

# [Loosing ourselves](https://assignbuster.com/loosing-ourselves/)

The short story “ Dead Men’s Path” is written by Chinua Achebe. The main idea of the story is to show the conflict of two worlds. On the one side we have the mission authorities who want to reform the unprogressive school and are sending the new active headmaster to teach the tribe of something fresh, and on the other side we have the old tribe with their traditions and animist belief culture. The fact is that missioners do not want to tolerate the other culture and the tribe will not forget and forgive the closure of the footpath, which exists for the travels of the dead souls.

The story is set around the unprogressive Ndume Central School. The action takes part in January 1949. The main hero is a very energetic and eager to work man, he has plenty of different ideas and he has got the opportunity to implement everything in life as a headmaster. His name is Michael Obi. The other character of the story is his wife Nancy Obi, who wants to become the “ queen” of the school, she recons herself to be the second after her husband in the line of importance, it is significant for her to become the model of imitation for everyone in the new place. Priest of Ani is the next hero of the story; he is religious leader and appears when Michael Obi decides to close the footpath. He tries to explain to the new headmaster the whole system of tribe believes, which Michael dismisses as senseless. All of the next characters are minor, as for example the young woman who died delivering the baby after the footpath was closed. The last hero we meet in the story is the inspector, who visits the school and writes a very negative report telling that there is a tribal war between the school and the village. The narrator of the story is the third person narrator, as the main person is Michal Obi, so the most important is to tell his thoughts; the narrator’s view and comments are quite limited.

The language of the story is very easy for understanding to average reader and that is one of the reasons why the number of stylistic devices is so small, those that are used are highly ironical and examples of exaggerations. One exaggeration underlines Michael’s thoughts about the path’s importance. It is obvious that he does not respect the tribe’s traditions. That is why he does not want " people to make a highway of school compound". This phrase shows how crucial is this little world is for him and that he just cannot let anyone ruin his work. Besides we can find two symbols here, on the one side it is the path, which symbolizes the old tradition of the tribe and on the other, the flowers in the garden that were tramped by the tribe as a sacrifice for the blocking of the path. And it is obvious from the story that the flowers symbolize the reforms by missioners that will not be accepted by the tribe.

The other short story is “ This Is What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona” by Sherman Alexie. It focuses on the situation in reservation, how people maintain their traditions and care about citizens there. The story takes place in Phoenix, Arizona, in the tribal council and reservation. The main hero of the story is Victor, who found out that his father died in Phoenix. Now he has to get there to properly return the body to cremate it. The other main hero is Thomas Builds-the-Fire who actually helps Victor to get to Phoenix, borrows him money. They used to be friends when they were small, Thomas is a bit strange as he is often telling different stories that people ignore and do not understand. One more important characteer in the story is Victor’s father. He as a person is mentioned in one story about Thomas, when he was small he decided to go to Spokane to wait for the sign. Victor’s father found the boy there and took him home, he promised not to tell anyone about the situation, but the part of Thomas’s deal was to watch out for Victor. The next hero is the very council that explained to Victor that they cannot afford to give him the full sum of money to transport the body of his father home, despite the fact that council had special funds deferred for such cases. The other minor hero that appears in the story is Norma Many horses. He was the one who save the life of Thomas when Victor with Indian boys was beating him.

As in the previous story, the narrator of the story is the third person. He is “ all-knowing”, as he has the information about everything and everyone. The language of the story is also easy and understandable for the average reader, yet the story might be a bit discursive, as the author is mixing the memories and current events. The text is not rich in stylistic devices, but it has some symbolism. The Victor’s father is the symbols of the sign for Thomas; he is generally the person that teaches that people should take care of each other. The other one is visible in the scene, when Victor starts driving and the only living creature was killed at the same moment.

We can make a conclusion that these two stories demonstrate the conflict of oppositions. On one hand, the first story shows how people care about their tradition and how they respect them; on the other hand, the second story shows how people forgot about their culture they have no money to help to uphold traditions, how they mock from those who are still faithful to customs.