He remembers thinking, "*I knew*

I was hearing terrible things,” yet he still found it hard to take offense because Nanga’s charm softened everything. The public’s usual reaction to his missteps is the indulgent phrase “Make you no min’ am” (don’t mind him).

Ignorance Turned into Applause: Nanga’s lack of knowledge becomes a public spectacle. At one event, he proudly announces he has never heard of the country’s most famous novel and still receives applause. Later, he predicts that the nation will soon produce writers like *“Shakespeare, Dickens, Jane Austen, Bernard Shaw,”* and then adds *“Michael West and Dudley Stamp.”* The crowd cheers again. After the event, Mr. Jalio and the editor of the Daily Machete ask for copies of Nanga’s speech. Nanga hands them clean copies and personally adds the extra names he had improvised earlier. Odili watches him bend over the table and write them in *“his own fair hand.”*

A Ride Home Filled with Expectation: Odili, Elsie, and Nanga leave an exhibition. In the car, Odili takes Elsie’s hand and pulls her close. He praises Nanga’s speech, saying, *“That was a beautiful speech,”* while imagining the intimacy he expects later. Back at the house, Elsie goes upstairs to change. Earlier, Nanga had instructed his steward to place her bags in his absent wife’s room, which alarmed Odili. But he reassured himself that Nanga was showing *“great tact and delicacy.”* Odili plans to visit Elsie once the house is silent.

Dinner With Elsie: They share a dinner of rice, plantains, and fried fish. Elsie looks radiant in a yellow dress. The conversation turns to the Writers’ Association president, whose outfit had amused them earlier. Nanga unexpectedly calls him *“a well-comported young man,”* surprising Odili, who remembers their earlier clash. Odili retires early, hoping Elsie will follow. She disappears from the sitting room, but Nanga remains there reading his speech file. Odili peeps out repeatedly, thinking, *“Why didn’t he take the blessed file to his study?”* (70). Odili feels trapped, unable to go upstairs.

A Shocking Discovery: After an hour, Nanga finally goes to bed. Odili tiptoes upstairs, but when he reaches Elsie’s door, he hears voices and laughter. He retreats, tries to rationalize, and then decides to wait. When he later rushes upstairs, he hears Elsie *“deliriously screaming my name”* (71). He hopes that she is calling on him to come and rescue her from her ravisher. Odili opens the door. The shock freezes him. Odili returns to his room, overwhelmed. He describes his mind as struck by *“a huge sledgehammer beating down on my brain”*. He packs his suitcase mechanically, muttering phrases like *“Good Heavens.”* He waits for Elsie to come down in shame and apologize, but she never appears.

A Night Walk Through the City: Unable to stay, Odili leaves the house and walks through Bori until dawn. He notices beggars, a night-soil man, and empty buses. He compares his distracted state to *“the man in the proverb who was carrying the carcass of an elephant on his head and searching with his toes for a grasshopper”* (72). He thinks of what to say to Nanga. As for Elsie, he concludes that she is not worth it, and that she is *“a common harlot and the less said about her the better.”* When Odili returns, Nanga is waiting. He asks, *“Where have you been, Odili?”* Odili replies, *“Please don’t talk to me again.”* Nanga tries to explain, saying he thought Odili was not serious about Elsie. Odili warns him, *“You have won today ... but I will have the last laugh. I never forget”* (73).

Final Break With Nanga: Nanga attempts reconciliation, saying, *“I tender unreserved apology.”* He even offers to bring Odili *“six girls this evening.”* Odili spits and says, *“You call yourself Minister of Culture. God help us.”* Nanga becomes furious, threatening to *“show you pepper.”* Odili leaves with his suitcase. Nanga’s servant shouts after him, *“Na this boy de halla so for master im face?”* (74). (Is this the boy shouting at the master like that in his face?). Odili takes a taxi to Maxwell (Max) Kulamo, an old school friend, who is a lawyer. He finds him dressed for court. Max greets Odili warmly. In Max’s home, Odili finally feels safe and wonders how he ever ended up in Nanga’s house.

CHAPTER 8: Odili Joins the Common People Convention

The Weight of Humiliation and the Decision to Seduce Edna: When Max leaves for court, Odili finally feels the full force of what happened the previous night. He realizes that *"another man had wrenched my girlfriend from my hand and led her to bed under my very eyes"* (76). The shock is a humiliating truth. Odili obsesses over the fact that he could do nothing because Nanga is a powerful minister surrounded by wealth and protection. Odili's thoughts wander between shame and absurd impulses. At one point he even considers making *"an anonymous call"* to the hospital where Elsie works, though he immediately rejects the idea. He compares his mental state to an exam strategy his lecturers taught him: While working on easy questions, the subconscious arranges the difficult ones. He suspects that his own subconscious is now shaping a serious decision. Odili sees that Elsie is irrelevant. What matters is that *"a man had treated me as no man had a right to treat another."* His pride demands retaliation. He decides he must return to Nanga's house and seduce Edna, the young woman Nanga plans to marry. This moment of resolve arrives *"just like that, without warning."*

A New Mood and a New Purpose: By the time Max returns home, Odili is cheerful, even singing. Odili tells Max the story, *"making light of it all,"* because he now cares only about revenge. Max listens and responds with a bitter comment: *"Women, cars, landed property. But what else can you expect when intelligent people leave politics to illiterates like Chief Nanga?"* (78). Max's frustration reflects a deeper disappointment with the country's political leadership.

The Birth of a New Political Party: Odili learns that Max and several friends are forming a new party: the Common People's Convention. They are disillusioned by how *"our hard-won freedom"* has been misused by corrupt politicians. Odili is immediately drawn to the idea, partly because it offers another way to confront Nanga. Eight people gather in Max's room: lawyers, a doctor, a trade-unionist, a columnist, and one European from an Eastern Bloc country. Max introduces Odili as *"a trustworthy comrade who had only the other day had his girlfriend snatched from him by a minister"* Odili quickly corrects him, saying Elsie was *"a casual acquaintance."*

Odili's Skeptical Speech: The European speaks in a distinctive way, praising intellectuals who leave their *"tower of elephant tusk"* to join politics. He punctuates his sentences with *"yes?"* in a questioning tone. Odili finds both the man and his phrasing intriguing. Odili tries to show he is not easily impressed. He points out that a party called the Common People's Convention is composed entirely of professionals. He says, *"It is very kind of you to accept me so readily,"* but questions the party's composition. The group responds energetically, and Max explains that this is only the planning stage. The young lawyer reminds Odili that *"the great revolutions of history were started by intellectuals, not the common people."* The trade-unionist applauds loudly. The European suggests calling everyone *"comrades,"* though Max warns that being labeled communist would kill the group. Their opponents would simply say, *"Look at those crazy people who want to have everything in common including their wives, and that would be the end of it"* (80).

Max's Cool Leadership: Max handles the discussion with patience and authority. Odili notices his *"cool, sure touch."* Max predicts they will not win the next election but insists they must *"get something going"* and wait for the inevitable political collapse caused by corruption. Max explains that they will gather evidence of corruption and *"drop cats among their pigeons."* He says they will finance basic campaign costs but leave mass bribery to the established parties. Odili is impressed by Max's realism.

A Poem of Lost Hope: Max shows Odili a poem he wrote after Independence, *"Dance-offering to the Earth-Mother."* He now sings it like a lament. Odili reads the verse: *"I will rebuild her house, the holy places they raped and plundered"* The poem makes him mourn the lost promise of the early years of freedom. Max recalls a biblical passage: *"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great lamentation."* He connects it to Odili's phrase *"Poor black mother!"* Odili reflects about Africa: *"Poor black mother! Waiting so long for her infant son to come of age and comfort her and repay her for the years of shame and neglect. And the son she has pinned so much hope on turning out to be a Chief Nanga"* (82). Max explains that his father, an Anglican priest, still believes the country should not have asked the white man to leave.

A Fortunate Arrival: Max tells Odili that his arrival is perfectly timed. The new party needs regional organizing secretaries, and *"now we've got you."* Odili agrees: *"I'll do what I can, Max."* He feels a new sense of purpose. Max reveals that a junior minister in the government secretly supports the new party. Odili asks why the man does not resign. Max laughs and says, *"Where do you think you are-Britain or something?"* He explains that resignations in their country are rarely noble; they are usually strategic. Max argues that having someone inside the government is essential: *"He tells me all that goes on."* Odili agrees, quoting a proverb: *"It is only when you are close to a man that you can begin to smell his breath"* (84). Odili is fully committed to the new political movement and to his personal revenge.

CHAPTER 9: Odili Visits Edna

Returning to Anata: Odili returns to Anata on December 23rd after declining Max and Eunice's invitation to spend Christmas in Bori with them. As soon as the bus drops him at Waya market, he senses trouble: A crowd has gathered around Josiah's shop, gesturing angrily. A villager helps him with his box and explains that Josiah has committed an abomination against Azoge, the blind beggar. Josiah had invited Azoge in, fed him rice and palm wine as though he were a generous host, then secretly swapped the beggar's real walking stick for a fake new one, hoping to use the original stick to make "juju" that would help him cheat customers.

Josiah's Ruin: The villagers are furious. They see Josiah's act as greed beyond limits. One woman curses him, saying, *"May he blind his mother and his father, not me."* A palm-wine tapper adds that some people's stomachs are never full. The harshest condemnation comes from Timothy, who repeats, *"Josiah has taken away enough for the owner to notice,"* meaning Josiah has crossed a sacred boundary. Odili reflects on the proverb about taking until the owner notices. It represents the community's collective will. Within a week, Josiah's business collapses. No one buys from him, and even visitors are warned away. By the end of the month, the shop closes and Josiah disappears.

Seeking Out Mrs. Nanga: Odili rents a bicycle to visit Mrs. Nanga. He wants to reach Edna, the young woman Nanga intends to marry, before news of his quarrel with Nanga spreads. Mrs. Nanga is surprised to see him, but he explains his sudden return. Her children greet him, their polished "Corona School English" already fading in the village environment. As they talk, Mrs. Nanga reveals her frustration with her marriage and her husband's plans. Chief Nanga is planning a trip to America for their son Eddy to attend school. He is going without her: *"Have you ever heard of a woman going to America when she doesn't know ABC? ... When Edna comes, she will go to those places ... I am too old and too bush"* (88). Odili feigns surprise and tries to reassure her that she is more sophisticated than Edna. Mrs. Nanga does not believe him.

Mrs. Nanga's Frustrations: As Odili sits with Mrs. Nanga, he realizes her mind is drifting far beyond their small talk. She begins to speak with regret about her past, explaining that she once passed the entrance exam for secondary school but was pressured by both her family and Nanga's to abandon her education and marry Chief Nanga. She tells Odili she *"wasn't old enough to refuse,"* and now watches Edna, the young woman chosen to replace her, being pushed into the same trap: a girl fresh from college, denied even a year to teach or explore her own life. She laughs, but her laughter turns bitter as she says Edna should *"come quick-quick to enjoy Chief Nanga's money before it runs away"* (89).

No One Remembers the Woman Who Suffered: Odili feels uneasy, especially because Mrs. Nanga's teenage son Eddy is present while she speaks so openly about her disappointment. When Odili asks whether Edna will soon enter the household, Mrs. Nanga shrugs off any claim to authority. She says Edna can come whenever she likes, take over the role of staying awake at night to "talk grammar," and end up with clothes smelling of cigarette smoke and foreign visitors. Odili urges her to advise Edna to slow down and take a year to teach, but Mrs. Nanga refuses. She gestures to her breast and says, *"Let her come and suck,"* insisting she will not spoil anyone's good fortune. She remembers how young she was when she married Nanga and how she starved and struggled before money arrived. Now, she says, the *"food is cooked,"* and no one remembers the woman who suffered when there was nothing.

Planning to Meet Edna: Moved by Mrs. Nanga's pain, Odili declares that he must visit Edna the next morning. He hesitates because Eddy is listening, but he senses the boy is quietly on his mother's side. Odili

asks where Edna lives. Mrs. Nanga pretends not to care but allows him to go, saying, *"Don't tell anyone I sent you."* Eddy, sympathetic to his mother, gives Odili detailed directions and even suggests using their car, showing his youthful innocence. Odili finds Edna's father, Odo, working on yam-tying rope. He apologizes repeatedly for having no kolanuts. Edna arrives, wiping her face with her lappa. Odili is struck by her beauty and maturity. She remembers him, saying, *"You are Mr. Samalu."*

A Greedy Father: Mr. Odo's tone becomes unpleasant when Odili tells Edna that Nanga sends his best wishes to her mother who is still in the hospital. Odo suggests that Nanga has not been very supportive. But Edna gently corrects him, reminding him that Nanga had already sent help through his wife. Edna's father retorts that this is not enough and speaks openly about exploiting his in-law: *"He will bring and bring and bring and I will eat until I am tired"* (93). Odili sees him as greedy and self-interested. Edna excuses herself to finish cooking food for her mother in the hospital. Odili watches her walk back to the kitchen and notices that *"her back [is] as perfect as her front--which happens once in a million"* (93). Edna returns briefly with kolanuts. Her father breaks them with a prayer about *"bringing and eating,"* then crunches them. Odili takes one lobe and waits, unsure how to proceed.

The Bicycle Ride: Odili decides to offer Edna a lift to the hospital. He tells her father, *"I ought to go and see Edna's mother so that when next I write to Chief Nanga I shall have something to report"* (94). Edna accepts the offer without hesitation. Odili ties the food container to the bicycle and helps Edna sit on the crossbar. The road is hilly, and he pushes himself hard to impress her. She praises him, saying, *"You are eating all the hills like yam."* He replies, *"I haven't seen any hill yet,"* though he is exhausted.

The Bicycle Crash: A sheep and its lambs suddenly rush onto the road. Odili brakes sharply, but Edna's weight prevents him from using both brakes. The bicycle crashes. Edna cries out, *"My father!"* She grazes her knee, and the food spills into the sand. Odili feels humiliated and stares at the ruined meal. Edna begins to cry, saying, *"My mother will die of hunger today."* Odili thinks her tears come from hurt pride and poverty. He apologizes repeatedly and offers a solution: *"Can she manage bread and corned beef?"* He promises to buy food and disinfectants for her knee, relieved to have a way to help.

CHAPTERS 10-11: Odili Launches His Campaign

After the Accident: Odili realizes that the bicycle crash has ruined any chance of speaking frankly to Edna. Still, he learns she will spend Christmas morning helping Mrs. Nanga, and he decides to go there himself. When Odili reaches Chief Nanga's home, Edna is not there. Instead, a drunken kinsman is demanding beer and boasting loudly. He calls himself a *"P.I.V., Poor Innocent Victim,"* as opposed to Nanga being V.I.P., and praises Nanga's wealth, pointing to the new four-story house being built next door. Mrs. Nanga handles him calmly, showing she is used to managing such relatives.

Waiting for Edna: Odili spends nearly two hours at the house, giving small coins to groups of children performing masked dances. Edna finally arrives in a car sent to fetch her. Mrs. Nanga leads Odili to a small reception porch and sends Edna with a beer. Edna serves him silently, then stands at the window watching people pass in their Christmas clothes. Odili tries to begin a serious conversation, but she seems unsure why he wants to talk. Odili urges her to slow down and avoid being rushed into marriage, especially to a polygamist. He warns, *"You will be making a big and serious mistake if you allow anyone to rush you into marriage now"* Edna immediately asks whether Mrs. Nanga sent him and then challenges him: *"What is your business in it?"* She is defensive, confused, and wary. He tells her that a girl as beautiful and young deserves better than an old polygamist: *"The man's son is almost your age."* She replies, *"that is the world of women."* Odili is outraged: *"Rubbish! An educated girl like you saying a thing like that! Are you a Moslem or something?"* (99). She gets up and confesses that Nanga paid for her education.

Misstep and Progress: Odili tries to persuade Edna further, but when he puts an arm around her waist, she reacts sharply, pushing him away in alarm. They stand apart, both embarrassed. Odili apologizes, saying, *"Do not misunderstand me... Forget everything I've said."* After a long silence, Edna replies, *"I am sorry, Odili,"* using his first name for the first time. Her apology softens him. She asks, *"Have I offended you?"* with genuine innocence. Odili feels his heart melt and decides that with Edna, progress must be slow and gentle. He believes he has made modest headway, even if the moment was awkward.

National Scandal Erupts: On New Year's Day, the Minister of Foreign Trade announces a 20% rise in textile import duties. The Opposition reveals that British Amalgamated was secretly informed months earlier and imported three shiploads before the increase. Newspapers report that Nanga himself had done similar things when he held the same portfolio, building *"three blocks of seven-storey luxury flats"* with illicit gains. The country descends into chaos as unions threaten strikes and shops close.

The CPC Launches: Max summons Odili to Bori for consultations and the launch of the Common People's Convention. The political atmosphere is electric, full of anger and anticipation. Odili feels exhilarated, noting that scandals now produce *"a feeling akin to festivity"* among ordinary citizens who believe they have nothing to lose. During this meeting, Odili announces that he will contest Chief Nanga's seat. the CPC leadership equips Odili for his campaign against Chief Nanga: *"I returned to Anata with a brand-new Volkswagen, eight hundred pounds in currency notes and assurances that more would be forthcoming"* (101).

Hostility in Anata: Odili tries to visit Edna but misses her. He writes her a long letter explaining why she must not marry Nanga. When he announces he will contest Nanga's seat, most people laugh, except Josiah, the disgraced trader, who offers to join his campaign. Odili declines, knowing Josiah's reputation would harm the movement. Odili attempts to hold an inaugural meeting at the school hall, but Mr. Nwege blocks it. A villager pretends to greet him, then knocks off his cap and kicks him, to the crowd's amusement. Odili realizes Anata is hostile territory and decides to move his campaign headquarters to his home village, Urua. That same night, Mr. Nwege dismisses him from the school, handing him a month's salary and a notice.

A Final Visit to Mrs. Nanga: Odili decides to say goodbye to Mrs. Nanga before leaving Anata. But when she sees him, she explodes in fury, shouting so the whole village can hear. She accuses him of bringing trouble to her doorstep and calls on the gods to witness her suffering. Odili retreats as she dramatically girds her waist, preparing for confrontation. Odili goes to the hospital to find Edna, but the gateman insults him viciously, shouting, *"Idiot like you ... look him motor self!"* Inside, a nurse tells him Edna's mother has been discharged. Feeling discouraged, he drives to Edna's home despite her father's earlier warning never to return.

A Dangerous Encounter: Edna is terrified and begs Odili to leave, saying, *"He will kill you if he finds you here."* Odili refuses, teasing her by making her repeat *"please, Odili"* while she panics. Her father arrives, recognizes him: *"Who do you want here? Were you not the one I told the other day never to come here again?"* (106). He storms off to fetch a machete. Edna cries out for her mother. Odili stays seated, strangely calm. Edna's father returns with the raised machete. Odili asks him, *"Who do you want here?"* Odo thinks Odili is crazy. Edna's mother appears, frail and unsteady, and recognizes Odili as *"the boy who brought me bread."* Her presence diffuses the danger.

A Father's Threat: The father lowers the machete and listens as Odili explains he has come to ask for their vote. Before Odili leaves, Edna's father gives him an analogy: *"My in-law is like a bull ... and your challenge is like the challenge of a tick to a bull"* (107). He advises Odili to keep the campaign money for himself instead of wasting it. As Odili rises to go, Edna tries to walk him to the car. Her father forbids it, shouting, *"Don't let me lay hands on you this afternoon."* She stands at the doorway and says softly, *"Bye, bye."* Odili replies, *"Bye,"* and leaves Anata behind.

Odili's New Resolve: Driving away from Edna's house, Odili feels proud of the courage he showed when her father threatened him with a machete. Her soft *"bye, bye"* convinces him that she noticed his bravery. In that moment, he finally admits to himself that he wants Edna for her own sake, not merely as part of his revenge against Chief Nanga. His motives are now tangled: personal desire, political ambition, and vengeance all reinforce one another. Odili realizes that if he hopes to win Edna, he must weaken Nanga's power. Even if he cannot defeat Nanga in the election, exposing his corruption might prevent him from returning to the Cabinet. He thinks someone might eventually say, *"Nanga has taken more than the owner could ignore!"* But he knows this is only a hope in a country where leaders are rarely punished.

Remembering His Own Transformation: As he drives past the hill where he and Edna once crashed, Odili reflects on how much he has changed. He once dreamed of joining the privileged class symbolized by car ownership. Later, at university, he rejected that dream after seeing how privilege corrupted people,

like the former student leader who became a wealthy, oppressive civil servant. Now, ironically, Odili is driving a new car himself, *"eating the hills like yam,"* and hoping he won't fall into the same trap.

Edna's Letter: When Odili reaches home, his boy Peter hands him a blue envelope. It is from Edna. She apologizes for her father's behavior, saying she feels like going on *"a bended knee to beg forgiveness."* She explains she is trapped: Her father has already accepted money for her marriage to Nanga, and backing out could be dangerous. She writes, *"What cannot be avoided must be borne,"* and ends with warm wishes and a playful reference to their bicycle accident. Odili rereads the letter several times, removing the parts clearly written by a professional "letter writer." He studies every word to understand how she feels about him. Although she begins with *"Dear Odili,"* which disappoints him, he finds comfort in her closing phrase, *"sweet dreams."* Encouraged, he feels ready to intensify his political fight against Nanga.

Pressure from His Own Men: Back in his home village, Odili organizes a bodyguard of four men led by Boniface, a tough outsider with a reputation for fearlessness. Odili pays him generously and equips the group with machetes, bottles, stones, and eventually two guns. Violence escalates as Nanga's supporters, calling themselves "Nangavanga," attack Odili's team. Odili even collects a placard reading *"SAMALU IS TREITOR,"* amused to see his name publicly displayed. Boniface and another guard wake Odili one morning demanding 25 pounds. They argue that Odili cannot win with "talk talk" alone and hint at burning Nanga's car. Odili refuses, insisting the CPC is a small party that cannot behave like the ruling P.O.P. Their misunderstanding shows how dangerous and chaotic grassroots politics has become.

A Father's Ambiguous Support: Odili's father, a local P.O.P. chairman, surprises him by allowing him to stay at home despite their opposing political loyalties. His father believes politics is mainly about personal gain and is satisfied that Odili has at least gotten a car out of the CPC. Their usual hostility softens, temporarily.

Chief Nanga Arrives: One afternoon, Chief Nanga arrives at Odili's father's house in his Cadillac. Odili stays seated, refusing to greet him warmly. Nanga tries to act friendly, calling Odili *"my great enemy,"* but Odili remains cold. His father becomes nervous and tries to scold him, while Nanga pretends to defend Odili, saying, *"If a young man does not behave like a young man who is going to?"* Nanga claims that all his corrupt commissions are used for party funds, and Odili mocks him by asking whether his new four-story building is the party headquarters. His father shouts at him to stop, but Odili continues, mentioning buses and import duties. Nanga says he will "educate" Odili after he finishes "advertising his ignorance."

The Bribe: Inside the house, Odili's father reveals that he has begged Nanga to forgive Odili. Nanga then offers Odili a scholarship and 250 pounds if he signs a paper withdrawing from the election. Nanga says he deserves to be elected unopposed and warns Odili he will *"fail woefully."* He claims even Max has taken money and stepped down. Odili refuses the bribe, saying, *"It is NO in capital letters!"* He accuses Nanga of fear, pointing out that Nanga sends thugs to intimidate him. He tells Nanga to take his "filthy money" away and calls him a "bush man." His father shouts his name in shock, but Odili storms out. As Odili passes the Cadillac, he notices several thugs inside, one of whom looks familiar. He realizes the situation is becoming dangerous. He also knows Nanga lied about Max stepping down but wonders why Max has not yet arrived to help with the campaign.

CHAPTER 12: Edna Rejects Odili

Odili and His Father Clash Again: Odili's father scolds him for refusing Chief Nanga's bribe. He tells Odili he has *"lost the sky and the ground,"* insisting that Odili should have asked for more money instead of insulting the minister. Odili tries to argue that they belong to different parties, but his father warns that he will keep lecturing him *"until you look for me and don't see me anymore,"* a remark that softens Odili's anger.

The Truth About Party Corruption: Odili asks whether the ruling party truly allows ministers to take bribes. His father replies with a proverb: *"If Alligator comes out of the water one morning and tells you that Crocodile is sick, can you doubt his story?"* (122). In other words, if Nanga admits it, it must be true. Then his father dozes off mid-conversation, showing how normalized corruption has become.

Max Arrives With the CPC Team: The next day, Max arrives from Bori with a full campaign team, cars, a minibus, and two new Land Rovers with loudspeakers. Their confidence and equipment lift Odili's spirits. His father, eager to impress, greets everyone warmly. A telegram Max had sent days earlier finally arrives, prompting jokes about the notoriously slow postal service. The excitement draws neighbors into the compound. Max suggests launching the campaign immediately. Odili hesitates, worried about embarrassing his father, but his father insists: "*The hawk should perch and the eagle perch.*" Loudspeakers blast music, chairs are arranged, and a crowd gathers. A microphone is set up, astonishing villagers who marvel at how a voice can thunder from "a completely different place."

Max's Fiery Speech: Max delivers a passionate speech accusing the government of corruption and greed. He describes leaders who were "ash-mouthed paupers" five years earlier but are now millionaires. The crowd laughs, but with resignation rather than outrage. A troublesome ex-policeman named "Couple" defends the ruling party, saying, "*We know they are eating, but we are eating too.*" His cynicism reflects the villagers' acceptance of corruption as normal.

The Vultures Metaphor: Max compares the ruling parties (P.O.P. and P.A.P.) to vultures fighting over a carcass. The crowd applauds, until Couple jokes that there were "three vultures," including the CPC. Despite the interruption, Max ends by presenting Odili as the CPC candidate, and the crowd cheers loudly, encouraged by the idea that "*our own son should go and bring our share.*" After the rally, Odili tells Max about Nanga's bribe offer. Max shocks him by admitting that he himself accepted 1,000 pounds from Chief Koko. He explains that the CPC needed money and that the paper he signed "has no legal force." Odili is horrified, saying Max has committed a "big blunder" and weakened their moral position. Max counters that the ruling party has received hundreds of thousands of pounds from foreign companies and that the CPC cannot fight a "dirty war" with clean hands.

Odili's Renewed Desire for Edna: Seeing Max and Eunice together makes Odili long for Edna even more. He decides to abandon subtlety and tell her directly that he loves her. He imagines presenting her proudly to Max. During the drive to Anata, he rehearses what he will say, including the story of Nanga's secret nighttime bribe. When Odili arrives, Edna's younger brother tries to hide her. Odili calls her loudly, and she appears with a hardened expression. She unleashes a furious attack: she calls him shameless, a gossip, an errand boy for Mrs. Nanga, and tells him to return to his "prostitute-woman in Bori." She declares she will marry Chief Nanga and warns him never to come again. Her brother adds that Dogo, a one-eyed strongman, has threatened to "castrate" Odili if he returns.

Odili's Sadness and Lucidity: Odili leaves calmly, not dazed but deeply sad. Edna's accusations make no sense to him, but they hurt. He realizes that both his hopes, winning Edna and cleaning up politics, have collapsed. However, instead of giving up, the sadness hardens his resolve. His fight against Nanga becomes symbolic, "a shining, monumental gesture" with no expectation of reward. Listening to the radio, Odili hears that his father has been "ignominiously removed" as local P.O.P. chairman for "subversive activities." His father shrugs it off. But the next day, the council reassesses his taxes, inventing a fake income of 500 pounds. Later, council policemen arrive, manhandle him, and demand 24 pounds. Odili pays using CPC funds. The officers mock him, saying, "*Turn you back make I see the nyarsh you go take fight Nanga*" (Turn your back so I can see the backside you plan to use to fight Nanga).

Retaliation Against the Village: Soon after, seven Public Works lorries arrive and remove the water-scheme pipes that had been delivered to the village months earlier. This proves the authorities are punishing the village for supporting Odili's campaign launch. Brutalized by the events, Odili finally forces himself to push Edna "down the precipice" of his mind. He writes her a cruel letter, mocking her education and telling her to marry her "ancient man" and, if necessary, "steal away to his son's bed." It is a deliberate act of emotional self-defense, closing the door on the girl who had become the center of his hopes.

CHAPTER 13: The Country Descends into Chaos

The Village Publicly Abandons Odili: Two nights later, the village crier announces something unprecedented: Instead of calling people to a meeting, he declares a decision already made. Urua's elders and councilors have resolved that every man, woman, and child will vote for Chief Nanga, just as they always have. Odili immediately sees the irony: If the people truly decided this, why must they be told? The next afternoon, the national radio repeats the message in four languages, confirming that Urua has officially withdrawn its support for Odili.

The Water Pipes Return, Partially: Within days, some of the water pipes that had been removed as punishment are returned to Urua. The rest are diverted to Ichida, another village that had been promised water but never received any. Odili realizes that his efforts have only helped Nanga "kill two birds with one stone," rewarding Urua for obedience and pacifying Ichida. Councilor "Couple" visits Odili's father with a document promising a refund of the punitive tax, if he signs a statement disowning Odili's political activities and reaffirming loyalty to Nanga. Odili imagines his father reading it carefully, then telling Couple to "carry his corpse off." The councilor flees so quickly he leaves the document behind.

Odili's Father Stands Firm: Odili tells his father he made a mistake refusing to sign. His father replies that a *"man of worth never unsays what he said yesterday."* Odili realizes he has misjudged his father for years. But his father also declares that any new tax will now be Odili's responsibility, since Odili brought the trouble home. Driven by curiosity, or recklessness, Odili disguises himself with a hat and sunglasses and attends Nanga's inaugural campaign rally. He goes alone to avoid drawing attention. The crowd is huge, with drums, guns, and a brass band. Odili pushes through the masses until he can see the dais clearly.

Edna on the Platform: On the platform sits Chief Nanga, his wife, and, painfully for Odili, Edna, looking quiet and convent-like. Around them stand thugs, including one-eyed Dogo, and the flamboyant Nangavanga boys in green cowboy outfits. Odili notices none of the signs mention him; he regrets bragging to Nanga about collecting one earlier. A party official tests the microphone, producing ear-splitting noise. He introduces Nanga as "Chief Doctor (in advance) M.A. Nanga." Odili fantasizes about storming the stage and exposing Nanga as a thief but knows the crowd would beat him senseless for saying what they already know but refuse to act on.

Public Humiliation: Suddenly Josiah, the disgraced trader, climbs the dais and whispers to Nanga. Nanga jumps up, scanning the crowd. Josiah points directly at Odili. Panic hits. Odili tries to flee, but the loudspeaker orders the crowd to stop "that man wearing a hat and dark glasses." Hands grab him, and he is pushed toward the dais. Nanga greets him mockingly: *"Odili the great!"* He announces to the crowd that this is the boy who wants to take his seat. The crowd erupts in disbelief and laughter. Odili is dragged onto the platform. Edna covers her face in shame. Nanga accuses Odili of betrayal, claiming he fed him, helped him, and Odili repaid him by plotting against him.

The Assault: Nanga claims Odili tried to steal Edna, *"on whose head I had put the full bride-price."* He forces her hands away from her face. Then he thrusts the microphone at Odili, demanding he explain himself. Odili says, *"I came to tell your people that you are a liar..."* Nanga snatches the microphone and slaps him hard. Thugs seize Odili's arms. Nanga slaps him again and again. Edna rushes forward to help, but Nanga shoves her violently to the ground. The crowd roars. Blows rain down on Odili until something heavy cracks his skull. The policemen quietly walk away.

Hospital and Arrest: Odili wakes in the hospital with a broken arm, a cracked skull, and severe bruises. His father and Mama stand nearby, along with policemen. He learns he was placed under arrest for "possession of dangerous weapons" found in his car, machetes and two guns, planted by thugs who also burned the vehicle. The real purpose was to prevent him from signing his nomination papers. Odili discovers that Max brought a new nomination paper but was turned away. That same night, Max is killed in Abaga. Chief Koko's wife had been smuggling ballots in her brassiere ("breast-feeding the ballot"), and Max went

to investigate. A jeep knocks him down and kills him. Eunice fires two bullets into Chief Koko's chest before collapsing on Max's body. She is arrested.

Chaos Across the Country: Max's death sparks violent clashes between thugs. Nanga's private army refuses to disband and terrorizes markets. Other thugs across the country form their own gangs. Despite the chaos, the Prime Minister reappoints Nanga and the old Cabinet, claiming the country is "as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar." Chief Koko's widow is made Minister for Women's Affairs. Political commentators claim public outrage toppled the government, but Odili insists the people were apathetic and cynical. The real cause was thugs who, after tasting power, turned on their masters. Eventually, the Army stages a coup, arrests the entire government, and restores order.

Edna Returns: Before Odili leaves the hospital, Edna visits him. They stare at each other silently. Odili apologizes for the cruel letter he wrote. She cries, and he comforts her. She reveals she never wanted to marry Nanga and that her father forced her. She also explains that the postmaster had been giving her letters to Nanga, including Odili's second letter, which she never received. Odili's father arrives and jokes that he once threatened to marry Edna for one of his sons. Odili suggests she marry *this* son, him. After Odili recovers, his family visits Edna's father with palm-wine to begin marriage negotiations. At first, the father refuses to believe he has lost a minister as a son-in-law. But after the coup, he changes his mind.

Bride-Price and Closure: Edna's father lists the money Nanga paid: 150 pounds bride-price and 100 for education. Odili insists on paying everything back, surprising his relatives. He plans to borrow from CPC funds, now useless since political parties have been abolished. The military announces trials for corrupt officials and releases Eunice, declaring Max a "Hero of the Revolution."

The Country's Cynicism: Odili reflects on how quickly people switch sides. Those who praised the old regime now condemn it. His father says, "*Koko had taken enough for the owner to see,*" echoing the proverb used earlier about Josiah. But Odili notes that unlike villages, the nation has no "owner," no collective moral force. Max was avenged not by society but by one grieving woman.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

ODILI (*idealistic, proud, conflicted*)

Odili idealizes merit and justice. His pride makes every humiliation feel unbearable. His conflicted nature places him between moral conviction and personal desire.

Idealistic Odili begins the story believing that education and integrity can shape a better nation, and this idealism guides his early choices. He trusts that merit should matter more than connections, even when the world around him proves otherwise. His idealism becomes both his strength and his vulnerability as he confronts political corruption.

Proud Odili's pride shapes his reactions to humiliation, especially when Chief Nanga seduces Elsie or mocks him publicly. He refuses bribes because accepting them would violate his sense of dignity. This pride pushes him into political confrontation even when the risks are high.

Conflicted Odili's personal desires often clash with his political convictions, creating a constant inner struggle. He wants justice, but he is drawn to comfort and admiration. His journey is a search for transparency in a world that blurs the line between ambition and principle.

CHIEF NANGA (*charismatic, corrupt, ruthless*)

Chief Nanga charms the masses with charisma while enriching himself through corrupt deals. His ruthlessness appears whenever his power or image is threatened.

Charismatic Chief Nanga wins crowds effortlessly, using humor, warmth and confidence to present himself as a friend of the people. Villagers celebrate him with music and dancing, convinced he understands their needs. His charisma functions as a shield that hides his flaws.

Corrupt Nanga treats public office as a private opportunity, turning contracts, commissions and favors into personal wealth. He manipulates institutions and rewards loyalty with money rather than service. His corruption is normalized by a society that expects leaders to “eat.”

Ruthless When challenged, Nanga responds with aggression, intimidation and violence. He publicly beats Odili at his rally, showing how far he will go to protect his position. His ruthlessness reveals the darker side of his seemingly friendly persona.

MRS. NANGA (*warm, pragmatic, marginalized*)

Mrs. Nanga’s warmth and practical outlook help her navigate a demanding household. Her marginalized position reveals how power can sideline those closest to it.

Warm Mrs. Nanga brings a natural warmth to every interaction, offering Odili kindness without calculation. Her hospitality feels genuine, especially in a household dominated by political ambition. This warmth makes her one of the few characters who treats Odili as a person rather than a tool.

Pragmatic Mrs. Nanga understands the demands of her husband’s position and adapts to them with practical acceptance. Her comments about embassy parties and the loneliness of being a minister’s wife show a clear awareness of her reality. She navigates her role with steady composure rather than complaint.

Marginalized Despite her presence in the household, Mrs. Nanga occupies a secondary position in Nanga’s world, overshadowed by his political life and his pursuit of a second wife. Her simplicity is contrasted with the polished image Nanga wants to project.

EDNA (*gentle, intelligent, resilient*)

Edna’s gentle nature and intelligence make her perceptive in a harsh political world. Her resilience allows her to withstand pressure and reclaim her future.

Gentle Edna carries a softness that makes her presence calming and sincere. Her kindness appears in her attempts to help Odili during moments of danger. This gentleness contrasts sharply with the harsh political world surrounding her.

Intelligent Edna understands more than people assume, and her education gives her awareness of the choices denied to her. She sees the risks of marrying Nanga and recognizes the manipulation behind her father’s decisions. Her intelligence guides her toward a more hopeful future.

Resilient Despite pressure from her family and the political chaos around her, Edna finds strength to rebuild her life. She endures fear, humiliation and uncertainty without losing her sense of self. Her resilience allows her to imagine a future beyond the control of powerful men.

THEMES

Society

Class Class disparity in *A Man of the People* appears most vividly in the way luxury and poverty coexist within the same social space, often without either side acknowledging the other’s full humanity. Achebe presents a society where wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small political elite, and where

that wealth is displayed through imported furniture, polished cars, lavish guest rooms, and extravagant parties. These symbols of comfort sit beside villages where people struggle with water shortages, collapsing schools, and markets vulnerable to thugs. The contrast is not subtle. It is built into daily life. When Odili enters Chief Nanga's mansion, he is struck by the gleaming bathrooms and soft beds, a world far removed from the bucket latrines and rat-infested rooms he once knew. The minister's home is a physical representation of the distance between rulers and the ruled. Achebe shows how this distance shapes behavior. Politicians treat public resources as private property, using them to build houses, buy buses, and secure foreign honors.

Villagers, meanwhile, learn to expect favors rather than rights. They praise leaders who hand out small gifts, even when those leaders have diverted funds meant for public projects. The coexistence of luxury and poverty also affects personal relationships. Edna's father sees marriage as a transaction that can lift his family into comfort. Elsie becomes a temporary ornament in the minister's world, valued for her beauty rather than her autonomy. Even Odili, who criticizes corruption, feels the pull of luxury when he sleeps in Nanga's guest suite. Achebe suggests that class is both an economic condition and a psychological force. It shapes how people imagine success, how they treat one another, and how they justify wrongdoing. The novel portrays a society where the privileged live behind polished doors while the poor navigate dust, noise, and scarcity. This coexistence creates resentment, admiration, and resignation, forming a complex emotional landscape that makes political change difficult. By placing luxury and poverty side by side, Achebe reveals how class becomes both a barrier and a temptation, influencing choices and reinforcing a system where comfort for a few depends on hardship for many.

Education Education, opportunity and gender intersect in *A Man of the People* in ways that reveal how personal futures are shaped by social expectations and political power. Achebe uses characters like Edna and Mrs. Nanga to show how access to schooling can open doors while cultural pressures close them again. Edna is bright, recently out of college, and full of potential. But her father insists she marry Chief Nanga because he has already paid money on her head. Her education is a bargaining chip rather than a path to independence. Mrs. Nanga's story deepens this reflection. She remembers passing the entrance to a secondary school but being pushed into marriage by both families. Her regret shows how opportunity can be present but unreachable when gender roles dictate that a girl's future lies in domestic life rather than personal ambition. Achebe presents education as a fragile promise for women, easily overshadowed by economic need and patriarchal authority.

Odili's own experience highlights the contrast. His education gives him mobility, confidence and political voice. He can reject bribes, challenge leaders and imagine a career beyond his village. The same system that empowers him restricts Edna, whose choices are narrowed by expectations of obedience and by the financial interests of her father. Even when she tries to resist, Edna is caught between respect for her family and fear of losing security. The novel shows that opportunity is unevenly distributed, and gender plays a decisive role in determining who can benefit from education and who must surrender it. Achebe also suggests that political corruption reinforces these inequalities. Leaders like Nanga use their influence to claim young, educated women as symbols of status, turning their schooling into an ornament rather than a tool for self-determination. The novel reveals how education can inspire hope but cannot guarantee freedom when gendered expectations and political interests shape the choices available to young women.

Politics

Power Power in *A Man of the People* appears glittery on the surface but dull and corrosive beneath. The novel presents political authority as something that attracts admiration, celebration, and envy. But it functions through routines, through fears and compromises that drain resources from public service. Chief Nanga embodies this contrast. To the public, he is a charismatic figure who arrives in villages like a festival, welcomed with dancing, gunfire and praise. His generosity, his easy jokes and his assured presence create the impression that he is a leader who is close to ordinary people. This positive image of power is built on spectacle. It depends on crowds, music, gifts and the belief that a powerful man can open doors that would otherwise remain closed.

Behind this brightness lies a dark world where power is maintained through manipulation, bribery and constant vigilance. Achebe shows Nanga in his office surrounded by files, irritated by technical advice, worried about rivals and dependent on favors from journalists and party officials. The glamour of his public life hides the monotony and insecurity of his private one. He fears losing influence, fears scandal and fears

the collapse of the system that sustains and protects him. The dark side of power also appears in the way leaders treat public resources. Contracts are awarded for personal gain, public funds are diverted, and political decisions are shaped by convenience rather than principle. The daily functioning of power becomes a series of small transactions that slowly empty institutions of their purpose.

Achebe extends this reflection to the people themselves. Crowds cheer leaders today and condemn them tomorrow. Praise singers follow ministers with drums, then disappear when the political winds shift. The same citizens who celebrate Nanga's wealth later applaud the military coup that removes him. This rapid change reveals how the bright surface of power can fade instantly, exposing the dark reality underneath. Through this contrast, Achebe suggests that postcolonial power is built on performance but sustained by habits that lack vision. It shines in public moments and dulls in private ones, creating a system where leaders enjoy the glow of authority while living inside its shadows.

Leadership: *The Archetypal Image of the Postcolonial African* The archetypal image of the postcolonial African politician emerges through Achebe's portrayal of Chief Nanga, a figure who blends charm, populism, and self-interest into a single, recognizable type. This politician presents himself as a man close to ordinary citizens, someone who speaks their language, laughs with them, and hands out small gifts that create the illusion of generosity. He arrives in villages like a celebrated hero, and he encourages the belief that he is a protector of tradition and community. Beneath this performance lies a pattern of behavior that reflects the contradictions of postcolonial leadership. The politician claims to defend national culture while seeking foreign honors and foreign validation. He speaks against elitism while distrusting educated citizens. He praises patriotism while refusing to consume local products. Achebe shows how this figure uses familiarity and warmth to mask a deep commitment to personal gain.

Contracts, commissions, and public resources become tools for private enrichment. The politician's home is filled with luxury, his influence reaches into every institution, and his power allows him to silence critics, manipulate the press, and punish dissent. Achebe also highlights the politician's ability to survive scandal. Even when corruption is exposed, he remains popular because citizens expect leaders to "eat" and hope to benefit from their leftovers. This acceptance allows the politician to present his actions as normal, even necessary. The archetype is completed by the politician's control over narrative. He shapes public opinion through speeches, radio announcements, and staged events. He turns personal betrayal into public accusation and transforms political violence into a display of authority. Through Chief Nanga, Achebe constructs a figure who is both familiar and disturbing, a leader who embodies the hopes and disappointments of a nation navigating independence. The postcolonial politician is an emblem of how power can be built on charisma, maintained through patronage, and protected by a population that has learned to adapt to a world where leadership often serves itself before serving the people.

Public: *Versatility of the Masses* Achebe presents the masses as a shifting force shaped by hope, fear and immediate. Their credulity, malleability and versatility become central to the political drama of *A Man of the People*. The crowd welcomes Chief Nanga with effervescence, treating his arrival as a festival rather than a civic event. Their enthusiasm is genuine, but it is also built on the belief that a powerful man can bring water, electricity and small gifts that make daily life easier. This belief makes them receptive to whatever narrative the politician offers. When the village crier announces that Urua has already decided to vote for Nanga, the people accept the message without questioning how a supposedly unanimous decision can be announced before it is collectively agreed to. Their credulity is not foolishness. It is a survival strategy in a society where public resources depend on loyalty and where dissent can bring punishment. Achebe shows how quickly the masses can shift direction. They cheer for Odili during the CPC inauguration, then abandon him once they get their water pipes back. Their malleability reflects the pressure of poverty and the desire to avoid conflict with powerful men. At the same time, the masses display remarkable flexibility. They adapt to new political realities with speed. When the military coup arrives, they immediately condemn the old regime, praising the soldiers and repeating new slogans with confidence. Achebe suggests that this flexibility is rooted in experience. People have learned that governments rise and fall, promises change, and the safest path is to adjust quickly. The masses are not passive. They respond to incentives, threats and opportunities, and they navigate politics with a mixture of caution and practicality. Their behavior reveals a society where trust in institutions is weak and where individuals rely on instinct and communal wisdom to interpret events.

Ethics

Corruption The book shows how corruption becomes a daily language, a way of surviving, a way of rising, and a way of controlling others. It is visible in the grand gestures of ministers who hand out money as if it were sand, and in the exchanges where journalists, policemen, and local officials wait for “something small” before doing their jobs. The novel makes clear that corruption thrives because it is familiar. People expect it, joke about it, and sometimes admire it. When Chief Nanga enriches himself, villagers shrug and say a sensible man does not spit out a juicy morsel. This acceptance is part of the tragedy. Corruption becomes a shared understanding between leaders and citizens, a pact that says everyone will eat if they stay loyal. Achebe also shows how corruption destroys trust. Odili’s father is removed from his party position through a false accusation, and the tax office suddenly invents a new “business income” to punish him. The same system that rewards loyalty punishes dissent.

Corruption becomes a weapon. It is used to silence opponents, to buy elections, and to manipulate public opinion. Even personal relationships are shaped by it. Edna’s father sees marriage as a financial transaction, and Chief Nanga treats women as part of his political image. Odili’s attempt to challenge corruption becomes tangled with his desire for Edna, showing how personal motives can mix with political ones. Achebe’s message is clear: Corruption is not an isolated act. It is a culture that touches every part of life. It shapes how people see power, how they treat one another, and how they imagine success. It creates a world where public service becomes private gain, where justice depends on who you know, and where truth is easily buried under noise, money, and fear. The novel invites readers to see corruption not as a distant political problem but as a human one, built from choices, excuses, and the belief that nothing can change.

Psychology

Hopes and disillusionment The narrative shows how characters begin with expectations that feel reasonable and even innocent, only to watch those expectations collapse under the weight of greed, power, and betrayal. Odili enters adulthood believing education will open doors, and that merit will matter. His hope for a scholarship, his belief in political integrity, and his trust in personal relationships all rest on the idea that effort and honesty can lead to a meaningful life. These hopes begin to fade the moment he witnesses how easily Chief Nanga manipulates public opinion, buys loyalty, and turns charm into a political weapon. Odili’s admiration for Nanga from childhood becomes a source of disappointment when he sees the minister’s hypocrisy up close.

Elsie’s betrayal deepens this sense of collapse, showing how personal hopes can fall apart in the same space where political illusions crumble. Edna represents another form of hope, a possibility of genuine connection and a future not shaped by corruption. Her sudden rejection and her father’s greed reveal how fragile that hope is in a society where money and influence override personal choice. Even Odili’s village briefly raises his expectations when they cheer for him during the CPC launch, only to abandon him days later when Nanga manages to reinstate their long-delayed water supply project. Their reversal shows how collective hope can be redirected by fear and self-interest. Max’s death and Eunice’s desperate act mark the final breaking point, proving that political hope can turn into violence when corruption becomes unbearable. The story suggests that hope is powerful but vulnerable. Disillusionment is not a single moment. It is a slow recognition that the systems people trust are built on unreliable ground. The novel invites readers to see how individuals cling to hope even when disappointment becomes a constant presence, and how the struggle between the two forces shapes both private lives and national politics.

Conflict: *The intersection of personal and political conflict* Odili’s story shows how personal desires and political ambitions collide until they become impossible to separate. His initial resentment toward Chief Nanga begins as a political objection to corruption, but it quickly becomes entangled with jealousy, pride and wounded masculinity. When Odili enters Nanga’s world in Bori, he is confronted with the minister’s political power and with his effortless charm, wealth and access to women. Elsie’s betrayal in Nanga’s house is the moment when Odili’s personal humiliation fuses with political outrage. His decision to challenge Nanga’s parliamentary seat is presented as a political stand, but the narrative makes clear that it is also a response to emotional injury. Odili himself admits that his motives are mixed: *“I was going for Edna in order to hurt Chief Nanga; now I would gladly chop off Chief Nanga’s head so as to get her.”* This reveals how private desire fuels public rebellion. Odili’s attraction to Edna begins as a personal longing, but her role as

Nanga's future wife turns her into a symbol of political rivalry. When her father threatens Odili with a machete, the confrontation is framed as both a domestic dispute and a miniature version of the larger political violence spreading through the country.

Odili's campaign with the CPC also shows how personal relationships shape political action. His father's shifting loyalty, Max's compromises and Eunice's devotion all influence Odili's choices. Max's death and Eunice's retaliation demonstrate how political conflict spills into private life, transforming grief into action. Even the villagers' reactions reveal this intersection. Their support for Nanga is not ideological but rooted in personal expectations of favors, gifts and access to resources. The political arena becomes an extension of household economics and social obligations. By the time Odili is beaten at Nanga's rally, the personal and political have merged completely. His injuries are both the result of a political struggle and the consequence of intimate rivalry. Achebe uses Odili's journey to show how political corruption thrives in a society where personal interests, emotions and ambitions shape public decisions, making the boundary between private life and national politics impossible to maintain.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Achebe use the relationship between Odili and Chief Nanga to explore the moral tensions of political leadership in a newly independent nation?
2. In what ways does the novel show the public's complicity in corruption?
3. How do personal desires, such as love, pride and ambition, influence political decisions and conflicts throughout the story?
4. What does Edna's situation reveal about the intersection of gender, education and opportunity in the society the novel portrays?
5. How does Achebe balance humor with criticism?
6. To what extent does the ending of the novel suggest hope, and how does the military coup complicate that sense of renewal?