

Dead men's path by chinua achebe



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

There are six characters in the story by Chinua Achebe. One of the main characters is a young man, aged twenty-six by the name Michael Obi. Michael Obi is the headmaster of Ndume Central School. Michael Obi has new ideas concerning the reform of the school and wants to implement them. Michael Obi is not ready to consider the ideas of the others in reforming the school. For example, Michael does not listen to the village priest on blocking a path that the villagers had been using for a long time. Nancy Obi is the wife of Michael Obi, the headmaster. Nancy follows whatever the husband does or says. Nancy Obi considers herself as the one to come second in the school decision-making after her husband. Nancy thinks that she is the queen of Ndume School. Nancy is the one behind the new gardens in the school (Achebe 1).

Another major character in the story is the old Lady. The old Lady is the cause of Michael Obi fencing off the path that the villagers had been using in the school. The Old Lady uses the dead men's path. The old woman walks through the flowerbeds and hedges along the path that annoys Michael Obi and forces him to fence it. Priest of Ani is another character in the book. Priest of Ani is the religious leader who presents the concerns of the villagers about the need of the dead men's path to the headmaster. The priest is humble. A young woman is another character in the story. The young woman dies after the fencing of the dead men's path during childbirth. The white supervisor is the character of the story that inspects the school. The white supervisor gives a negative review on the leadership of the headmaster (Achebe 3).

Plot

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Ndume Central School is a school in the Ndume village that has been unprogressive for many years. The mission authorities, who run the school, give the responsibility of reforming the school to a twenty-six-year-old man by the name Michael Obi, who seems reform-minded. . Michael and Nancy intend to modernize the village that hosts the school. The goals of the two are to raise the education standards of the school as well as transform the school compound to be beautiful (Achebe 1).

On one of the days, Michael sees an old woman in the school compound. The old woman is walking on a faint path crossing the compound of the school. Michael consults with the other members of staff and finds out that the administration of the school has been trying to close the path without success. The villagers always provided opposition whenever the school tried to close the path. Michael aims to impress the educational officer from the government. Therefore, Michael puts a fence and a barbed wire across the path blocking it. After three days, the village priest meets with Michael to discuss the issue of the path. The priest explains the significance of the path and its importance in relation to the animist beliefs of the villagers. Michael shuns the explanations that the priest gives and says that he is not going to reopen the path. Michael argues that one of the aims of the school is to see that people abandon such beliefs (Achebe 2).

A young woman later dies when giving birth. The village's diviner points the cause of the death as the blocking of the path. The diviner states that by blocking the path, the people insulted the spirits and the unhappiness of the spirits caused the death of the young woman. Therefore, the villagers had to offer sacrifices to the spirits to end their unhappiness. The villagers later

attacked the school at night destroying the flowers, hedges and one of the buildings in the school. The education officer from the government drafts a bad review on Michael. The educational officer writes a bad report on the tribal war that was developing between the villagers and the school (Achebe 3-4).

Setting

The story occurs in the southeast part of Nigeria in a rural village by the name Ndume in the year 1949. Mission authorities run Ndume central school. Ndume School has been not progressing for a long time. For that reason, the authorities send Michael Obi to the headmaster of the school, because he seems to be reform-minded. The story's action takes place in the school grounds. Michael and Nancy try to make the school look beautiful. In their attempts, they interfere with the spirits, because the spirits of the local community have a path that crosses the gardens of the school. The path is an imaginary line that divides the place where the villagers bury their dead and the place they use to worship. The path is useful to the villagers in terms of their animist beliefs (Achebe 1-4).

Narration

The story takes the omniscient third-person narration. The narrator switches the story forth in time. For example, the narrator uses the phrase " three days later". The person narrating the story does not appear in the story but chooses the major character. In the story, the narrator chooses Michael Obi as the major character. The narration focuses mostly on the actions,

opinions, behavior and wishes of Michael Obi, but also comments on other characters (Baker 1).

Conclusion

The story by Chinua Achebe focuses on the conflicts of the culture between the traditional animist beliefs and the modern ideas. Michael had transforming modern ideas but was in a community filled with animist beliefs. In his attempt to implement the modern ideas, he created a conflict that saw his efforts brought down. The story shows also the ignorance of people on other beliefs. Michael does not tolerate the beliefs of the villagers and so do the villagers on the ideas of Michael (Bentley 1).