

Essay about fireweed by skye brannon

[Parts of the World](#), [Africa](#)



The short story Fireweed, written by Skye Brannon in 2009, is a story about a young man named Baluta whose family was killed back in Liberia. I believe the story takes place around 1980-1990 (civil in Liberia) because we hear about the soldiers killing his family and his father also mentions a war coming. The story takes place in America where Joel, which is the name he goes by in America, also lives. Baluta is a carpenter but is having a difficult time finding jobs. He lives in the ghetto with his brother Jato and his sister-in-law Sama. They have all migrated from West Africa to America probably because of the war. We can see in the text that Baluta and his brother are not very good at English because of the way Brannon writes. Brannon shows us that they pronounce the English sounds a little bit wrong by writing “ d” instead of “ th”. Baluta is a kind and sensitive man. We know he is kind because he feels bad about taking the car so his brother and sister-in-law have to take the bus and we know he is sensitive because of his sister. It’s clear how much he misses her and how close they were. Even though he is trying to forget the things that happened in Liberia the memories still means a lot to him. He treasures them even though it’s sad memories. Baluta was brought up in Africa. He lived with his family who are Mandinkas. It sounds like they were a strong family with a close relationship. They knew what to do and how to use the things they had. We always hear that Baluta and his sister were playing in the nature. We also know that he is poor because he has to take a cold shower. After his brother and sister-in-law had had theirs all the hot water had been used. The car he has is named Swiss Chevy by his brother because of the many holes in its body which is also a sign that they don’t have much money. The story is written chronological but with a lot of

flashbacks. In the flashbacks we hear about Baluta's family and things that happened in Liberia. The flashbacks are always triggered by something that reminds him of his home country. There is always a thing that reminds him of certain happenings. You have the feeling that there are two stories told at the same time - one in Liberia and one in his present hometown. Most of the flashbacks are about his dead sister. We also hear about his father and grandmother but his sister is almost in every flashback. He describes his sister, Alanso, as a cheerful and lovely girl. In the beginning the memories are good but as time goes by the memories turn bad. We hear about memories he has tried to forget and in the end we discover why. We discover how his family tragically dies. It is a third person narration told in the past tense. The "real" story takes place in maybe an hour at Tiffany's place. We also hear about the time when he fixes the banister for Mrs. Giles but that is just a flashback. I think the title is really important for the story because whenever Baluta hears the word "fireweed" he will think back on the tragic episode at his home. Fireweed is also the word that bonds the two parallel stories — the Liberian story and the American story. A happening in the story that I find important is the end. I find it a little bit ironic that the last sentence is Tiffany saying: "[...] I'm just going to die! ", when we just heard about how Baluta's family died and how he survived because he had to get some fireweed. It's also the final thing that brings the two stories together. Tiffany sounds really arrogant and the only things she cares about are her wall and the hole in her garden. But then again, how could she know what Baluta has gone through? She has never had an experience like that.