

English

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

‘ The Old Chief Mshlanga’ In the short story ‘ The Old Chief Mshlanga’, Doris Lessing portrays a young girl d Nkosikaas, the protagonist who matures to learn about the valuable aspects in life. As she walks about her large farm that once belonged to the blacks, she meets the old man, Chief Mshlanga. She understands the pain the blacks undergo in the hands of the whites. In essence, the white treat the blacks as slaves who have no right to posses anything in society. In addition, the whites tease and humiliate the blacks in everything they do. The story depicts Nkosikaas as immature and naive concerning the ways of the world. She understands nothing in life except the surroundings in her parent’s farm. This paper focuses on her innocent and its loss as she encounters the old chief Mshlanga (Lessing 426).

According to her perception, she has learnt that a black is always inferior and deserves no better treatment rather than serving the whites. She grows up knowing that she deserved respect from any black person despite the age or social status. She innocently learns to tease and humiliate a black and posses more respect to an animal rather than a black. Her encounter with the chief makes her change her attitude towards the blacks and perceives the equality they deserve in society. As the old man refuses to walk away and let her pass, she feels perturbed and angry. However, after she realizes that he is a chief and posses more dignity and respect than her, she possesses a feeling of humility. She realizes that blacks are people who too deserve respect and understanding. She also discovers that blacks are people whom anyone can engage in a conversation with and deserve politeness. Although this is against their custom and she is not used to this circumstance, Nkosikaas learns to portray politeness not only to the old man, but also to other blacks (427).

Evidently, from the story, Nkosikaas's end of innocent starts with her encounter with the old man. Her new feeling towards the blacks transforms her perception of the values initiated by her neighbors and parents (428). This later resolves to a conflict. She begins her new life of maturation and growth in character. Her respect towards the old chief gives her a new attitude towards the black. Nkosikaas had always walked around with a dog and a gun for protection (426). She thought the natives were dangerous and could cause harm upon her. However, her encounter with the old chief makes her realize that Africa is a peaceful place. As she visits the old chief's house, she feels lonely and an intruder. She experiences what the black men experienced as they visit their territory. She realizes the impact it has to discriminate the blacks and make them feel inferior to the whites. She learns that her limited perspective of the world is never accurate. Her realization of the inequalities in society becomes an astounding revelation to her contrary to her upbringing. She pulls herself out of the perception that she had once been brought up to understand about the blacks.

Work Cited

Lessing, Doris M. *Collected African Stories*. London: Joseph, 1973. Print.