

Chike's School Days

But now to return to Chike who refused heathen food at the tender age of four years, or may be five.

Two years later he went to the village school. His right hand could now reach across his head, which proved that he was old enough to tackle the mysteries of the white man's learning. He was very happy about his new slate and pencil, and especially about his school uniform of white shirt and brown khaki shorts. But as the first day of the new term approached, his young mind dwelt on the many stories about teachers and their canes. And he remembered the songs his older sisters sang, a song that had somewhat a disquieting refrain:

*Onye nkuzi eweelu itali
piagbusie umuakA.*

There is a lot of imagination when emphasizing something in the Igbo language, so the teacher in the refrain might not actually have flogged the children to death. But there was no doubt he did flog them. And Chike thought very much about it.

Being so young, Chike was sent to what was called the 'religious class' where they sang, and sometimes danced, the catechism. He loved the sound of words and he loved rhythm. During the catechism lesson the class formed a ring to dance the teacher's question. 'Who was Caesar?', he might ask, and the song would burst forth with much stamping of feet.

*Siza bu eze Rome
Onye nachi enu uwa dum.*

It did not matter to their dancing that in the twentieth century Caesar was no longer the ruler of the whole world.

And sometimes they even sang in English. Chike was very fond of 'Ten Green Bottles'. They had been taught the words but they only remembered the first and the last lines. The middle was hummed and hic-ed and mumbled.

*Ten grin botr angin on dar war
Ten grin botr angin on dar war,
Hm hm hm hm hm,
Hm hm hm hm hm hm,*

An ten grin botr angin on dar war.

In this way the first year passed. Chike was promoted to the Infant School, where work of a more serious nature was undertaken. We need not follow him through the Infant School. It would make a full story in itself. But it was no different from the story of other children. In the Primary School, however, his individual character began to show. He developed a strong hatred for arithmetic. But he loved stories and songs. And he liked particularly the sound of English words, even when they conveyed no meaning at all. Some of them simply filled him with elation. 'Periwinkle' was such a word. He had now forgotten how he learned it or exactly what it was. He had a vague private meaning for it and it was something to do with fairyland. 'Constellation' was another.

Chike's teacher was fond of long words. He was said to be a very learned man. His favourite pastime was copying out jaw-breaking words from his *Chambers Etymological Dictionary*. Only the other day he had raised an applause from his class by demolishing a boy's excuse for lateness with unanswerable erudition. He had said, 'Procrastination is a lazy man's apology'. The teacher's erudition showed itself in every subject he taught. His

nature study lessons were memorable. Chike would always remember the lesson on seed dispersal. According to the teacher, there were five methods: by men, by animals, by water, by wind, and by explosive mechanism. Even those pupil who forgot all the other methods remembered 'explosive mechanism'.

Chike was naturally impressed by the teacher's explosive vocabulary. But the fairyland quality which words had for him was of a different kind. The first sentences in his New Method reader were simple though and yet they filled him with a vague exaltation. 'Once there was a wizard. He lived in Africa. He went to China to get a lamp'. Chike read it over and over again at home and then made a song of it. It was a meaningless song. 'Periwinkles' got into it, and also 'Damascus'. But it was like a window through which he saw in the distance a strange, magical new world. And he was happy.

from Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War*.

A. COMPREHENSION

Now answer the following questions by choosing only the best answer.

- 1 The text *Chike's School Days* was
- written specifically for this exam.
 - selected from various sources.
 - extracted from a book.
 - adapted from a book.
2. When he started school, Chike was
- four or five years old.
 - five or six years old.
 - six or seven years old.
 - just two years old.
3. The refrain refers to the fact that
- teachers flogged their pupils to death
 - the Igbo language was filled with exaggerations
 - teachers often flogged their pupils
 - it was not certain that teachers flogged the children
4. The children sometimes sang the song Ten Green Bottles
- but Chike hated it very much
 - and Chike liked it a lot
 - but Chike was not very interested on it
 - but Chike was very angry about it
5. For Chike
- 'Periwinkle' means 'to have a vague private meaning of something'
 - 'Periwinkle' means precisely 'fairyland'
 - 'Constellation' is another meaning of 'Periwinkle'
 - 'Periwinkle' just excited him.
6. Chike's teacher's nature lesson were memorable because
- he always punished pupils when they arrived late to his classes
 - he used explosive methods to control the class
 - he often used long and unusual words during the lessons
 - he was a very learned man.

7. In the end, Chike was happy because
- he saw in the distance a strange, magical new world
 - he was able to turn a story into a song
 - he was naturally impressed with his teacher.
 - his New Method Reader contained many stories of fairyland quality.
6. The purpose of the author of this text is
- to show how clever Chike was when he was a child
 - to show the methods teachers used in the classroom
 - to show how important English was in Primary School
 - to tell about Chike's experience at school
9. Which of these sentences best show that the story happens in a colonial context?
- Chike was sent to what they called "the religious class"
 - He was old enough to tackle the mysteries of the white man's learning.
 - He was happy about his school uniform of white shirt and brown khaki shorts.
 - His mind dwelt on the many stories about teachers and their canes.

B. LANGUAGE STRUCTURE

Read the text below and choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D) for each number.

As you probably know, our host __10__ that Duncairn is one of a small group of castles built __11__ on the twelfth century on the western coast of Scotland. Only one of its sea-walls still stands. It is __12__ a few feet high, __13__ an entrance gate with __14__ of a stone stairway that originally rose up to the wall walk. I had a theory that it was the work of a particular architect who had built some other castles on the coast. __15__ I decided to __16__ Duncairn to see if it would confirm my theory.

I was __17__ a farmer living __18__ __19__ the castle, who was quite pleased to put me up. He seemed interested in my work and used to

join me every evening __20__ together from the castle. On the night before I __21__ I told him I wanted to go back to the castle to check a detail I was not sure of.

“You’d never __22__ there by night, __23__ you”, he asked/

“Of course not. I won’t be long”.

“You can’t get there after dark”, he **replied**. “You would never come back. The wall would shut you in. Didn’t you ever wonder why __24__ with you every night? It was to make sure that you would not be shut in __25__ the rest of them”.

I thought he has gone a little mad, __26__ sometimes happens to people who __27__. Then he told me a strange story about a war between two families that had ended in __28__ brutal way that one of them had killed the others and put them in the wall, believing that it would help to hold it up. “I cannot let you go back there”, the farmer said, “in case you are __29__”.

“I __30__ don’t see that __31__ danger”, I said, laughing. “__32__ the ghosts are holding up the wall, it won’t fall on me”.

“__33__ has ever gone there at night and come back alive”, he said. “The ghosts are __34__ tired and need others to help them”.

10. **A.** was explaining to us
B. was explaining us
C. was remarking us
D. was telling to us
11. **A.** by
B. at
C. in
D. on
12. **A.** hardly more than
B. almost more than
C. just as much as
D. nearly more than
13. **A.** in spite there is yet
B. in spite it still
C. though it is yet
D. though there is still
14. **A.** what stays
B. what remains
C. that what remains
D. that what stays
15. **A.** Because of that
B. For that
C. That is the cause why
D. For which reason
16. **A.** do a careful study to
B. make a careful study to
C. do a careful study of
D. make a careful study of
17. **A.** enough lucky to find
B. lucky enough to find
C. with enough luck to meet
D. with lack enough to meet
18. **A.** by his own
B. without no one
C. by himself
D. solely
19. **A.** quite near at
B. not much far from
C. nearby to
D. not far away from
20. **A.** so that we could walk home
B. so that we could walk to home
C. for walking home
D. for walking to home
21. **A.** was to leave
B. would be to leave
C. must have left
D. must be left
22. **A.** pretend to go
B. pretend going
C. think of going
D. think of go
23. **A.** should
B. did
C. would
D. had
24. **A.** have I always come back
B. I have always come back

- C. have I come back always
D. I have come back always
24. A. similar than
B. the same that
C. as well
D. like
25. A. what
B. which
C. that
D. for
26. A. do live alone
B. do live lonely
C. live alone
D. live lonely
27. A. a so
B. what a
C. the most
D. such a
28. A. avoided to leave
B. prevented to leave
C. avoided from leaving
D. prevented from leaving
29. A. still
B. yet
C. already
D. no longer
30. A. It is any
B. it is some
C. there is any
D. there is some
31. A. Meanwhile
B. During
C. As long as
D. As far as
32. A. None
B. No one
C. Anyone
D. Not one
33. A. getting
B. getting to be
C. becoming that they are
D. becoming to be

C. VOCABULARY

Once again, choose the appropriate word to fill in the blank spaces.

35. I ____ him some money and must pay him back tomorrow.
A. lent
B. borrowed
C. owe
D. own
36. Steak pie! That's my favourite ...
A. menu
B. receipt
C. dish
D. plate
37. Her shoes were so old that her _____ were sacking out of them.
A. toes
B. tips
C. thumbs
D. fingers

38. They were _____ from the company because they were always late for work.
- A. sacked
 - B. retired
 - C. resigned
 - D. disposed
39. She got married although her parents had not given her their _____
- A. allowance
 - B. consent
 - C. permit
 - D. authority
40. It is a good idea to see your doctor regularly for _____.
- A. a revision
 - B. a control
 - C. a research
 - D. a check-up

The End.