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Themes used in second class citizen

This plot summary of Second Class Citizen will assist you (be you a student or teacher of Literature) to prepare adequately to answer as many questions on the novel as possible. Second Class Citizen has already been summarized by a lot of other people. DISCLOSURE: The posts on this site contain affiliate links from which I may earn a commission. READ FULL AFFILILATE DISCLOSURE. However, the difference here is that I've adopted a holistic approach to summarizing the novel. My sole objective is to enable you to know the key points you must concern yourself with during your studies. Without further ado, let's do this summary of Second Class Citizen by Buchi Emecheta once and for all. Buchi Emecheta's novel, Second Class Citizen tells the story of a Nigerian Igbo girl called Adah Ofili. SEE ALSO: Chapter by Chapter Summary of Second Class Citizen The Lion and the Jewel Summarized: Plot Summary, Themes, Characters and Dramatic Techniques Chapter One Summary of Second Class Citizen Chapter Two Summary of Second Class Citizen (Key incidents you can't afford miss) Chapter Three Summary of Second Class Citizen The main thrust of the novel has to do with the many obstacles that Adah Ofili (maiden name), the protagonist has to overcome in order to achieve her educational, career and personal dreams. Download PDF Copy Do you wish to save this summary and analysis of Second Class Citizen in PDF format for future use offline? You can start the process to download the plot summary of this novel and many other valuable learning and teaching resources right now. Simply click the button below. BUY REVISION EBOOKS AND MORE Setting and Plot The story begins at the time when Adah, the protagonist, is roughly an 8-year old girl. She was born sometime in the 1940s. That was during the Second World War. Though Adah's parents are from the Igbo tribe of Eastern Nigeria (precisely Ibuzo or Igbozor), she was born in Lagos, the then capital city of Nigeria, where her parents live. The plot of Second Class Citizen starts from Adah's early years in Lagos, through her marriage to Francis Obi, an Accounting student, and then moves to her early years as an African female immigrant with lofty dreams in the United Kingdom's capital, London. Second Class Citizen ends with the failure of Adah's marriage to Francis. Early Years Adah happens to be a young girl with big dreams. She aspires to have an education and also travel to the United Kingdom. She also desires to become a writer. Adah's fascination with the UK stems from comments she heard from her father regarding one Mr Nweze whom his townfolk are eagerly preparing to welcome from a far away country called United Kingdom. The impression the mention of "United Kingdom" has had on the young Adah's mind is strong enough to convince her that the UK can only be a place of greatness and bliss. So, Adah, from an early age, resolved to do whatever it would take to one day travel to this place called the "United Kingdom". And that includes getting herself formal education. Obstacles Adah Must Overcome to Realize Her Dreams Unfortunately for Adah, fate and the culture into which she has been born will place roadblocks on her path to making her dreams a reality. Girl-Education is not Encouraged Among Adah's People Prominent among these obstacles is the simple fact that she is a female child and not a male. Among Adah's Igbo people at the time, sending a girl to school to receive formal education is considered a waste of time (and,by extension, money). Thus, Adah is forced to stay at home to help her mother with the household chores while her brother, Boy, is in school. It only takes the resourcefulness of the young Adah to one day sneak out of the house to visit a nearby school where her neighbour, Mr Cole, is a teacher. Mr Cole, being kind enough, allows Adah, who has literally burst into the classroom to the consternation of the children present, to stay on and participate in the lesson. This incident marks an important stage in the development of the plot of Second Class Citizen. Additionally, it ushers us into a new period in the development of Adah as an ambitious and determined young Nigerian girl. The Death of Mr Ofili (Adah's Father) A second important development that threatens to cut short Adah's dream of becoming an educated woman is the sudden death of her father. Mr Ofili has allowed Adah to attend the school – an expensive one of course. Sadly, however, he dies from complications due to a wound her received while a soldier in far away Burma during the Second World War. Again, by the dictates of Igbo culture, Mr Ofili's brother has to inherit his wife, and by extension, his children. As a result, the decision is made for the children to be split among family members who will assume the responsibility of taking care of them. This is how Adah ends up living with a maternal uncle of hers. To say that life for Adah in this new environment is unbearable will be an understatement. But Adah is relieved that she is allowed to continue attending school. Though it is no longer the expensive, apparently higher quality Ladi-Lak school she once attended before the passing of her father. It is interesting to note that what motivates her relatives to allow Adah to stay in school has nothing to do with their desire to see the girl realize her dreams. It is simply because, to them, an educated child will command a much higher bride price when the time comes for her to be married off. Pressure Mounts on Adah to Marry Early Unsurprisingly, as Adah enters puberty, many suitors come knocking. Determined and focused on achieving her own dreams, Adah refuses to bow to pressure from her environment to accept a suitor and become a wife to "an old baldie". Instead, she relishes the idea of gaining a scholarship to continue her education at the secondary level. Her resourcefulness again pays off. She literally steals money to sit for the Common Entrance Examination. Consequently, Adah easily gets the grades she needs to win a scholarship to the Methodist Girls' School. Having successfully completed the secondary school course, Adah has been able to achieve another important milestone on her journey of grit, focus and single-minded determination. In fact, this event also ushers us into the next significant stage in the development of the plot of Second Class Citizen. It is also and important landmark in the development of the character of Adah Ofili. Adah Gets Married to Francis Obi To be clear, the teenage Adah's primary motive for her decision to get married is to be able to have the opportunity to attend university. In fact, Francis is too poor to even afford the bride price. But that is not of any concern to the determined and resourceful Adah. It is again important to note that for Francis and his people too, this is simply a marriage of convenience. It's all about the potential of Adah, an educated and ambitious girl to earn and bring an income to support their family financially. So, right from the onset, the marriage between Adah and Francis has got absolutely nothing to do with the usual love or romantic stuff. Quickly, Adah gets pregnant and gives birth to a baby girl called Titi. This will soon be followed by a second child – a boy called Vicky. PLEASE NOTE: Adah was pregnant with Vicky when Francis left for the United Kingdom, an event we'll talk about shortly. So Vicky was born in Lagos when Francis was in England pursuing his Cost and Works Accountancy studies. Adah now has a job. She works as a library clerk at the American Consulate Library in Lagos. United Kingdom Hopes Dashed Adah is now working and earning an income. She is able to take care of herself, her children and even her husband as well as her in-laws. The once-penniless Adah can now afford anything she desires. She even has servants at her beck and call. No wonder, Adah now considers herself as a first class citizen. We must not lose sight of one important fact, though. Adah cannot make decisions about her own money. All decisions concerning Adah's salary are made by her in-laws (with her husband's tacit consent). But this is not all that Adah wants in life. Her dream of migrating to study and work in the United Kingdom is still alive. After a discussion on the matter with Francis, her husband, they both decide to travel abroad. Then comes one more stumbling block in the way of the heroine in Second Class Citizen. Her father-in-law will not agree to Adah travelling to the UK. To him, it is not proper for a woman to undertake such a journey. But what we must not forget is that Adah's salary takes care of the household needs. Allowing her to travel to England with her husband will deprive her in-laws of much-needed housekeeping money. So Adah is forced to stay behind while Francis leaves for London to further his studies in Cost and Works Accountancy. Even then, Adah is still the one who, in spite of her mounting responsibilities at home, has to send Francis money to be able to take care of his needs in far away England. Adah Finds A Way At first, Adah feels very bad about her failure to travel to England with her husband. But being the smart, determined and resourceful young woman that she is, she decides to keep calm and make her move at the slightest opportunity. She doesn't have to wait for too long. A few months later, Francis writes to announce to Adah that he will have to stay in the UK for at least four more years. Adah wastes no time to go and impress on her in-laws the need for her to join her husband. Because he is, she decides to keep home anytime soon. She makes it clear to them that Francis himself has requested her to join him in England and that her going will bring more benefits to them. Now, her in-laws cannot stand in her way anymore. Thus, finally, Adah is set to travel to the United Kingdom. Her long-cherished dream is finally coming to fruition. From First Class Citizen to Second Class Citizen We must not lose sight of the fact that Adah's level of educaton, coupled with her employment status in that period of post-independence Nigeria, automatically makes her a highly-respected first class citizen. It is, therefore, of little wonder that she books first class tickets on the Oriel, the boat on which she travels with her two children (Titi and Vicky) to join her husband in the UK. But that happens to be the last taste Adah will have of her first class citizen status. Because, when she arrives in Liverpool, and later London, she realizes she has not been adequately prepared for the shocking spectacles and experiences awaiting her in that country. Cultural Shock Our heroine, Adah, in Buchi Emecheta's novel, Second Class Citizen has all along had fanciful ideas of life in the Unite Kingdom. But on her arrival, things are not exactly the way she expects them to be. Right from Francis, her now-transformed husband, to others like Trudy, Babalola, Janet, Miss Stirling and Mr Noble or Pa Noble, Adah comes to a discomforting realization that she is in for a real life of struggle and pain. Below is a list of some of the conditions that will make life in England less than enjoyable for Adah. Francis' change in attitude – his strange, foreign mannerisms, his abusive behaviour and his uncaring attitude.The burden of giving birth and caring for five children, her lazy, abusive husband and herselfThe mantra that Nigerian children must never be allowed to live with their own parentsThe shocking stories of other Nigerian and African immigrants like Babalola and Mr. Noble.Ladi's dehumanizing lifestyle of white women like JanetThe prevalence of racial prejudice and discrimination against blacksNaked display of tribalism and disunity among Nigerian immigrants themselves- Yoruba versus IgboThe harsh, unforgiving cold climate of the United Kingdom.Widespread poverty, poor housing and unbearable living conditions for many blacks and even whitesMeanwhile, Adah Keeps Getting Pregnant The very first sexual encounter between Adah and Francis on the night she lands in England quickly results in a third pregnancy. This is perhaps the most problematic pregnancy the 20-something year-old Adah has gone through in her life. The birth of baby Bubu (a boy) at the University College Hospital in London, is both painful and emotionally exhausting for Adah. In fact, it nearly sent her to an early grave. Right on the heels of this third pregnancy follows a fourth one. Dada is the name of this female child. An interesting fact about this fourth pregnancy is that Adah has actually made an unsuccessful attempt to abort it. And at the close of the novel, when Adah is on the verge of saying a final goodbye to her loveless marriage she is carrying her fifth baby in her womb. Adah Finds Employment in London The protagonist's first job in England comes knocking on the day she discovers that she is pregnant with her third child. This gives her an opportunity to work as a librarian at the North Finchley Library. This is where Adah meets and works with her very friendly boss, Mrs Konrad. Baby Bubu's problem-fraught birth however brings an end to that job. One other library where Adah will work is the Chalk Farm Library. It is here that she meets wonderful working colleagues like Peggy and Bill, the handsome and intelligent Canadian. At this stage, Adah has started nursing the idea of putting more effort into writing so as to achieve her ambition of becoming a published writer. The frequent pregnancies are also beginning to have their toll on the body and energy of the relatively young Adah. She would, therefore, love to just sit at home and write. This is how, with the support and encouragement of people like Peggy and Bill, Adah finally manages to complete the manuscript of her maiden novel, The Bride Price. The sad mistake Adah makes again in to think that Francis will be enthused by her achievement. So she joyfully shows Francis the manuscript. Adah is in for what is probably the biggest shock of her entire life. Francis Burns Adah's Manuscripts To Adah, for her drastically changed husband, Francis, to torch her manuscript for her first novel, is the last straw to break the camel's back. She returns home from shopping one day to see Francis busy but calmly burning some papers. Adah receives the shock of her life when she discovers that they are the papers on which she's been drafting her first novel to be titled The Bride Price – a key step to her achieving her lifelong dream of becoming a writer. Francis has never liked Adah's ambition to become a writer. This attitude stems from a combination of factors such as envy, male chauvinism and a growing tendency towards cruel, sadistic behaviour on the part of Francis. The truth is this. Francis has gradually begun to see himself as a failure since he is unable to pass his examinations. This is despite the fact Adah, who has had to deal with many difficult challenges, is making slow but steady progress in her educational and career pursuits. So he must destroy anything that could make that dream a reality. Since Adah is not willing to sacrifice her dreams for anything (not least for what has apparently become a loveless marriage), she must simply move on. Hopefully, she will have a more conducive environment to nurture her dreams. She will see to it that she becomes the successful, fulfilled woman she has always wanted to be. This is how her marriage with Francis comes to an end. And this marks the end of our plot summary of Second Class Citizen. Key Themes in Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizen Here, I have for you an extensive collection of both major and minor themes in the novel. Second Class Citizen. These points should guide and prepare you for any eventuality in the examination. So I urge you to take a very close look at each one of them. Are you a tutor looking for the best teaching resources on Second Class Citizen? You will definitely find these points very useful. Please, make sure to let me know what you think about them. Looking for possible essay questions on Second Class Citizen? You will find likely exam questions on Second Class Citizen here. Again, if you're interested in discovering the secret behind how WAEC set their questions for the Literature paper and the other subjects, click here. The theme of determination or perseveranceThe theme of male privilegeThe fight for the dignity of womanhood.Theme of women's liberation.Theme of indictment (or criticism) on a male-controlled society.The theme of girl-child education in Second Class CitizenTheme of racial prejudiceTheme of class in societyTheme of the African woman's struggle for survival.The African woman's quest for fulfillmentTheme of domestic violenceTheme of female independenceTheme of gender inequalityThe theme of marital stabilityTheme of discrimination (Note that this is general. So you will need to look at two or more areas where discrimination can be seen in the novel. Examples are race and gender.)The theme of racial inequalityTheme of clash of culturesTheme of gender inequalityThe theme of possibilitiesTheme of gender discrimination/discrimination against womenCharacters in Second Class Citizen Take careful note of the following characters in the novel, Second Class Citizen. I've taken the trouble to provide you with the key aspects of character that examiners are likely to ask you to write about. Trust Gega Academy to provide you with an in depth tutorial on these characters before your examination is due. I believe this should be enough reason for you to keep coming back here. Adah as a fighter or survivorAdah's quest for personal developmentObstacles, setbacks or challenges in Adah's lifeThe social impediments to Adah's personal growthAdah as an exceptional or rare girl/womanThe character and role of Adah OfiliThe character and role of Francis ObiCharacter and role of Mr OfiliCharacter and role of Mr ColeAdmirable qualities of AdahAspects of Adah's character that you dislikeAdmirable (or repugnant) qualities of FrancisCharacter and role of Mr. NobleCharacter and role of Mrs KonradCharacter and role of Miss StirlingThe character and role of JanetAdah as a resourceful character. The character and role of MaSimilarities and differences in the characters of Francis Obi and Mr. NobleAdah's role as a mother and wifeThe transformation of FrancisFrancis Obi as a frustrated husband/manAdah's attitude to her marital challengesSimilarities and differences between the characters of Adah and Francis.Effects of unrealistic social expectations on Francis ObiObstacles Adah has to clear to achieve her dreamsAdah's movement from first class citizen to second class citizenMajor Incidents and Other Aspects of Style In this article, I speak passionately about the importance of incidents or episodes/events for an effective study and appreciation of a novel, drama or narrative poetry. I make it abundantly clear that it gets relatively easy to answer any question on a novel, play or poem as soon as you have a good knowledge of a couple of incidents in the text. And, if you're a teacher guiding Literature students, your own knowledge of a few incidents in the text in question will make your work much easier. Now, I want you to keep in mind the following points regarding some important incidents in Second Class Citizen. I also have for you what you must be looking at in terms of plot and style. Here we go. The contribution of the death of Mr. Ofili to the development of the plotThe use of the narrative technique of foreshadowFrancis Obi's migration to the UK and how it contributes to the development of the plotAdah's childhood experiences and their effects on her growing up into adulthood.Significance (or appropriateness) of the title of the novelUse of euphemism in the novelSecond Class Citizen as a realistic novel.The novel as a piece of feminist literatureThe relationship between Francis and Adah and its significanceAspects of life in the UK that shock Adah on her arrivalSignificance of Adah's employment statusThe surprises Adah has to contend with on her arrival in the UK.SHARE IT. Did you find this post helpful? Then do me a favour by sharing it on your favourite social media platform. Simply click your preferred icon below. Thank you! Photo by tim & annette from Freemages YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE what are the themes in second class citizen

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