

# THE RIVER AND THE SOURCE

## THE TITLE

- The statement uttered by chief Odore Gogni summaries the story a homo without daughters is like a spring without a source.
- The title the river and the source refers to Akoko and her successive generation of children, grand children and great grand children.
- From Akoko, the source, The 'river' flows across the face of Kenya and can be seen in places like Nakuru and Nairobi.
- At first, the 'river' appears to dry up when Obura and Owang' sino die suddenly but it picks up in Nyabera's daughter. Elizabeth Awiti.
- It is she who increases the size of the 'river' when she gets married to Mark Antony Oloo Sigu from some and they proceed to have a large family.
- From this couple Akokos river gains momentum and swells into the family tree that transendes a number of generation.

## THEMES

### 1. Love and Marriage

- Love was not necessary for a marriage to occur in the life of tradition set up. Marriage in this society was arranged and it was a matter of wealth. And social status for the bribes father. Akokos father for example desired that his daughter marries a chief as a 'mikai' first wife. He turns down twelve other suitors before chief owner kembo turns up {page 17}
- The bride marries the man the father chooses for her and has one say in the matter {page 24}
- Owner Kembo loved Akoko and refused to marry the second wife inspite of his mothers protest and persistence.He also stands by Akoko at all times, never lay finger on her which considered scandalous –consults her most of matters and goes over to her hut in the evening just to hear talk on her past,Akoko tells the olders during the reconciliation talks that owour has been good to her and she has nothing against him.
- Owours love for Akoko drives him to do an unseemly thing when he nearly slaped his mother- a taboo and throttles-his brother Otieno half to death. For driving Akoko out of his homestead. Owour not only refuses to take another wife but also wants Akoko back to his homestead in haste and appreciate her contribution towards her wealth.
- There is both polygamous marriage Otieno marries many wives while Owour marries only one wife. However polygamous marriage is accepted.

- With the coming of white man who introduces Christianity marriage is no longer compulsory as Veronica Sigu {vora} opts to remain single and joins the Opus Dei as an unmarried member.
- Polygamy is threatened by the extinction when Christianity comes to the village community. The church forbids it and insists one should take only one wife. This presents a problem for Nyabera a widow who desires children.
- Love is a prerequisite to marriage and a woman's choice of a husband is the symbol of an organized marriage. A will and Mark Sigu merely invite their close relatives to facilitate their marriage. Long after they have fallen in love with each other.
- Tribal and religious barriers to marital relationship disintegrated when formal education and migration of people from the traditional setting and ancestral homes takes place. Becky marries a Canadian while Aoro marries Wandia, A kikuyu.

## TRADITION

- Child naming is portrayed in this novel as a complicated issue that involves the living and the dead. Who send in their application or demand to be immortalised by having their names given to the new born. A child can also take several names e.g. Akoko is named a season of her birth {Adoyo} after her grandmothers sisters who sent a dream {Akelo} after her uncle who died recently {Obanda} and a fourth name Akoko meaning the noisy one.
- Tradition is also portrayed in the marriage and payment of dowry. The father of the bride bids price to be paid. The bride has no say in determining the husband. Once the bride price is paid. The young men from the bride's side who resist the girl screams as to he leaves the village as Akoko did.
- Divorce and separation is not allowed especially expect in cases of witch craft where Akoko went back to her matrimonial home when the mother in law accused her of bewitching her son. So as not to marry another wife. Marriage disputes are settled by elders as seen when the council is called to settle the matter between Owour and Akoko.
- Tradition is also seen in funerals where when Chief Owour Kembo dies the whole village goes in mourning for sixty days. Akoko dress in late husband's skin robes and carries his shield and spears. She sings praises for her late husband his personality and the way he had treated her with honor. When Obura dies, Akoko leads the village in mourning the chief's son and they give him a befitting farewell as a warrior. In the absence of Obura's body a banana trunk is buried to symbolize his body and the mock funeral allows the villagers to express their emotions Obura's age mates stage mock fight while the mother leads the village in singing dirges with Obura's shield and spear in her hand.

- Wife inheritance is practiced but the man owes his allegiances to his own wife and has no obligation- economic or otherwise to other the children or the widow they get together Nyabera is inherited by her in-law after the death of her husband although they latter separated.
- Polygamy is somehow contrasted with monogamy Otieno had six wives while Owour had one wife Akoko.

## CONFLICT

- Conflict between Akoko and her mother in-law because of Akokos inability to conceive regularly. She accuses Akoko of bewitching her don. Akoko leaves to her matrimonial home.
- Conflict between Owour Kembo and her mother for accusing Akoko of witchcraft he almost strikes the mother too.
- Conflict between Owour Kembo and Otieno over Akokos departure to her home he almost through the Otieno to death.
- Conflict between Mark Sigu and Elizabeth over her inability to conceive after miscarriage. She accuses her husband for deliberately giving her chloroquin tablets to make the startle
- Conflict between Mark's mother and Elizabeth over Elizabeth inability to conceive. Mark orders her mother to go back home
- Becky's promiscuous life leads to break up of her marriage with John courtesy thus conflict between them.
- Conflict between Aoro and Wandia over their son Daniel she has Leukemia. Wandia thinks Aoro spends too much time outside their home yet they had children to bring up.
- Conflict between Akoko and Otieno over Akokos wealth.
- Conflict between Becky and Vera .Becky is jealous of Vera since Vera excelled almost in everything. They almost fought but were separated by their mother.

## THE PLACE OF GIRL CHILD AND WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY

- Women are presented within the tradition setting which is made denominational and male oriented.

- The tradition preference for sons is evident at Akoko's birth at the beginning of the story. Her father comments "another rock for my sling" {page11} which meant another boy actually he had already covered himself with a considerable glory by siring seven sons. The chief reaction to Akoko's birth shows the society's bias against the girl child and women.
- A woman's importance starts and with her ability to bear children especially male children. Inability to conceive or do so regularly like Akoko is regarded a major failure in a wife.
- Chief Owour Kembo comes under greater pressure to marry a second wife especially because Akoko had difficulties in conceiving regularly as her mother-in-law would have wished. The villagers cannot comprehend their chief's "stubborn monogamy" the success for that marriage notwithstanding.
- In the traditional set up the purpose for female existences is marriage and child bearing and by same token to bring forth wealth to her family with the bride price.
- While sons belong to and are root deepened in their people, girls are passers-by who should not only marry and settle anywhere but must marry for a girl not to get married is unthinkable.
- Women are owned – body and soul – by the men who marry them. The villagers who gather at Akoko when she raises an alarm are shocked by the courage when she leaves her home and threatens to serve the union. The crowd hissed, such a thing was unheard of didn't a man own a woman body and soul.
- Owour's Kembo's fumes in silent fury because he had only two sons and twenty-two daughters.
- A woman's worth and conduct are measured by how they reflect on her husband. During the marriage negotiation, Akoko is described as an obedient pupil who would not bring shame and pain on her husband by improper conduct.
- Marriage is arranged for the girl by her father who chooses the best man for her, she has no say in the matter and only makes a brief appearance the girl is expected to be shy.
- Gender inequality at Aluor mission is expressed by the biased provision of education until the girl child getting fewer chances of acquiring education. In class of 34 that Awiti joins there is only one other girl who drops in school to get married.
- A girl is not expected to be as intelligent as a boy. When the teacher issues Awiti with a certificate, he does not dare mention that she has been admitted to a college for fear of hostility it would attract against her.
- The villagers cannot understand Awiti being a girl and yet so intelligent. They wonder who would marry her.
- After her training as a teacher she becomes an object of curiosity because she does not want to do what other women do like till land and rear children.
- Wandia beats boys in her school group including Aoro says that the first time he has been beaten by a girl and calls her tough meaning boys are regarded more intelligent than girls.

- Injustice against women is explicit as expressed in Akoko's experience at the hand of Otieno. Her brother-in-law Otieno takes her hand, her wealth and denies her great son his rightful position as the chief.
- Women inheritance is injustice against children since the burden of raising children is left to them. Nyabera falls dejected and bitter about this.

## FAMILY WORK AND STUDIES

- Aoro and Wandia's life revolves around their families, the demanding jobs and studies soon after the recovery of her son Daniel, Wandia's interest in pathology (the study of disease process) and in hematology (the study of blood disease). In particular is enhanced. Aoro on the other hand has completed his studies in surgery and has gone into the demanding private sector practice. But they do not forget their responsibility over their family of two adopted children and their own.
- Aoro and Wandia have their studies. This is the reason why Aoro encourages Wandia to go to U.S.A after all; it is only for a short year.

## IDENTITY CRISIS

- Conflict in parenthood when Johnny Courtney's son refuses to study as a pilot, his father's career. He does not want anything that reminds him about his painful past. He has instead chosen medicine, his foster parent career.
- Johnny adamantly refuses to forgive his father for abandoning them just because they had disagreed with his wife.
- Johnny wants to change his surname from Courtney to Sigu something that alarms Wandia, his advises him not to since she may need it in future.
- Johnny feels so deeply about his lack of an African name until he decides to take the name Sigu as a middle name to appear his African soul. He also hated the fact that people took him for pure white and compensated for this by speaking mostly Swahili, eating mainly African food and having friends who were African and black.
- Noticing this struggle in Johnny, Wandia again asks Vera to write to Courtney in Canada and send him a photograph of his children. She believed that his father ought not to resist or want to lose such a fine heir (children). He would at least want to identify himself with his son who was very own "splitting image."

## GENDER INEQUALITY

- The write tells us “if it was hard for a boy to get education, it was well high impossible for a girl. The purpose of a female existence was marriage and child bearing (pg 129). This is a clear indication of gender inequality that existed in this community. A girl was supposed to get married at the age of 17 yrs. It brings wealth to her family through bride price.
- Out of a class of 34 there were only two girls one of whom was Awiti. Soon after the other girl was married off at the age of 16 yrs. It is only the determination of Akoko that saves Awiti from sum, liar fate.
- Awiti proved to be very bright in her class and earns the disapproval of everybody. They even proposed that no man would marry her. And whom results are announced and Awiti leads the 5 who pass, she attracts every admission and generally the disapproval of the villagers.
- Because Awiti is not o boy they ask for time to consult being making a decision on whether Awiti will go to college or not.

## PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Responsibility of lack of it is first seen in the institution of ‘tero’ (wife inheritance). Nyabera loses her husband Okumu Angolo and is compelled to accept his first cousin Ogoma Kwacha as a second husband unfortunately he had no obligation to provide for him nor did he have to behave responsibly. In fact when he tries to spend more time with her. His wife complains to the council of Jodongo and he is promptly reprimanded.
- Nyabera has the responsibility of looking after Awiti, when the husband dies. Akoko has to take care of the daughter Nyabera, Awiti and Owuor Sino.
- Awiti pursues her education as Owuor goes to the seminary; the responsibility of paying fees falls on Akoko.
- Elizabeth heavily relies on her grandmother for support and inspiration. She wonders what would have happed to her life were it not for Akoko. Her last major responsibility is to oversee the negotiation for Awiti’s marriage to Mark Sigu.
- Parental responsibility us seen in Mark and Elizabeth’s life as they take care of their young one family. This is especially seen when Odon go nearly drowse and the two older boys; Aoro and Tony have to be punished. Tonny’s illness and frantic steps made by his parents to take him to hospital is another example of parental responsibility. They spend the whole night worrying over the operation.

## RELIGION

There was tradition religion which involved beliefs, rites and practices among the people. For example, child naming was particular crucial at time when a child developed a prolonged. It involved the invocation of the departed spirits of the ancestors for child to be given; the appropriate name was then given at that point. (pg 13).

The people believed in were god of the age of the rising sun and ancestral spirits. They made sacrifices and poured libation to these deities. Akoko commands that it was, were the god of Ramogi who formed children in one womb when she is accused of barrenness.

- Nyabera is converted to Christianity and get baptized. Later Akoko, Awiti and the cousin join Christianity and get converted. They are baptized and given Christian names. Awiti performs a church marriage.
- Owuor joins priesthood and later becomes a 'father' meaning catholic priest. Before being ordained as a bishop later on Vera joins Opus Dei as a non marrying member.
- Akoko was to be buried in her ancestral home to the left of the entrance to her house. Being the first wife of the chief but she joins Christianity and buried at the church cemetery.
- There's church wedding performed by Christians like in Mark and Elizabeth's wedding which was proposed over by Father Peter.

## LOSS AND DEATH

The disappearance and subsequent announcement of the

Death of Akoko's eldest son, Obura Kembo. He had been lured away from home by footloose Nyarocho and his friend K'ongoso and he had died while fighting the Germans in Tanganyika. Nyabera 14, is deeply affected by the brother's death that it takes a great effort from her mother to console her to her normal self.

Nyabera herself experiences loss in the death of her first born child within two years of birth. Soon after chief Owuor Kembo dies as negotiations are being finalized for Owang' Sino as marriage to a girl from Uyoma. Akoko is devastated by this loss. Indeed Owuor Kembo never quite recovers from his son's death.

As if this is not enough loss for the family. Owang' Sino who had taken over from his father as the chief dies choking on a meal of ugali and fish. His mother Akoko is left standing over him with utter disbelief, she is left with no son after the death of Obura and now Owang' Sino.

More deaths occur within the family as Nyabera reports the death of her child a boy she gave birth to with her inheritor Ogoma Kwacha. Akoko's death quietly in her sleep occurred at a time when Elizabeth Awiti had just concluded her marriage arrangement with Mark Sigu. She is terribly

affected by the loss of her grandmother that she blames Mark for causing it. Although she was Nyabera's daughter, it is Akoko whom she had heavily relied upon in her upbringing.

When Nyabera finally dies at Maseno Hospital, her daughter Elizabeth feels so deeply about this because Nyabera's death was like the removal of the last symbol of their eventual past.

Other situations of death of Becky who died of AIDS and that of Elizabeth Awiti strongly enough. It is not any of Awiti's children who feels a great sense of loss. But Wandia, her Kikuyu daughter-in-law. She faints at the burial of her mother-in-law.

#### TRANSITION/ CHANGE

The coming of the white man brought some change e.g. Christianity

There is change in form of the government where initially by chief (Odero Gigni & Owuor Kembo) to government ruled by DO & DC (Sirikal)

Nyabera and Akoko changed their names and became Christians, their names Nyabera to Mary Awiti to Elizabeth and Akoko to Veronica. They are baptized and Elizabeth and Mark Sigu hold a church marriage, not a traditional one.

Bride price previously deemed a source of wealth is reduced to a mere token taken by Awiti and Wandia's time.

In traditional Luo society, marriage across the boundaries of religion, race and tribe were disapproved. Rebecca, Mark Siga's daughter, marries a Canadian John Courtney and his son, Aoro marries Wandia Akikuyu. Resistance to those marriages is minimal.

At death a woman was originally buried in her husband's ancestral home to the left of the entrance of her house, Akoko however buried in a Christian way. After a service presided over by a deacon in the church cemetery.

The strictly defined role the place of woman at home also changes although with resistance from male chauvinists e.g. Mark Chingu assists Elizabeth in house chores. "Especially in taking the children off her hands."

He did things for Elizabeth that would never have crossed the mind of a full-blooded African

Man with a low opinion of women's breed into him! He does things to his friends Chagrin.

#### STYLE AND LANGUAGE USE

## AFRICAN ORAL NARRATION TECHNIQUE

There is use of Dholuo, Kiswahili and kikuyu in certain instances in the novel. The word sirkal (government) is given a dholuo account with the omission of the last (l) to sirkal. English words like company, baptism and appeal are lionized as *kambi*, *baptism* and *pail* respectively.

Aoro is referred to as *Muthoni* a kikuyu word for an in-law and a man from Ruguru kikuyu for west. Unable to find an equivalent for chariot. Maria tells her daughter Awiti and her nephew Owuor that Elias of the Old Testament went to heaven on a bicycle of fire.

Use of local dialect give the story local color, humor and capture the time and place of action. There are ideas like Migogo and Mica that cannot be sufficiently be translated into English without lengthily and elaborate explanations. They are however accompanied by explanations.

## IRONY

- It is ironic that Elizabeth apparent interest in mark sigu seems to attract him to her rather than repel hiro. The more he is reluctant to reply his letters the more he writes persistently.
- Onyango silwa. Awiti's uncle wants to demand exorbitant bride price yet he had neglected raising his brothers child
- Mark and his people expect Elizabeth's people to demand a high bride for her now that she is highly educated by the standards of the day. The dismay, Onyango silwa only asks for a token bill, two cows and six goats.
- Mark sigu holds the belief that kikuyu only interest is money. he therefore expect wandias family to demand a high bride for their girl he is surprised however to learn that all wandias mother requires is for Aoro to stay peacefully with her daughter.
- Mark has always been over strict on Aoro and Vera has always though Aoro hates his father. It is there for ironic when she learns from wandias that he has utmost for mark and tries to emulate him in most things. [page 28]

## DIALOGUE

- Dialogue is used to advance the plot, reveal character traits high light themes, and add humor capture the mood. It is used to achieve vitality and immediately as the reader has dined across access to the scene of action. It's also used to sharpen characterization example exchange between Akokos father and Aloo.

- Dialogue is used to develop the plot of the novel. The dialogue in the marriage negotiation ceremony leads to Akoko's marriage to Owour and consequently her movement to Sakwa.
- Dialogue brings out Odera's character traits that he is responsible and decorous. Olo tells the in-law to be. Odera had carefully brought up Akoko and taught her the ways of a chick. Akoko's character is revealed as knowledgeable in the ways of a chick and quick to her feet and obedient.
- It is used to highlight themes. The themes of love and marriage are highlighted in the negotiations.
- The largest dialogue in this novel is between twin sisters Vera and Becky and is used to sharpen characterization, develop the plot and highlight the theme of change. Vera comes out as loyal, responsible and great full as she impresses on Becky the need to inform their parents of her intended marriage. She is also frank and realistic and tells Becky to expect some resistance and suspicion as people would not trust her intentions in marrying a "Mzungu".
- There is also
- Dialogue between Nyabera and Akoko when Nyabera tells Akoko about the dream.

#### Vivid description

- ❖ Page 28, the author describes Akoko "Her eyes were set far apart and neither too small nor too big. Her teeth were white and even with a bewitching gap at the center of the upper set. And that neck, it was yet to inspire praise songs from nyatiti players.
- ❖ The author vividly describes the form of Akoko at the time she is born "This was when the leaves of the growing sorghum tremble greedily in the wind pg 11. The vivid description creates a mental picture in the reader's mind.
- ❖ Awiti is described as a good-looking girl with her grandmother's wide-set eyes, long neck, trim figure and her mother's height and grace.
- ❖ Her \_\_\_\_\_ sat on her face as if the creator thought hard before placing it carefully in place (pg 135)

#### RHETORIC QUESTIONS

- Akoko asks "Has anyone overseen me gossiping with either women at the water hole? She defends herself against her mother-in-law's accusation.
- Wandia asks herself this question "which father could resist or want to lose such a fine pair? (pg 304) referring to Alicia and Johnny Courtney's children etc

#### FORE SHADOWING

- ❖ This is taking of something that is likely to happen in the future.

- ❖ During the party celebrating graduation of Wandia with a doctorate degree in medicine her mother-in-law foreshadows her own death which occurs the following day. On her way to Njoro Elizabeth bent to remove it and felt the attack of dizzy breathlessness come upon her once again and with the sure knowledge of one who has lived long she knows that this suffocation was a sign of the beginning of the end.
- ❖ When Akoko was born it was foreseen that she would be a great dirge singer and for sure she sings at her husband's burial.

#### FLASHBACK

- Accounting technique of the past are brought to the present.
- In a moment of loneliness at the height of Mau Mau uprising marks recalls his daughter Vera's constant chatter that filled the house. Now that he is alone he misses her innocent but witty questions like why her mother's stomach was so big and how a baby can see which in his mother's stomach.
- Becky's death and the reading of the will are revealed in a flashback.
- On his way to Njoro to introduce Wandia to his parents Aoro is lost in a series of flashbacks. He remembers his father's punishment while he was a student but this time he intends to win by making his father his choice of a Kikuyu for a wife.
- Vera recalls her sister's bitterness and confidence despite them not being in good terms. It also started in flashback that Becky had ensured that her children would not lack anything by leaving behind enormous wealth.
- Just before Elizabeth dies she takes up back of her past life in series of flashbacks she relates her childhood, her school and college life, the meeting with her future husband and how Wandia is turning up to be like Akoko in many ways.
- While waiting for Aoro to bring Wandia home, Elizabeth reads her son's letter and recalls

incidents in the past concerning her children. She remembers Becky's marriage to John courtesy and their subsequent divorce. Tony joining priesthood and Vera opting to become UN married members of poised.

#### PROVERBS

- ❖ There is an extensive use of proverbs in the novel to add cultural authority and bring out a strong Luo tradition setting e.g .
- ❖ "how can you know where you are going before knowing where you are coming from ?" [page 42]
- ❖ 'Insults never break bones' [page 43]
- ❖ "who knows the goodness of a tree but he who sits under its shade" [page 44]
- ❖ 'It pays to have a good tongue in your head if you have no money in your pocket s' [page 212]
- ❖ 'There are more ways than one to skin a cat' [page 218]

#### DREAMS

- ❖ Dreams are channel through which the spirit of dead make request through the living to be named babies are born. For instance Akoko's great uncle, Obanda send a dream through her father and grand mother and the girl is given the name. this in shame the dreams seem to connect Africans living to the dead.
- ❖ Maria dreams about Obura coming to her with a bottle which keeps common turning into a beautiful bird the colour of the sky. It flies off then returns with many others. Her mother interprets this dream as to mean her dead brother wants her to name the unborn baby after him unlike the other before who died

infancy this one is bounded to live. This is a dear message from spirit world.

- ❖ An example of a dream used by the author to further the plot is that of vera on the day she visits becky. After breaking up with tony Muhambe. It is at a time when vera has to make some hard decisions concerning the next course of her life now that she left her husband/boyfriend.
- ❖ In this dream, she sees herself walking compulsory and without stopping. She feels herself hurtling towards the south horizon fast and hung at the edge which falls into a bottomless abyss. This is when she wakes up having been gripped with terror .

#### IMAGERY [SIMILES, METAPHORS AND PERSONIFICATION].

- ✓ There is extensive use of imagery in the novel by the author. the author has used a number of similes when thinking how trade ally Obura's life has ended . Nyabera thinks life is a futile in this simile " of what use was this life if one could be snuffed out like a poorly lit fire."[page64-65].
- ✓ In represents to her husband's respect and love for her,Akoko says this in the dirge in comparison to other men" men live with the wives like cats and dogs , ravens and chicken[page 69]
- ✓ In her story about creation told to her nephews Odongo and Opiyo while on their way to Kisumu ,Akoko explains the omnipotence of 'Were' God of the rising sun using the following similes -----'Were' is a spirit and a spirit is like a flame ----it is like air ----it is like wind which can uproot a tree.[page 81]

- ✓ In Akoko's reprimand for Nyabera who's unhappy with the news that Awiti is soon to join a teachers training college, she says "You shake like a reed in the wind --- -"[page 131] she reminds Nyabera that when her bloodline will still have preferred out well in the dry season[page 131] when will still see her as she would be a hundred season.
- ✓ The author has used metaphors extensively, Nyabera feels "We should stab the world with lightning`"
- ✓

N/B other styles are less dominant though they play pivotal roles in helping the author aptly communicate her concerns. Engage your learners in identifying these styles e.g. premonition, journey motif, and other types of motifs.

## CHARACTER AND CHARACTERIZATION

### 1. AKOKO(VERONICA )

She is the main character, the wife of chief Owuor Kembo

#### **Confident and assertive**

At the age of ten months, her first words are 'dwaro maro' (want mine) to claim what rightfully belongs to her that has been taken by her older brother Oloo. When called before her husband to be during the marriage negotiations, Akoko who was traditionally expected to be shy, with her eyes fixed on the floor and her hands firmly held together in front of her mouth strides in confidently, steps measured, head held high, hands at her sides.

#### **Courageous/Bold**

During the marriage negotiation she takes straight into the eyes of the husband to be and Otieno wonders at her courage. In her relationship with her husband she wins him with her confidence. Being courageous, she makes her opinion on any subject known, she makes dangerous journey to Kisumu.

### **Liberated/Decisive/Self willed**

When her mother-in-law accuses her of witchcraft her and Otieno head on inform of the whole village, she proceeds to do the unthinkable by declaring her intentions to cleave the marriage to Owuor Kembo ,she leaves for Yimbo.

### **Perservering**

Akoko's courage and determination survive a series of tragedies in the death of her husband, two sons and plunder of her property and grandson's rightful chieftaincy by Otieno.

### **Inspiring**

Her boldness is a source of inspiration to her daughter and other descendants. On her first arrival at Aluor Nyabera, in a movement of doubt and fears derives courage from the fact that she is Akoko's daughter and as such should never be said to have succumbed to cowardice and fear. Nyabera marvels at Akoko's strength and courage.

### **Hardworking/diligent/Industrious**

As a wife, Akoko learns that the way to make a husband happy is by the work of her hands. She likes a life of hardwork, she is praised in songs for her speed and mother's use her as a point of reference when sending their children on errands. At Aluor, Akoko works tirelessly to provide for her children.

### **Decorous**

This is the will to do correct thing, those sent to spy on her by numerous suitor find her to be a woman of impeccable antecedents and capable of not only nurturing children but also building a real home. Her father's spokesman who Aloo K'Olima describes her as a very bright pupil who will not bring shame and win to her husband by improper behavior.

### **Trustworthy**

At Aluor, Akoko's property find favour in the catechists eye. Because she was trustworthy and did not gossip. Akoko has a house built for her nearer to the church. Her husband constantly confides in her.

### **Responsible and Disciplinarian**

She brings up her children and teaches them hardwork among other values. Nyabera finds growing up under her mothers care are quite demanding. Akoko demands that a young woman must be intelligent, quick and hardworking.

### **Kind and Generous**

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

### **Supportive and Understanding**

Afraid that his call of priesthood will upset his goodmother who hoped that he would grow up to re-claim Sakwa's chieftainy from Otieno and marry and provide many sons to ensure to continuity for her family, Owuor is surprised when Akoko raises no objection to his joining in priesthood. She is responsible and a loving mother she turns her attention to Nyabera after Obura's death and wisely helps her to accept the loss.

### **Accommodating and Selfless**

Alando Nyar Uloma, Owang' sino wife turns out to be an idler. Akoko goes out of her way to accommodate her weakness some of which she finds quite irritating.

### **Articulate**

Her oratory is evident when she addressed the villagers who gathered at her place the morning she goes back to her father's home. She explains her position and innocence regarding the witchcraft allegations. They are taken of by her oratory that they do not notice the absence of Owuor Kembo her husband and chief.

### **Modest/Humble**

She instructs her twin-nephew, Odongo and Opigo who have been sent by her brother to accompany her to Kisumu, to go back arguing that she was an old woman of no consequence to anyone.

### **Rash/Impatient/Short-tempered**

On learning that her mother-in-law accused her of bewitching her son, Akoko is so upset that she wakes up the village and announces her decision to return to her former home and saves the relationship with Owuor Kembo. She does not wait for her husband who is away at this time though he has always stood with her.

### **Pioneering/Adventurous**

She is the first woman to venture of Sakwa to seek redress from the white government for the wrong done by her brother-in-law chief Otieno Kembo. She makes a hazardous journey through wild countryside accompanied by her frightened nephew Opiyo and Odongo. She adventures into the hitherto unknown world of the whites (Jorocho) and gets the desired results.

### **Foresighted/Visionary**

She encourages Elizabeth to take up the invitation to attend a teachers training college because she knows the world is changing and education "who I" will make the difference as to whether she survives or perishes" pg 132. She advises Maria to support Elizabeth in her endeavours to acquire education. She allows Peter Owuor to pursue priesthood because she knows things have changed and people are turning to different things.

### **Wise and Realistic**

She knows her limits in the society that is male dominated, she knows that as a woman, a widow and sonless mother she has no chance against Atieno. She wisely turns to 'Sirkal' for support and Sirkal does not fail her. And when she returns from Kisumu to find Atieno's plunder of her cattle and had reached major proportions, she is tempted to confront the chief but reason prevails and she wisely thinks there was no advantage in knocking one's head against a tree trunk for at least one may chip off a bark out in return get a large bruise on the head. If you want to cut a tree take time to sharpen your axe pg 89

## **2. NYABERA (MARIA)**

She is later baptized Maria, is the only surviving child of the three that came of Akoko's marriage to Owuor Kembo.

### **Hardworking**

Akoko teaches her that a young woman must be intelligent, fast on her feet and hardworking and solemnly warns her that it should never be said she learned laziness from her mother. Her mother taught her that the greatest eyes-sore in the world is an idle woman.

### **Modest/Humble**

Although she marries a poor man, Okuma, and brought with her a sizeable herd of cattle, sheep and goats, she respects her husband and shows him humility although he could hardly raise the

bride price. She treats him with utmost respect and politely seeks his permission to go visit her old home.

### **Courageous/Determined**

She equals her mother when it comes to making ruthless decisions. It is her courage and determination that sets her to go Aluor in search of a different way of life after her husband's death. Her strength and courage attracts Ogoma Kwach her inheritor to the extent that he neglects his wife to spend more time with Nyabera and council of Jodongo was to be called into get him back to his wife.

### **Loving**

As Akoko's daughter, she loves her mother deeply. In Aluor, the two love each other in the way of "the souls caring for each other deeply" ... As sisters, she loves her brother Obura that his death devastates her. She becomes a loner wondering a way of herself, mute and quite for days. As an aunt, Nyabera appreciates Owuor's love for her and the attention and support he gives her.

### **Protective**

Especially where Awiti, her only child is concerned so protective it's because of Awiti that lives in fear that something might happen to her. When Awiti excitedly displays her college invitation letter, Nyabera is frightened as if her child was in danger.

### **Responsible/Caring**

At a time when education especially for girls is thought unnecessary, Nyabera helps to educate Awiti. To Akoko and Nyabera, Awiti is the centre of the world and nothing is good for her though they struggle not to show it or spoil her in any way.

### **Weak willed/Indecisive**

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

### **Creative/Intelligent**

Nyabera works hard at learning the new faith. She is baptized Maria, when it comes to story telling Maria is unequalled even by Akoko. She creatively tells stories of the old testament and New Testament and the children keep asking for more.

### **3. OTIENO KEMBO**

Brother of chief Owuor Kembo.

#### **Contemptuous/Disdainful/Scornful**

When he accompanies his brother to Yimbo for marriage negotiations, he contemptuously advises his brother not to pay high bride and instead forget about Akoko as all women are the same. He reveals his disdainful and scornful nature when Akoko is called to the negotiations. He curses his brother for agreeing to pay so much and judges Akoko as disrespectful and not worthy thirty heads of cattle.

#### **Selfish**

He is angry with his brother for paying high price not only because he thinks that all women are the same and Akoko is not worth the price but also he is afraid there might be no animals left for him to pay dowry completely lacking in style. Otieno marries one "colourless woman after another" he treats his wives as slut.

#### **Immoral/Jealousy**

He desires his brother's only wife and is jealous because she is treated like a queen and is never beaten. Together with his mother he quarrels about the dowry paid for Akoko and finally drives Akoko out of her husband and home. He is ruled by his stomach and directed by his wings. pg 96

#### **Hateful/Ungrateful**

Although Otieno depends on Owuor to pay dowry for his numerous wives, he hates him violently. He also hates Akoko so much and together with his family cannot hide their joy when Obura died.

#### **Lazy**

He depends entirely on his brother. He does not work to support his appetites for both property and wife. Akoko describes him as lazy and observes that laziness has opened the door for greed to rule his mind and body.

#### **Abusive and coward**

Twice he confronts Akoko with her intention of beating her but her courage fails him. Just before Akoko leaves Owuor's home in protest against witchcraft allegations, Otieno threatens

to discipline her and call her a she-wolf. But when Akoko dares him he develops cold feelings and retreats.

### **Indecorous**

Having no sense of dignity of his position, he goes to search Akoko and stands fuming and frothing at the door of her hut in anger. Akoko asks him whether he was the village or the village fool.

### **Arrogant/Unjust/Autocratic**

When Otieno Kembo takes over the chieftaincy he sits on the chief's stool with glee and heavy arrogance. He is also to have appropriated his brother's wealth and tried to grab his widow's personal wealth as well. He dispenses with the council of Jadong' and makes unilateral decisions as chief. Even though the chieftaincy is hereditary and he is only a custodian of the stool, he is not willing to surrender the chief's stool to Owour Sino the right heir.

## **4. ELIZABETH AWITI**

### **Intelligent**

In a class she is the only girl, she holds her position quiet well in Maths which she dislikes. She emerges top of her class and is invited to join the first college of teachers near Alour.

### **Hardworking and determined**

She inherits her grandmother's industry and determination comes out at the top of her class at the end of primary school. Though education for girls was not considered and superfluous and marriage was preferred her grandmother's pioneering and daring spirit sees her through school as an only girl.

### **Decorous/self controlled**

Although of the male students at the teacher's training college are attracted to her and go to great lengths including throwing love notes wrapped around stones to her room to win her over, she does not yield. She remains the odd one out when all the other girls have paired up

either from within college or outside. Even the mature and courageous Mark Sigu way laws her during axeat has behaved appropriately to get her attention.

### **Motherly and responsible**

she is keen on her children that she can tell that Aoro has been suspended from school even before the son mention the suspension letter. Aoro wonders whether anything ever escaped his mother. As a mother she sleeps without sleeping. Aoro scream when Tonny falls sick at night gets her out of bed even before Aoro reached the bedroom to report his brother's sickness.

### **Strict and disciplinarian**

When Aoro is suspended from school his father comes home to find 'grim; mother and a 'shaking son'. The disapproval of indiscipline is understood by her language in reporting Aoro to his father "Your son need to be taken to approved school look at this" pg 188

### **Tactful and sensitive**

When the children got home drenched after one of the twins has nearly drowned, Awiti tactfully comes between the boys and their extremely angry father. That many turns out to be sensible young lady is largely to Elizabeth's intention Mark would have turned her into a spoilt and dependent person but Elizabeth had prevented his spoiling of the little girl.

Realistic.

She knows that she cannot treat Vera and Becky as little children forever. When Sera seeks permission to accompany to the movies Awiti gets Mark to give his consent. She argues that Vera is too mature to be up.

### **DISCERNING/INTELLIGENT**

She is good judge of character. She correctly believes that Tommy is a nice, polite and hardworking young man and that all will be with Vera while out with him. She also decides that Vera is strong enough to make success of her life in whatever school she goes and as such she prevails upon Mark to allow her to go to Becky's less prestigious school.

### **LOVING/CARING**

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

### **COOPERATIVE/HELPFUL**

As a mother in law she takes to wandia at the first sight.In their first encounter ,the two gets on like a house on fire.Awiti is quick to appreciate Wandia's character and declares how lucky she thinks Aoro is to have Wandia for a wife.

## **5.VERONICA(VERA)**

The first born child of Mark and Elizabeth Sigu,twin sister to Becky.

Hardworking/Industrious

With the tremendous energy she participates in many school activities and carries off trophy.

Responsible

She is made the school captain,a responsibility that has been the domain of boys.She has inherited Akoko's pioneering spirit.In high school she she extents herself with determination and passes extremely well.

Intelligent/Diligent

At the university she does not allow her work to pile up.She forms a habit of staying on top of her work through the year.her intelligence is easily noticed by Tommy Muhambe who enjoys her lively and intelligent conversation

Loyal and Loving

She adores her twin sister ,Rabbecca and for felts her placein a prestigious national school to join her sister just to be with her.Right from childhood she has an enviable capacity to love she is passionate ,very protective of her twin sister and does everything possible to ensure Becky is happy.

Caring and Obliging

She is very popular because she is very helpful and so caring that she gets upset when no one informs her the night Tonny is taken to hospital.she cares a lot for her sister and takes time off trace her at the airport.

Affable

Vera and wandia talks to each other easily and faster.She appreciates Wandia's inner strength although the two are different as East and West.Aoro and Wandia find her loving nature useful when their son ,Daniel is diagnosed to be suffering from leukemia ,she comes over to comfort and to keep Wandia company.

## Religious

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

## 6. RABBECCA (BECKY)

She is Vera's twin sister

Self-centred and fastidious.

She is not moved by the news of Tony being sick at night and continues to sleep in bed. This preoccupation with herself makes Vera have doubts about her and also the mother becomes so concerned. After her A level exams Becky prefers to stay at home and concentrate on making herself beautiful rather than teach in a harambee school which she considers boring.

Irresponsible

Her obsession with herself prevents her from appreciating how caring and responsible her parents are. She disappears from home for three days and only comes back under great pressure from Vera and her Canadian boyfriend, John Courtney.

Sincere /frank

Becky frankly admits of her jealousy to her sister Vera's intelligence and achievement. The attention her little sister, Mary, gets from her father irritates her so much that she loudly complains that Mary never gets punished.

Hateful and pretentious

She hates Vera with a passion. Becky had a problem. She disliked her sister with a violence which was alien to a child and worse, she hid it well behind that beautiful face pg 174

Selfish and Ungrateful

She keeps her things strictly to herself in their shared bedroom .Becky claims that Vera has insisted on coming to her school so as to spy on her.

### Caring

She turns out to be a caring mother although in her own way.She provides for her children and on her death leaves behind a hefty insurance and a large estate ,a string of massionates ,two bungalows in spring valley and a block of offices in westlands.pg 284.

### Unfaithful and promiscuous

Becky has illicit love affair while her husband John I s outside the country.this leads to their divorce when when John finds out what she was doing behind his back.Vera complains of beckys changing of men as often/frequently as she changes clothes.She throws herself at every other man as if she hates herself.This distances her from children and she ends up dying of AIDS.

## **WANDIA**

She is Aoro's wife and also a doctor

### i. Bold

It is Wandia and Aoro who first makes a go of the cadaver while the other members group, six of university of Nairobi anatomy class have get to overcome nervousness. Her boldness is also shown when she takes the first step towards commenting her relationship with Aoro tried to waiting Aoro to propose. She reminds him though they have known each other for six yeafrs and if tired of being asked when she will bring home the man from Ruguru (West) pg 256.

### ii. Assertive

She asserts herself when wshe insists that members of the group be called by names and not referred by their gender.

### iii. Intelligent/ Brilliant

The battle for the top position in the anatomy class is between her and Aoro, she finally beats him although narrowly.

iv. Polite and cautious

When Aoro makes a pass at her seeking to write letter to her over the holiday, she politely and tactfully objects as she doesn't want to be emotionally involved so easily in her studies. She gives excuse that she would not be studying in one place for long but would be moving about seeing in relatives.

v. Loving

If revealed in her relationship with her mother and Becky's children. Her mother to whom she has always been close means a lot to her. She has fond memories of her childhood with her mother has never referred to as anything but 'mami' with the tenders of affecting.

vi. Hardworking and Pioneering

She becomes first Kenyan woman to get a doctorate degree in medicine like Akoko. Nyabera and Vera before her she is the first of a kind.

vii. Greatful/Appreciative

She expresses her gratitude to Aoro for the support given to enable her study, she regard his as a blessing from God.

viii. Irreligious

When she discussed Becky promiscuity with Vera she costs doubt about the existence of God. Vera promises that these would be a time and a place to seek God comes true when Danniell, Wandia's son is discovered to be suffering from leukemia. As Vera guides Wandia out of the hospital, Wandia turns to God in this hour of need.

MARK SIGU

Elizabeth husband an ex-soldier

i. Patient/Persistence

He watches Awiti for a long time before gathering the courage to talk to her. That is how he knows that Awiti is always alone. He refuses to report to a job he has been offered in Nakuru until he has talked to her and will only report if she promises to his letter. Although she doesn't respond to his first two letters, Sigu doesn't give up and write third to which she respond.

ii. Respectful and well mannered

This is what puts Awiti at ease with him how eventually warms up to him when he shakes her mind, he does it in a respectful way "brief, cool and correct unlike some other ill mannered men who left their fingers to linger longer.

### iii. Bold/Courageous/Confident

When he suddenly appears by her side, Awiti wonders how during he its although Awiti treats him coldly at first, he keeps on walking by her side and smiling. He takes in her and smiling. He takes in her impolite remarks and questions calmly and eventually puts Elizabeth at ease.

### iv. Wire and Cautious

He is careful not to blow up his chance with Awiti. He keeps his letter jobber “full of fun and good honoured news” in getting Elizabeth to relax and open up to him with news about herself and relative pg 140

### v. Loving and Responsible

He does things for his wife that would never have crossed the mind of a fully blooded African male despite the disapproval from his friends against involvement in his house chores. He is turn between his love for his wife and unborn baby (mary) when his expectant wife develops high blood pressure, though strict with the children, he eventually loved them all pg 192

### vi. Hardworking/Diligent

When independence comes, and white leaves the country marks joins a correspondence school and works hard earning himself a promotion of position of a manager.

### vii. Unfaithful

At the peak of the state of emergency that insecurity in Nakuru, Elizabeth of the children leaves Mark in Nakuru and goes back to Aluor for safety left alone in Nakuru, Mark develops an illicit affair with other woman and ignores his family for sometimes.

### viii. Strict/Disciplinarian

He insists that the children must behave as expected and most obey him, when Aoro is sent away from school, Mark doesn't only deny him food also gives him a man's notice to get himself a place that own. Aoro grows up knowing that his father is a man to be suspected and feared.

### ix. Just

His family loves him because he is just and fair firm but un understanding. His sense of fairness is evident when Aoro brings Wandia a Kikuyu home although he fears about his relationship, he doesn't try to improve his wishes on Aoro.

AORO SIGU

Sigu's first born

i. Curious/Inquisitive

So curious and full of energy is Aoro that as much as he would wish to be a good boy he simply cannot be. "As a boy, Aoro satisfies his curiosity caused by the appendix operation on his brother by performing an operation on a boy."

ii. Intelligent

He maintains a brilliant performance without straining and stays at the top of his class to the time of the final exam without being seen to exert himself. He displays his brilliance up to university.

iii. Bold/Confident

He and Wandia make the first move towards the cadaver, in their anatomy class at the University of Nairobi.

iv. Hardworking

Once focused on what he wants he becomes, he works very hard and achieves excellent results of six distinctions at ordinary level exam, as a private medical practitioner to spend many hours treating his patients.

v. Supportive

He supports as a husband. When Wandia gets a scholarship to study haematology in anaemia he encourages her to take up although her departure would leave him with five children to look after. He answers her that all will be with him and the children, she receives the doctorate degree of medicine she acknowledges his support.

## OBURA KEMBO

Akoko's first born son. Died in the first world war in Tanganyika.

i. Hard working

One of the reasons why everybody in the village shares the chief's and Akoko's grief at the death of Obura, is his attitude to work. Having been brought up by Akoko to believe that "The son should rise and find a man still asleep" Obura is a habitual early riser and does.

ii. Amiable and cheerful

The villagers love him and work forward to the day he would become their chief, secure in the knowledge that he would make a good chief.

iii. Argumentative

As a little boy, he once comes from his grandmother's place and demands to be shown his mother, who is then in labour. He refuses his sister is born. He is described as argumentative after he attempts to follow his mother when she leaves for return he argues with his parents over his desire to go to places and see what other people do.

iv. Inquisitive/Curious

Obura's curious nature leads to his death. He desire to know more about life beyond his village keeps him in the company of Nyaroche who tells him about the Jorothere that he so relishes. Curiosity overwhelms him and disappears with a trace and dies in the First World War years later.

v. Humble

Although he is the chief's son and beh..... appears to the chieftaincy, Obura humility does not allow him to lead it over others. For this reason he earns the love of the villagers.

## OWUOR KEMBO

He is the chief of Sakwa and Akoko's husband.

i. Calm/Soft-Controlled/even Tempered

He remains calm and composed when everybody else gets agitated by the high bride price, demanded by Akoko's father during the marriage negotiations.

A man of haste and class he oppose to pay the bride price his in-law demand without bargaining. He remains composed when his son's disappearance is revealed. His son Owang' Sinos is said to have inherited his father even temper. The one time he loves his cool and which the villagers remembered for a long time is when his mother and brother drives Akoko out of his home.

ii. Firm and Independent Minded

Owuor remains monogamous against pressure from his mother and expectation of his village.

iii. Loving

He doesn't marry the second wife despite pressure from his mother and community. He keeps to his wife, Akoko whom he fully depends; he is proud of her and is ready to pay heavily in order to take her home as a wife.

iv. Wise and Tactful

When the council of Jodogo meets to discuss Akoko's departure, Ogiol leads the council in impressing on the chief the need to marry another woman Owuor wriggled out of the situation by first acknowledging the wisdom of the elders, then goes on politely reminding them of the

special place held by a man's first wife. He wisely and tactfully rejects any attempt to make him polygamous.





