

In what ways does
mariama ba use the
male characters in
scarlet song as an
influe...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In *Scarlet Song* by Mariama Ba, the male protagonist Ousmane Gueye is greatly influenced by the various male characters throughout the book.

Mariama Ba strategically places certain types of characters in Ousmane's life so that his character develops as the story progresses, as a way to keep the reader interested. However, Ousmane does not entirely become influenced by the characters but instead he comes to terms with what he understands is best for his situation. The various male influences differentiate from one another as some of them try to encourage and support his relationship with Mireille, while others do not.

From the beginning of the book, Djibril Gueye, the father of Ousmane, shows his dedication towards his Muslim religion. This plays a major role in how he accepts the marriage of Ousmane and Mireille. Generally, his faith keeps Djibril's character the same throughout the story which indicates the importance of religion and how much of an impact it makes in people's lives. However, Ousmane does not tell his father about Mireille until after they are married because he believed that his father would not understand because "he was proud of [the] difference" (38) between their own people and white people.

In fact, he had been oblivious to the whole relationship "even when Ousmane handed them gifts" (58) from her. When Ousmane reveals to his family the marriage, he decides to tell his father first because he is "more armed against suffering than Yaye Khady." (64). Although Djibril was shocked and upset, he did not make it very apparent and instead he "was carrying on a monologue consistent with...his piety" (66) and said "'Since

this woman has embraced Islam, we must simply accept her into the bosom of our family. ” (66). The fact that Mireille had become Muslim, “ his faith made him accept the will of God without a murmur. (69). Mariama Ba’s use of Djibril’s character is effective as it is an example of a person who has a close relationship with Ousmane, who encourages and supports him even if the situation is frowned upon in society. Mariama Ba portrays two male characters, Lamine and Ali, as a good conscience in Ousmane’s life concerning his relationship with Mireille. Lamine in particular is a good comparison to Ousmane, as he is the complete opposite in terms of beliefs and opinions. His situation is the same as Ousmane in that he is married to a French woman.

However, he has learned to deal with the cultural differences as he “ had an open mind and was not tormented by ideological complexes. ” (98). The comparison between Ousmane’s character and one who is in the same situation shows the reader that a mixed marriage is not impossible, and that it can work as long as the couple are able to make sacrifices and compromises for each other. While it is apparent that Mireille really wants the marriage to work, as she has made a sacrifice by moving to Senegal, Ousmane still keeps the same mindset towards embracing his negritude where no room is left for considering Mireille’s feelings.

Lamine tells him that he “ wants happiness without making any sacrifices. ” (98), but this will not work in a marriage where it is “ based on tolerance and a human approach. ” (99). Lamine is worried about their marriage and tries to talk some sense into Ousmane by having him settle his and Mireille’s

differences, but because of his stubborn pride for his roots, he does not want to lose his “ African soul” (100) due to a white woman.

When Ousmane’s friend, Ali, had heard about how he has been treating Mireille, he “ had been surprised...Now he was revolted. ” (135). “ Ali cornered Ousmane. ” (136) in order to confront him of his wrongdoings and to make him repay Mireille back for the hardships he is putting her through. Again, Mariama Ba includes a character that also has a close relationship with Ousmane, to emphasize Ousmane’s actions and how they are only tearing down his relationship with Mireille.

On the other hand, two other male characters are revealed who share similar opinions and backgrounds. One man is Mireille’s father, Jean de La Vallee, and the other is a French neighbor of Ousmane called Guillaume. They both have strong prejudices against Ousmane and others of his race which adds to the disdained view upon his and Mireille’s relationship. When Jean discovers the hidden secret relationship, he discriminates Ousmane and is furious that Mireille would date a man to whom he calls “ this object” (25).

Therefore, it is evident that Jean de La Vallee is not accepting of his daughter’s interracial relationship. He is a man who highly appreciates order and appearance in his household, as he does not “ want any scandal. ” (27) from having any close connection with a native man since he is a French diplomat. Mireille is shocked to hear how hypocritical her father actually is as he calls Ousmane a “ nigger” (27), but as a diplomat he “ made speeches preaching fraternization with the indigenous peoples” (28).

Finally when Monsieur de La Vallee hears about the marriage between Ousmane and Mireille, he makes further discriminating remarks saying that “ He was haunted by the memory of the blacks...’Hideous half-wits, guffawing with laughter, the whites of their eyes staring out of their vacant faces! ’” (76). Even as Mireille was asking her father for forgiveness, he could not because he “ sealed off his heart against reason and love...[and] he could not accept ‘ betrayal’. ” (76-77).

Ousmane’s neighbor, Guillaume, was like Jean de La Vallee. He discriminates Ousmane by calling him a “ lout” (88) and a “ nigger” (88), but he can only “...stand them in their own home. But here, in [his] place, it’s unthinkable. ’” (90). He often spies on their marriage as well, and thinks that “ things are not going well. ” (88). Mariama Ba includes these two similar characters as different points of views into Ousmane and Mireille’s marriage, from the opposite side; the French people.

In this tragic love story between two people with very different social standards, culture, and background, Mariama Ba has successfully used the main male characters as positive and negative influences on Ousmane’s relationship with Mireille. Through these male characters, there was a balance between two opposing sides of their marriage. Although the characters each had convincing influences in Ousmane’s life, in actuality it was up to Ousmane to decide how his relationship with Mireille would end up. Works Cited: Ba, Mariama, and Dorothy S. Blair. *Scarlet Song*. Harlow: Longman, 2008. Print.