
KÖNIGS ERLÄUTERUNGEN

Band 365

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PRÜFUNGSAUFGABEN MIT MUSTERLÖSUNGEN

In Ergänzung zu den Aufgaben im Buch (Kapitel 6) finden Sie hier zwei weitere Aufgaben mit Musterlösungen. Die Zahl der Sternchen bezeichnet das Anforderungsniveau der jeweiligen Aufgabe.

Aufgabe 5 **

Using suitable quotations from the text, describe the humiliating treatment of the central character Fatou.

ANALYSIS/
INTERPRETATION

Model answer:

Fatou is treated poorly in both her homeland in Africa and in Europe. This is due to her African origins, her gender and her status.

In the health centre in Willesden, a man of Arabic origins is offended by Fatou's black skin and immediately leaves the whirlpool together with his wife. The Arab's reaction to Fatou – the whispering and the provocative retreat – is hurtful and absurd.

"In the hot tub sat a woman dressed in a soaking tracksuit, her head covered with a headscarf. A man next to the woman, perhaps her husband, stared at Fatou and said something to her. He was so hairy he was almost as covered as she was. Together they rose up out of the water and left." (p. 113)

The man could himself have provoked reactions with his excessively hairy body and skimpy bathing suit.

Fatou's gender, combined with her ethnicity, is why male Bengali refugees feel able to reject her and refuse to have any closer contact with her:

"Until that point, she had been envious of the Bengali boys on Via Nazionale. She felt that she, too, could paint herself green and stand still for an hour. But when she tried to find out more the Bengalis would not talk to her. It was a closed shop, for brown men only. Her place was in the bathroom stalls." (p. 102)

In the world of the Bengalis, brown-skinned men are worth more than black-skinned women. Here as well there is no solidarity among refugees of diverse origins.

For the Russian tourist at the Carib Beach Resort, Fatou's gender and ethnicity are excuses to commit a crime against her. While his wife is visiting the Cape Coast Castle, he rapes the 18-year old Fatou and is subsequently terrified of the possible consequences:

"She had only a month left in Accra when she entered a bedroom to clean it one morning and heard the door shut softly behind her before she could put a hand to it. He came, this time, in Russian form. Afterward, he cried and begged her not to tell anyone: his wife had gone to see the Cape Coast Castle and they were leaving the following morning." (p. 99)

As it is, the Russian would probably not have faced prosecution: the majority of the employees at the Carib Beach Resort have to suffer multiple sexual assaults on a daily basis. The regular employees seem to be second-class citizens, and so they are also forbidden from using the pool:

"When she spots these big men, paddling frantically like babies, struggling simply to stay afloat, she prides herself on her own abilities, having taught herself to swim, several years earlier, at the Carib Beach Resort, in Accra. Not in the hotel pool – no employees were allowed in the pool. No, she learned by struggling through the rough grey sea, on the other side of the resort walls." (p. 69)

Hierarchy obviously plays a role here, which is also the Derawal's reason, as they see it, to treat Fatou so poorly, as we can see here:

“And nobody beat Fatou, although Mrs Derawal had twice slapped her in the face, and the two older children spoke to her with no respect at all and thanked her for nothing. (Sometimes she heard her name used as a term of abuse between them. ‘You’re as black as Fatou.’ Or ‘You’re as stupid as Fatou.’) [...] she had not seen her passport with her own eyes since she arrived at the Derawals’, and she had been told from the start that her wages were to be retained by the Derawals to pay for the food and water and heat she would require during her stay, as well as to cover the rent for the room she slept in. She had an Oyster Card, given to her by the Derawals, and was trusted to do the food shopping and other outside tasks for which she was given cash and told to return with change and receipts for everything.” (pp. 78–79)

The Derawals’ contemptuous treatment of Fatou is the result of ethnicity, gender and status, and peaks in Fatou being fired by Mrs Derawal (cf. p. 114) despite Fatou having saved Asma Derawal’s life. The following dialogue shows clearly how little Fatou is worth in Mrs Derawal’s opinion:

“And I would like to have my passport, please.”

“Excuse me?”

“My passport, please.”

At last Mrs Derawal looked at Fatou, right into her eyes, but her face was twisted, as if Fatou had just reached over and slapped her. Anyone could see the Devil had climbed inside poor Mrs Derawal. He was lighting her up with a pure fury.

“For goodness’ sake, girl, I don’t have your passport! What would I want with your passport? It’s probably in a drawer in the kitchen somewhere. Is that my job now, too, to look for your things?” (p. 115)

Aufgabe 6 ***

Describe the dimensions of what Andrew Okonkwo calls “Big Man Policy” using suitable quotations from the text.

Model answer:

“We know all about Big Man Policies in Nigeria. They come from the top, and they crush you. There’s always somebody who wants to be the Big Man, and take everything for himself, and tell everybody how to think and what to do. When, actually, it’s he who is weak. But if the Big Men see that you see that they are weak they have no choice but to destroy you. That is the real tragedy.” (p. 106)

ANALYSIS/ INTERPRETATION

Andrew Okonkwo’s theories have a political and a personal dimension. The political dimension is obvious, because Okonkwo is describing the mechanics of oppression and repression by the state. He does this using his home country Nigeria as an example, but his ideas can be seen in a more generalising way. The motivations for repressive behaviour are greed for power, wealth and an associated demand for absolutism. Political systems like this result in non-transparency, corruption and destructiveness. Okonkwo puts it like this:

“There’s always a lot of hiding; it’s the same all over. It’s like this bureaucratic Nigerian government – they are the greatest at numerology, hiding figures, changing them to suit their purposes. I have a name for it: I call it ‘demonology.’ Not ‘numerology’ – ‘demonology.’” (pp. 85–86)

People living in a repressive political system are subject to enormous pressure to conform. Individual rights are negated, violations of the system’s rules are ruthlessly investigated and punished. Confronted with this kind of pressure, people submit and conform. Others, like Andrew Okonkwo, leave the country.

This is a personal reaction to the political circumstances, which is where we arrive at the personal dimensions of repression. These personal dimensions can be illustrated using the character of Fatou and her living situation. She may by now live in one of Europe’s most important cities, but her living situation continues to be one of non-freedom. Repressive factors here include the Derawals with their avarice, their greed and stinginess (they make Fatou pay rent for the room she occupies in their house), their economic position and their autocratic control over Fatou:

“And nobody beat Fatou, although Mrs Derawal had twice slapped her in the face, and the two older children spoke to her with no respect at all and thanked her for nothing. (Sometimes she heard her name used as a term of abuse between them. ‘You’re as black as Fatou.’ Or ‘You’re as stupid as Fatou.’) [...] she had not seen her passport with her own eyes since she arrived at the Derawals’, and she had been told from the start that her

wages were to be retained by the Derawals to pay for the food and water and heat she would require during her stay, as well as to cover the rent for the room she slept in.” (pp. 78–79)

After Fatou saves Asma Derawal’s life the situation is changed. The Derawals are in her debt, which weakens their position with and over her. So it comes to what Andrew Okonkwo describes:

“But if the Big Men see that you see that they are weak they have no choice but to destroy you.” (p. 106)

For Fatou this means her incomprehensible firing by an insecure Mrs Derawal:

“That same evening, Fatou was fired. Not for the guest passes – the Derawals never found out how many miles Fatou had travelled on their membership. In fact, it was hard for Fatou to understand exactly why she was being fired, as Mrs Derawal herself did not seem able to explain it very precisely.” (p. 114)