

Love and tradition in "marriage is a private affair"

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



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Marriage traditions vary greatly throughout the world. In some cultures, people's marriages are traditionally arranged by their parents. In others cultures, the partners make their own choice. This diversity in tradition causes many conflicts within the family as well as in the culture group. A great example of marriage and its importance to different cultures is the story by Chinua Achebe, " Marriage is a Private Affair. " The story takes place in Africa, a country of great cultural diversity.

Old traditions continue to govern life in Nigerian villages, where parents often play a decisive role in choosing mates for their children. In the cities, however, modern practices displace many of the village traditions, including the role of parent as a mate finder. The tension between old and new ways of living sometimes creates conflict within families, especially between generations. The following story focuses on a conflict between a father and son about the choice of the son's marriage partner. Despite of the strong devotion to the tradition,

Okeke the father can hardly resist the love of his family. Firstly, the tradition plays a very important role in that story. Okeke is an old man, who lives in a Nigerian village, where the traditions have very important role in people's lives. He is first introduced to the readers from the very beginning of the story in a conversation between Nene and Nnaemeka. Although this conversation reveals little about his character, we think of him as an authoritarian father. And, as a traditional Ibo, he does not accept the couple's engagement.

For example, “ They are most unhappy if the engagement is not arranged by them” (258) shows Nnaemeka fear of his father’s disapproval of their marriage. As a result, the conversation between Okeke and his son shows both Okeke's deep disappointment and firm objection. After this conversation Okeke does not talk to his son for eight years. This is another example of Okeke’s loyalty of his people’s tradition. As a result, he never accepts his son’s wife: “ I shall never see her” (260). Okeke's actions show the reader that the tradition is stronger than family relationships. On the other hand, despite of Okeke’s cold description in the first part of the story, he changes his thoughts after he reads the letter from Nene. Nene, his daughter-in-law, sends him a letter and the night after he reads the letter, Achebe points out that Okeke “ hardly slept from remorse and a vague fear that he might die without making it up to his grandchildren” (262). This conclusion to the story hints that the grandchildren would bring these two generations back together again.

In conclusion, this story is a great example of the strong traditions in different cultures that can be stopped only with the great power of a loving family. Nnaemeka’s father was so devoted to the tradition to understand his son’s feelings or the consequences of having grandchildren that he would might never know. The letter that informs him about his grandsons breaks him down and lets the reader think of the happy ending of the story. Achebe teaches us to realize that love can conquer even the strongest traditions.