

# The change in perspective of kambili and jaja



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Kambili and Jaja live in a strict, quiet household where everything revolves around their father, Eugene Achike's, intense religious beliefs and the family's need to constantly impress him. However, when they visit their Auntie Ifeoma's house and get to know their cousins Amaka, Obiora and Chima, the lively, unsuppressed atmosphere in the Nsukka house and their cousin's freedom, changes the perspectives of Kambili and Jaja.

Obiora is years younger than Jaja, however, after the passing of his father, he stepped up to be the man in the household by undergoing initiation into the Igbo culture. He is independent, self assertive and is protective over his mother. When Jaja finds out Obiora has undergone this initiation, he is ashamed of how much older Obiora seems to be than himself, as he had not been able to participate in the initiation, due to his father's disapproval of the Igbo practices which he deemed to be uncivilised. This has a profound affect on Jaja as he starts to blossom into a young man. Kambili even notices that his shoulders are broadening and he has chest hair, all symbolising his transformation into a man. Obiora encourages Jaja to open his eyes and challenge his allegiances, to both his religion and his father, and to make his own decisions rather than blindly follow what is set out by his father.

Amaka also has an effect on the way Jaja sees religion as together they both make a stand against certain religious practices. Amaka refuses to be confirmed as she does not want to have to choose an English name and Jaja does not go up to receive communion. As a result of her influences, Jaja starts to reject and stray away from religion and rebel against his father's beliefs and traditions.

Obiora and Chima get told by Auntie Ifeoma that “ being defiant can be good sometimes. Defiance is like marijuana – it is not a bad thing when it is used right.” (Adichie 144). Kambili then notices that “ her conversation was with Chima and Obiora, but she was looking at Jaja” (Adichie 144). This conversation with his cousins and aunt planted the seed of rebellion into Jaja, and it was here where he first started to think about rebelling against his father’s tyranny. He realised that defying his father might be what is best in this situation.

Amaka had the biggest impact in the growth of Kambili and changing her perceptions. For Kambili, Amaka was a role model after which she could see what life for a normal teenager was like. Amaka was allowed to question authority and speak freely and easily, whereas Kambili was afraid to speak up. Amaka’s question to Auntie Ifeoma “ are you sure they’re not abnormal” (Adichie 141) is overheard by Kambili and makes Kambili aware of the fact that the way in which Kambili and Jaja live and the silent atmosphere in their household is very different to the way their cousins live and act. Kambili notices how easily Amaka can speak and converse with friends and Kambili wonders whether she and Jaja really are abnormal.

When Auntie Ifeoma commands Kambili to speak back to Amaka when she criticizes her, Kambili finally responds “ you don’t have to shout, Amaka” (Adichie 170) which was her first time standing up for herself. After this, Amaka respects Kambili and shows her how to make the Orah leaves, instead of judging her for not knowing how. Amaka’s words “ so you can be this loud” (Adichie 170) shows Kambili is starting to find her voice. Kambili no longer felt so uncomfortable in Amaka’s presence and their friendship only

grew from there. Their friendship was the first time that Kambili saw what it was like to converse normally with other girls her age, instead of always having to run away from her classmates at school in order to please her father and she became more comfortable in her skin.

When Chima does not understand what has been said, Auntie Ifeoma explains, however she uses words which Kambili believes Chima would still not understand. However, Kambili realizes that Auntie Ifeoma does this in order to push and better her children. Kambili realizes that when she and Jaja push themselves, it is because they are too scared to not be good enough for the standard which their father expects of them.

Adichie, the author of *Purple Hibiscus*, uses the cousins to effect change in Kambili and Jaja. This is effective because the way Kambili and Jaja have been raised is in a very conservative, serious manner where they have strict rules set by their father which they have to obey. They are both very quiet and obedient, which is the complete opposite to how their cousins are raised in Auntie Ifeoma's house. They are loud, expressive and have lots of freedom. When Kambili and Jaja come to visit them in Nsukka, they teach Kambili and Jaja how to liven up and not be so serious as Kambili and Jaja become accustomed to their newly found freedom. It is very effective as we can easily compare the two sets of siblings in the beginning and it points out just how boring and controlled Kambili and Jaja's lives are. It also makes it easier to see how Kambili and Jaja grow and change as we can track their progress and see how they become more and more like their cousins.

It is clear to see that through various encounters and conversations with their cousins and from merely living with them during their visits, the cousins had an effect on Kambili and Jaja's perceptions on life and had an impact on their growth and change as people.