

Stories from different cultures



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Dead Man's path is a story set in Nigeria during the year's of the Christian Missionaries, when European's tried to inflict culture, language and religion upon the people of Nigeria. This story shows how a new headmaster tries to bring modern methods to and old cultural village.

In Pieces Of Silver it gives an insight about a poor little boy from the Caribbean trying to get money for his retiring headmaster who in the end is the man who gives him the money to save the poor boy from punishment who uses the money to help fellow pupils avoid the same punishment and humiliation.

The twist in Dead Man's Path is reflected by the new headmaster, Michael Obi, who tries to bring his new modern methods of teaching and tries to create a new atmosphere in his workplace and surrounding neighbourhood. But his plan backfires when he upsets local villagers and clashes with their ancient beliefs. The villager's are said to have started a tribal warfare after Michael Obi closed a an ancient path leading through the school, which is said to be the path of which the souls travel and after failing to let both modern and new methods combine. Michael and the local village priest discuss their methods in which Michael hits out at the priest saying '... the whole purpose of the school is to eradicate just such beliefs as that. Dead mean do not require footpaths' which leads into the Tribal warfare, proving the main point that old and new cannot live side by side.

In Pieces Of Silver it shows how a young boy called Clement, who fears the punishment and humiliation he will receive if he doesn't get the money to contribute for his retiring Headmasters leaving collection. However after his

mother and father refuse to give money to the collection Clement is worried he will never be able to live it down with his new headmaster, until his sister a keen singer, decides they can make money through busking to help her brother. However the irony of the story comes when the pair arrive at the last house on their rounds, an impressive white building owned by none other than the retiring headmaster himself.

However the, spectacle wearing headmaster does not notice the Clement without them on and pays kindly for their entertainment. Clement is shocked that his headmaster is asking for money when he is already well off. The next day as Clement awaits on the stage in front of the school he hands his acting headmaster the money but then realizes he has enough to help free the other boys who could not get the money, thus saving them from the humiliation.

The writer's methods in *Dead Man's Path* portray the contrasts between characters in the story. Michael Obi is described as a young, enthusiastic man and his wife describes the methods he likes to use as modern and delightful when she says 'We shall have such beautiful gardens and everything will be just modern and delightful' which shows she has ambitions for Michael's career but are not exactly a shared view and her inconsideration for the villagers. On the other hand the priest is described as 'old' and says to Michael in the story '... we follow the practices of our fathers' this shows that if the priest is old then following his fathers actions must be very old from this it also tells us that the villagers have followed their ancestors doings for many years who would have followed their ancestors and so on.

The main contrast in *Pieces Of Silver* is between Clement and his family and the lives and personalities of the teachers at his school. Clement's sister is described as listening '... as attentively as a mother' showing she cared for Clement even though his real mother was there she could protect and help him on another level. On the other hand his acting headmaster, Mr. Chase, is described as a squat jug of a man, fierce eyed and unsmiling showing the varying life Clement lived between school and the loving warmth of home. Showing us that the teachers did not have any respect for the children and were only in the job purely for money.

When Achebe writes about the priest conversation with Michael about their cultural differences he says 'let the hawk perch and let the eagle perch' showing that although these two birds of prey must fight for survival like these are fighting for culture they should set it all aside and manage to combine both and not fight over their metaphorical prey of freedom.

In *Pieces of Silver*, Clement receiving the money from his retiring headmaster he is supposed to be getting the money for shows that the headmaster's aim is not to well educate the children but to launder money from them. The children at the school are treated like soldiers with such a strict regime and commanding words such as 'shun' and the humiliation of the children on the stage shows how much disrespect the teachers have.

At the time of *Dead Man's Path* Nigerians would have found it hard to live in a society of clashing cultures because of the European Christian Missionaries disrupting the lifestyle of the country. Natives wouldn't have been able to live their life in the freedom they deserve and many changes would have led to

deaths and wars in these parts of the countries which would have been a big shock to the young people inheriting their ancestors cultures but those cultures being altered by strangers.

Also during the time Piece's Of Silver would have been written it shows how children's education was sacrificed for the sake of wealth and luxury and not caring about the psychological damage they are causing the children.

Teachers were very few and far between back then as not many people were educated fully and the government were paying these teachers to share their knowledge with the pupils but took advantage and ran the school like a military camp.