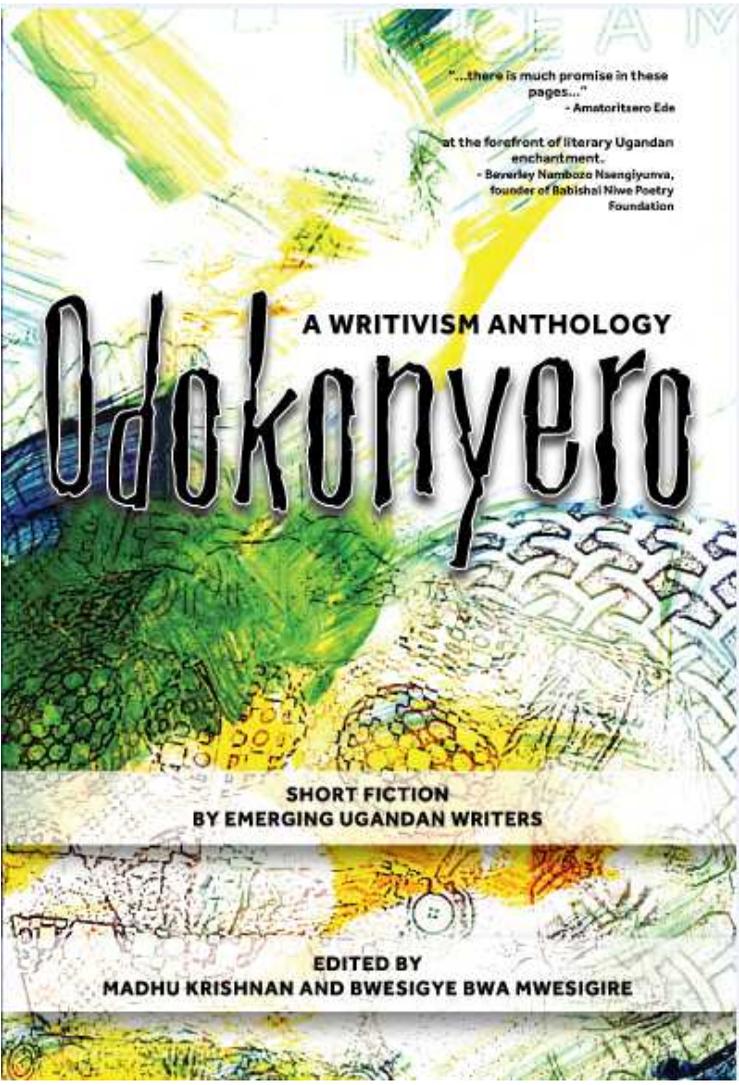


**Odokonyero: A Writivism
Anthology of Short Fiction
by Emerging Ugandan
Writers**

Study Guide



"...there is much promise in these pages..."

- Amatorisero Ede

at the forefront of literary Ugandan enchantment.

- Beverley Nambazo Naangiyumba,
founder of Babishai Niwe Poetry
Foundation

Odokonyero

A WRITIVISM ANTHOLOGY

SHORT FICTION
BY EMERGING UGANDAN WRITERS

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The stories in *Odokonyero* vary widely in their style, structure, use of language and form. Despite their differences, each story engages in some way with the shared theme of conflict: conflict between people, conflict with the environment, conflict in families, conflict between men and women, conflict within the self and more. This study guide is intended to help students understand the key issues that each story brings up, as well as develop their vocabulary, grammatical, language and writing skills.

General questions

The stories collected in *Odokonyero* are written in a range of styles, voices and narrative structures. For each story, try to identify the following:

1. **The protagonist:** who is the leading character in each story? How are they described? How is the reader made to feel about them?
2. **The setting:** setting is a crucial element of storytelling. Where is each story set? When? What features define the setting? How is each setting described?
3. **The central conflict:** conflict is central to storytelling and every story, from the tales we are told as children, to the stories we see in films, to more sophisticated pieces of writing, is organised around a conflict. Common types of conflict include human versus human; human versus self; human versus nature. What type of conflict is central to each story in this collection?
4. **The point of view** tells us who is telling the story (the narrator). There are two main types of point of view: first person, which uses 'I' and 'me' and is characteristic of stories narrated by a specific character within the story; and third person, which uses 'he', 'she', 'him', 'her', 'they', and 'them' and is characteristic of stories told by an unnamed narrator. Third person can either be omniscient, which is where the narrator has access to all characters' thoughts and perspectives, or limited,

where only certain characters' thoughts or perspectives are known.

5. **The resolution:** if conflict is central to a story, the resolution is almost as important, allowing us to tie up loose ends and feel a sense of conclusion. For each story, what is the resolution? If there is not a resolution, why?

Muhanguzi's Daughters

Vocabulary

What do each of the follow words or groups of words mean?

- malice
- intervention
- reconvene
- hindrances
- disempowerment

Grammar

For each of the following sentences taken from the story, identify whether it is **plural** or **singular**. Underline the subject and the verb.

1. The voices had all began to sound the same, croaky and hissing with malice.
2. Tubes ran in and out of his body.
3. She looked ahead at the long palm trees that surrounded the compound.
4. Evelyn was aware of the way the men were looking at her children.

Comprehension questions

1. How did Rebecca's father die?
2. Why does Rebecca's uncle believe he should get the inheritance?
3. Why does Rebecca think he is wrong?

4. What steps does each character (Rebecca and her uncle) take to try to prove that they are right? Who do you think is right?

Odokonyero

Vocabulary

What do each of the follow words or groups of words mean?

1. uprooted
2. granary
3. abductee
4. cannula
5. prosthetic

Comprehension questions

1. Why did Odokonyero join the rebels?
2. What happened to his mother and brother?
3. What was his reaction to discovering his leg had been amputated?
4. How does his family react to his return?
5. What is his confession?
6. How does he explain killing his father?
7. Should Odokonyero be found guilty for the murder?

Writing exercise

'Odokonyero' has three main **settings**: the bush, the hospital and Odokonyero's home. Each of these settings plays an important role in the story and holds an importance for Odokonyero. Go back and re-read how the author describes each setting in the story. Think of a

setting that is important to you (home, school, a friend's house) and write a paragraph of 150 words describing it.

Lost

Language exercise

Character description is an important part of any story. Characters can be described by their physical appearance; their feelings and emotions; their personality; and by how others see them. Using these categories, pick out at least 5 words that are used to describe Khalil. Use them in at least three sentences.

Comprehension questions

1. When did Khalid move to Uganda?
2. Where did he move from? Why?
3. What were his dreams and ambitions in Uganda?
4. How does the bombing making Khalil feel?
5. Why are people suspicious of him? Are they right to be suspicious?
6. Why does Achol help Khalid?

Writing exercise:

Much of 'Lost' centres on Khalid's feelings, especially his fear and uncertainty after the bombing. Write a paragraph of 150 words explaining how you would feel if you were Khalid. Clearly state what you feel and why.

If I Hadn't Said It

Comprehension questions

1. Why doesn't Sheila's father want her to enter the writing contest?
2. Is Sheila right to defy her father?
3. Who helps Sheila?
4. How does Sheila's mother feel?
5. Who do you think is right in the conflict between Sheila and her father?

Writing exercise

'If I Hadn't Said It' is told in **the first person**, from Sheila's point of view. Re-read the extract below and re-write it from her father's perspective.

When Dad took me to school the following day we did not say a word to each other in the car. He broke the silence. 'I'm sorry for what happened yesterday,' he said. I adjusted my bag on my lap but still did not look at him.

'I became too emotional and I did not control my temper. I'm sorry.' I did not say a word until I reached school. I got out of the car and moved so fast that I did not look back to see him leave. I just heard the car roaring as he went to work.

My father does not believe that a good lawyer should like reading for pleasure. All he wants me to do is read my

assigned schoolbooks, pass and become a lawyer. He works in the Prime Minister's office.

The Woman with Warm Chest

Vocabulary

What do each of the follow words or groups of words mean?

- elope
- clustered
- secluded
- cherished

Grammar

Re-write the following sentences in the **present tense**:

1. She wished sleep could take her over like a hen.
2. Ojuji was revered in announcing newborns that truly belonged to the compound.
3. Akello refused to be moved by the tongues of the women of Patiko, their insults and mockery.
4. He had been refused many times before.
5. When the bird found the right twig, it began to hoot.

Comprehension questions

1. What happens to Akello's first husband, Odokonyero?
2. Why does Aringo reject Akello?
3. Where does Akello go? How is she received?
4. What happens to Latim, Akello's son?

5. Do you agree that Lagoro deserves life imprisonment?
6. Why does Rose help Akello?
7. Why does Akello reject Rose's help?
8. Does the story have a happy or sad ending for Akello?
9. Are Akello's misfortunes her fault? Is the community right to gossip about her?

He Blames Me

Vocabulary

What do each of the follow words or groups of words mean?

- arpeggio
- staccato
- rustle
- eating me alive
- light bulb moment
- to have the luxury

'He Blames Me' uses many figures of speech. Figures of speech are expressions which use non-literal meanings to describe something. Find each of the following figures of speech in the story and write a short definition of each:

1. My feet felt glued to tile...
2. And I would sooner pull out a tooth than allow my weakness for sugar to blind me.
3. ...healthy as a thoroughbred horse

Comprehension questions

1. Where is Kiiza's mother?
2. Why does Kiiza dislike Liz?
3. What happens to Kiiza?
4. Whose fault is it?

Writing exercise

Write at least three sentences to describe each of the main characters in the story (Kiiza, Liz and Kizito)

Do Not Dare God

Vocabulary

What do each of the follow words or groups of words mean?

- pronouncement
- escalate
- prosperous
- unintelligible
- cheeky

Comprehension questions

1. Why does the main character marry her husband Latim?
2. Why does she decide to have a child?
3. Why does the main character call her mother-in-law the 'military commander'?
4. Where does she meet Lamunu?
5. What does Lamunu agree to do?
6. Why does main character change her mind?

Writing exercise

Pretend you are the main character of 'Do Not Dare God' at the end of the story. Write a short letter explaining your feelings to either:

1. Latim
2. The son she refused
3. Lamunu

Let Me Write to Dad

Grammar

'Let Me Write to Dad' is told in the **first person**, from Jethro's point of view. Change the following paragraphs to the **third person**, as though it were told by an unnamed narrator:

Edie can deliver a letter when he travels to South Africa on Wednesday. I will leave him with this and a contact for his graduate research on Ugandans living in SA. I hope he will easily find him. After all he is going to the University of KwaZulu-Natal and we've been told Dad lives in KwaZuluNatal province.

I am stirring my tea. Conversations I have had with Mum over the last few years keep coming back into my mind.

Comprehension questions

1. Why does Jethro's father leave?
2. Why is Jethro's mother upset?
3. Why can't Jethro marry Sheba?
4. How does Jethro feel about his situation?

Writing exercise

Write Jethro's letter to his father for him.

Candano

Language exercise

'Candano' uses many similes in its description of different characters. A simile is a **figure of speech** which uses the words **like** or **as** to describe something by comparing it to something different. Find the following similes in the story and write a short definition of each one:

- tall as a full-grown maize plant
- shaven as bald as a grinding stone
- fangs like thorns on a rose flower
- ran with your tails between your legs like cowards
- sounded like a woman in labour

Now, try to make up three similes of your own to describe a classmate, family member or friend!

Comprehension questions

1. What does the mvule tree symbolize?
2. Who does Candano love most in the world?
3. How does Temceo's wife explaining taking his daughters from him?
4. What is special about Candano's birth?
5. Why does Olum kidnap Lamaro?

6. What happens to Olum's son?

Writing exercise

'Candano' is about a conflict over land and whose land it really is. Pretend that Candano and Olum have gone to court to ask a judge to solve their conflict, and that you are the judge. Write a short (150 words) judgement that clearly explains whose land it truly is, the reasons for your judgement and what should be done to resolve the dispute.

Finding Freedom

Vocabulary

What do each of the follow words or groups of words mean?

- strikingly
- condensed
- pampering
- overwhelmed

Writing exercise

'Finding Freedom' has two main characters, Nyangoma and Fadi. Pick 3 **adjectives** to describe each character and use them in a short paragraph (150 words) to evaluate each character's actions in the story.

Is the Power Back On?

Vocabulary

What do each of the follow words or groups of words mean?

- opportunistic
- agitations
- meticulously
- reputable
- debacle
- unnerved

Language exercise

Find at least 3 **figures of speech** in the story and write a short definition of each.

Writing exercise

Plot is what moves a story. There are five main elements of plot:

- **Introduction or Exposition:** the introduction is where the basic characters and plot elements such as setting are revealed. Its purpose is to set the stage for the story to come.
- **Rising Action:** rising action occurs in the first third of a story and is where the main conflict is truly introduced.
- **Climax:** the climax is the turning point of the story. It can be either physical or mental depending on the type of conflict (human versus human; human versus self; human versus nature).
- **Falling Action:** falling action occurs after the climax and is where the events that will help resolve the main conflict of the story occur.

- **Resolution:** the resolution is where loose ends are tied up, the outcome of the conflict is revealed and the conflict as a whole is settled. Not all stories contain resolutions.

Re-read 'Is the Power Back On' and identify each of the **five elements of plot** in the story.

The Beautiful Tradition

Comprehension questions

1. Where is Aber when she finds out her father died?
Who tells her?
2. What happened to Aber's mother?
3. Where does Lucima take Aber?
4. Why are Aber and Lucima fighting with their uncle?
5. Who helps them?
6. How does Lucima die?
7. What do you think will happen to Aber?

Writing exercise

Re-read the following paragraph from the story and change it from Aber's **point of view** to Lucima's. What elements do you have to change to make it fit Lucima's perspective?

Out of the house, Lucima locked the door. This was my father's house in the village. During long holidays, he sent both of us to the bungalow and regularly checked on us. It had begun to drizzle as we strode down the dark blurred road. The winds blew strong and cold. The cold touched me deep enough that I began to shiver. I was being led to a promised land I did not know. Well, at least I knew my shepherd, and it was an added advantage that he was visible. Lucima carried the two suitcases while dogs from various homesteads barked and owls hooted, crickets chirped, and the frogs croaked. I was frightened. I decided

to use fatigue as a way to begin my complaint. We had already walked a long distance from the house. We had passed most homesteads, and the place was getting more frightening. Lucima seemed very determined to get out of the village.

Breathing Complications

Vocabulary

What do each of the follow words or groups of words mean?

- semblance
- extracted
- custodian
- porous

Comprehension questions

1. How does each member of the family (mother, brother, father) react to Lilly's death?
2. Did Lilly enjoy wearing her school uniform?
3. Does did Lilly's father react to her? How did Alice feel about her when she was alive?
4. Why does Alice tell people Lilly died of breathing complications?
5. What does Alice dress Lilly in for the wake and funeral?
6. How does Alice react to Lilly's friends arriving at the house?
7. Why does Alice change her mind at the end?

Writing exercise

Pretend that you are either Alice, the Colonel, Tim or Atim and write a short diary entry (150 words) the evening that

the story ends. Your entry should explain your feelings about the day and why you are feeling them.

Closing activity

All of the stories in *Odokonyero* reflect in different ways issues and concerns which each author thinks is important for young people today. Each story also shows us a different slice of life in Uganda from various regions and perspectives. Think about your own life and write a short composition about what you feel is the most important thing for young people to think about today and why that matters to you.

