

Marriage Is A Private Affair

Chinua Achebe

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- One of contemporary Africa's most famous authors.
- Learned English as a child.
- Currently is a professor at the University of Idaban in Nigeria.

Theme

- Two cultures –
modern and urban,
rural and traditional –
meet and clash.

Building Background

- The story takes place in the West African country of Nigeria, a land of great cultural diversity.
- Centuries-old traditions continue to govern life in Nigerian villages, where parents often play a decisive role in choosing mates for their children.

More background

- In the cities, however, modern practices have displaced many of the village traditions, including the role of parent as matchmaker.
- The tension between old and new ways of living sometimes creates conflict within families, especially between generations.

Main Characters

- Nnaemeka (Okeke's son), Nene (Nnaemeka's fiancée) and Okeke (father)

Nnaemeka

- Nnaemeka, like many of his contemporaries, has moved away from the village of his birth and lives in a city, Lagos, the economic and commercial center of the nation, with a population of 1.4 million.

Conflict

- Comes from Nnaemeka's choosing to marry someone other than the girl that Okeke picked for him. It is over a clash in cultures.

Conflict continued...

- Traditional – values marriages arranged by the parents and that remain within the tribe
- Modern – Values marriages based on love.

Opinion of the villagers

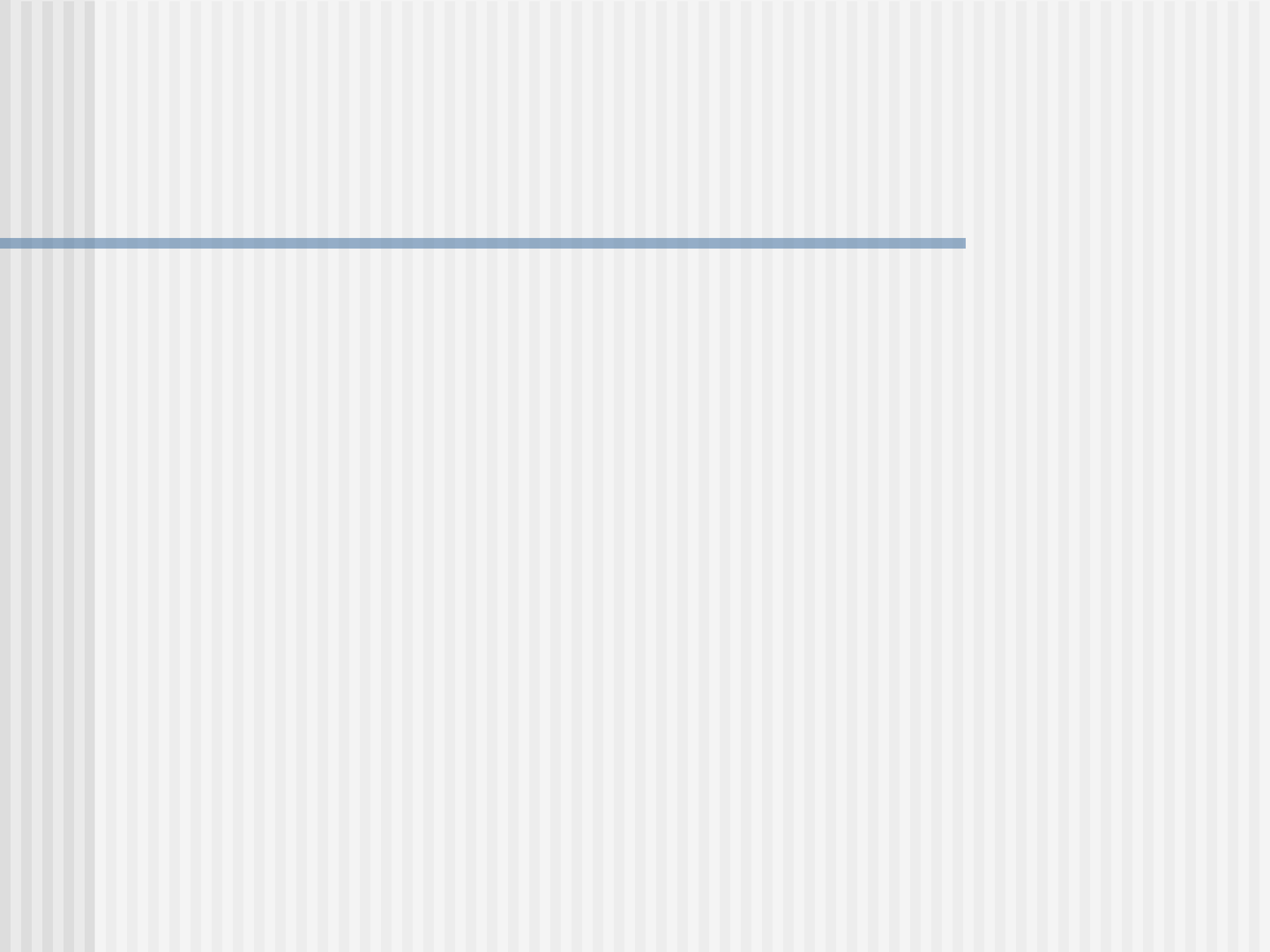
- The villagers where Okeke lives all see this marriage as wrong. They convince him that he is right to disown Nnaemeka and Nene.

What changes Okeke's mind?

- His desire to see his grandsons after Nene writes to him about them wanting to meet their grandfather.

Title

- Suggests that in matters where personal freedom and tradition conflict, personal freedom should win out.



Assignment

- The story ends before the reader finds out if Okeke reconciles with his son so that he can meet his grandchildren. Remember Okeke's beliefs: Ibo men should marry within their own tribe. Rewrite the ending from Nene's letter begging for forgiveness. Build on the conflict between Okeke and Nnaemaeka, and the internal conflict that Okeke has.