

A Chip of Glass Ruby

NADINE GORDIMER

TITLE

- ▶ Refers to the jewellery that Indian women wear in their nose and is traditional
- ▶ **Mrs Bamjee, however, is not traditional in the sense that she is an activist**
- ▶ The title suggests that what some people may think is a piece of useless glass, may, in fact be valuable (a ruby)
- ▶ The title could also be derived from the Scripture in Proverbs 31 V 10 that speaks about a virtuous woman being worth more than rubies
- ▶ **In the story, Mrs Bamjee removes her ruby stating it is too old style, even for her. She rejects the idea of being stereotypical**

SETTING and HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- ▶ The story is set in 1950s South Africa
- ▶ It is in a town near Johannesburg
- ▶ There was organised resistance to apartheid oppression
- ▶ Resisting the apartheid regime was criminal
- ▶ Most of the events occur in the crowded living room of the Bamjee home

PLOT

- ▶ **Exposition** – A duplicating machine arrives
- ▶ **Rising action** – Mr Bamjee's racist attitudes are revealed and Mrs Bamjee makes copies of anti-apartheid leaflets
- ▶ **Climax** – Mrs Bamjee is arrested by Special Branch policemen and taken to prison in the early hours of the morning
- ▶ **Falling action** – Mrs Bamjee goes on a hunger strike in prison. Mr Bamjee's confusion, resentment and self-pity grow
- ▶ **Denouement** – Mrs Bamjee sends birthday wishes to her husband and he subsequently realises that he loves her for the very qualities that he has been resenting all this time

CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERIZATION

- ▶ **Mr Yusuf Bamjee**

- ▶ A rounded character who undergoes change. He is racist, egotistic and narrow-minded. He eventually realises why he married Mrs Bamjee

- ▶ **Mrs Bamjee**

- ▶ A virtuous woman, unselfish, she behaves in accordance with her religion, is a good mother, dresses traditionally, an orthodox Muslim woman, she is helpful and thoughtful

CHARACTERS....

- ▶ **The Bamjee children**

- ▶ **Girlie** : The eldest, modern, pregnant with her first child
- ▶ **Jimmy** : 15 years old, typical adolescent who patronises his mother. He is very supportive of his mom. Realises the effect of apartheid on people's behaviour
- ▶ **Ahmed** : Younger brother who is victimised by his teacher

THEMES

- ▶ **Change is possible**
- ▶ **Sacrifice**
- ▶ **The human condition**

SYMBOLISM/FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

- ▶ The ruby has symbolic significance
- ▶ **Mr Bamjee learns that his wife's value is far more than precious jewels**
- ▶ What we see is not **all** that there is to see

The new tribe

BUCHI EMECHETA

TITLE

- ▶ **The new tribe** refers to people who originally come from Africa but are now living in Britain
- ▶ The **adopted children**, Julia and Chester, especially Chester, are part of this new tribe
- ▶ The new tribe explored in this story deals with a **mixed race family living in a multi-cultural society**

SETTING

- ▶ The story is set in a village community in England in 2000, modern time
- ▶ This is important because the writer focuses on the difficulties faced by adopted children and their parents in mixed-race families in Britain
- ▶ Arthur is an Anglican minister and the Arlingtons are Christians

PLOT

- ▶ **Exposition** – Ginny Arlington and her husband, Arthur, who is a church minister, are childless
- ▶ **Rising action** – The Arlingtons adopt two abandoned children (Julia, a baby girl found in a shopping bag and Chester, a Nigerian boy). They have been chosen by Chester's mother. Chester struggles with an identity problem and feelings of “unbelonging”
- ▶ **Climax** – Chester wants to know who his biological mother is. The Arlingtons now have to tell the children about how they came to be adopted. Chester recurrently dreams about an African compound, but tells no-one about his dream
- ▶ **Denouement** – Chester shows his growing independence by refusing to play a king from the Orient in the nativity play. However, he still relies on Arthur and can show his love for Ginny

CHARACTERS

▶ **Chester**

- ▶ Round character since he grows and changes.
- ▶ He has to face up to being different
- ▶ He struggles with an identity problem as he is a black child in a white family, living in a largely white rural community
- ▶ He “tries not to cause trouble” and feels he needs to prove himself
- ▶ His independence is realised when he rejects being stereotyped by being the king from the East

CHARACTERS...

▶ **GINNY**

- ▶ Round character due to her growth and change
- ▶ She is a devoted mother to her adopted children
- ▶ Now she needs to accept that they are becoming more independent and asserting their identities and being more independent

CHARACTERS....

▶ JULIA

- ▶ She is Chester's sister and very protective of him
- ▶ She becomes withdrawn and distant when she discovers that she has been adopted

▶ ARTHUR

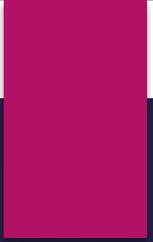
- ▶ He remains the same throughout the story – observant, dependable and supportive. “The Rock of Gibraltar

THEMES

- ▶ **RACIAL INTEGRATION** : The St Simon community adapt to having a black child in the community. Chester learns to accept that he is different and how to cope with this difference
- ▶ **MIXED-RACE FAMILIES**: The Arlingtons have adopted two children, one of whom is black. They now need to learn how to deal with Chester's cultural and racial difference to them

THEMES...

- ▶ **ADOPTION** : The process of adoption is long and difficult one. Parents need to bond with children who are not their own. They worry that biological parents may want to reclaim the child. They must face whatever problems may arise with an adopted child
- ▶ **IDENTITY PROBLEMS** : Chester struggles with his identity and Julia becomes withdrawn when she learns of her adoption



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I thank you for listening