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# CHILDREN OF THE QUICKSANDS

Efua Traoré

## CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER RESOURCES

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## Chapter

## Comprehension Questions

## Writing Opportunities

## Cross Curricular Opportunities

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why is Simi reluctant to spend the school holidays with her grandmother?</li> <li>How do you think Simi's mother feels about her impending trip?</li> <li>Simi's mum does not refer to her grandmother by name at all. Why do you think she does this?</li> <li>What does the description of the taxi – threadbare seats and smell – suggest about Simi's destination?</li> <li>What does the word 'heathen' mean? What does it suggest about Ajao?</li> <li>What do you infer from 'the car rattled to life'?</li> </ul>	Write a letter from Simi's mother to her grandmother, explaining why Simi is coming to spend the holidays with her.	<b>DRAMA:</b> Create a vlog for Simi's YouTube channel, trying to convince her friends she'll have an amazing time in Ajao.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why is Simi worried they might not arrive safely? Is she right to be worried?</li> <li>What does it mean that the 'road is deeply rutted'?</li> <li>Why does Simi groan as they drive into Ajao?</li> <li>What impression do you get of Iyanla in this chapter?</li> <li>How does meeting her grandmother compare to how Simi had imagined this moment?</li> <li>Why do you think everything is covered in red dust? What does this suggest about the weather?</li> </ul>	Can you predict what you think might happen during Simi's time in Ajao?	<b>ART:</b> Draw/paint a village scene of Simi's first impression of Ajao. <b>GEOGRAPHY:</b> Research Nigeria's vegetation zones. Where do you think Ajao fits from the description given?
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why does Iyanla ask Simi so many questions? What can you deduce about her relationship with Simi's mum?</li> </ul>	Write a description of Iyanla's house, including its setting.	<b>HISTORY:</b> Research the use of cowrie shells – as currency, for religious rituals, and as jewellery. What are cowrie shells used for in present times?



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you think she prefers to be called Iyanla rather than Grandma?</li> <li>• Why do you think Iyanla is pleased that Simi's mum is a pharmacist?</li> <li>• How does Simi feel about the chores she's asked to do?</li> <li>• What is a missionary?</li> </ul>		
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why does Simi turn left instead of right as instructed?</li> <li>• Why does Simi pick up a long stick?</li> <li>• What does 'diligent' mean?</li> <li>• What does Simi think might be the reason for the unfriendliness of the man with the rusty bicycle?</li> <li>• How is the bird described? What can you infer about it?</li> <li>• Simi feels something is about to happen. Can you explain why?</li> </ul>	Write a diary entry as Simi, describing the events of this chapter and the next.	<b>MUSIC:</b> Compose a short tune to sound like birdsong. What instruments would you use?
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why can't Simi turn around?</li> <li>• Do you think it's clear that this place is different from Ajao? Explain your reasoning.</li> <li>• Simi first thinks she might be dead. How does she decide she must still be alive?</li> <li>• How does Simi know she is in danger?</li> <li>• How does the author use the environment to create a sense of danger?</li> </ul>	Create an emotion map of Simi's feelings. What vocabulary would you use to describe the emotions she feels?	<b>SCIENCE &amp; GEOGRAPHY:</b> Learn more about quicksand. Why can't it support weight? Where is quicksand likely to occur?



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- Why is Iyanla in the forest with a kerosene lantern?
- How does Iyanla take care of Simi after she gets her home?
- What does Simi decide must have happened to her in the forest?
- How does Simi feel about not having information that could have helped her make better decisions?
- What does 'surreal' mean?
- Simi's mum refers to Iyanla's beliefs as superstitious stories. What do you think about this?
- Why does Simi feel shocked and ashamed of her mum's letter?

Write an email/instant message from Simi to her mum, telling her about her first night in Ajao.

**GEOGRAPHY:** The author describes an orchestra of night sounds. What makes these sounds? What would make up a similar orchestra in your area? Compare these night sounds to the sounds in Ajao.

**PHILOSOPHY:** Iyanla tells Simi there is evil as well as good in the world, and that she has to be careful. Do you agree? What do you think about this?

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- Why does Simi wake up excited to be in Ajao?
- What can you understand about Iyanla's role in the village?
- Do you think the medicine Iyanla makes and administers is effective?
- Mr Balogun says Iyanla is a good woman and people know her 'well-well'. After escorting her on her rounds of the village, do you think Simi would agree?
- What do you think Iyanla means by 'The backs of some people, like cats, never touch sand ...'?
- Identify some figurative language Iyanla uses in her proverbs.

Write a character profile for Iyanla including all the information you know about her already and anything you can infer so far.

**DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY:** Design an ankara pattern – think of what motifs from nature and everyday living you can use. Then design an outfit to be sewn with your fabric.

**MUSIC:** Design and make a 'shekere', improvising with readily available materials.



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- Who is Bubu?
- How does Simi persuade Bubu to speak?
- Why do you think Bubu tells tall stories?
- Do you think Simi's chores would be easier if Iyanla had access to running water and electricity?
- Is it easy for Simi to promise to stay away from the forbidden lake?

**SCIENCE:** Research and write instructions for making black soap, or for body moisturizer using shea butter. Think carefully about the properties of each ingredient and what the benefit of using it might be.

**SCIENCE:** Learn more about galagos. Find interesting facts about them – how they look, how high they can jump, and myths about them as well as why they are called bushbabies.

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- Simi sits upright when Iyanla mentions the name Layo. What connections do you think she makes with her visit to the lake?
- Why do you think Adunni asks Oshun to bring Layo back to life?
- Why does Oshun become angry when Adunni doesn't keep to her side of their bargain?
- Why does Oshun create the world under the lake?
- Why does Simi react so strongly when Iyanla tells her about the bubble beneath the lake?

Create a legend about one of the Orishas, and an encounter with them by someone from the old days.

**ART:** Draw one of the goddesses: Oya or Oshun.

**PHILOSOPHY:** Oya says, 'Bringing back the dead will only cause problems and is not the way of things.' What do you think about this? Discuss.



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10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How far away do you think Ekita is?</li> <li>What does Simi mean by the term 'colonial era'?</li> <li>Why does Iyanla eschew modern creature comforts?</li> <li>Why does Simi have trouble keeping up with Iyanla?</li> <li>Who do you think the man in the long black caftan and a turban is?</li> <li>Why do you think Iyanla and Simi are called in to see the chief ahead of all the people waiting?</li> </ul>	<p>They meet the unfriendly man from the forest in the chief's house in Ekita. Can you predict why he is so upset?</p> <p>Write an article looking at how the way Iyanla and the people of Ajao live 'locally' benefits the environment.</p>	<p><b>HISTORY:</b> Investigate the colonial era in Nigeria. Who colonized Nigeria? How long did it last?</p> <p><b>NIGERIAN CULTURE:</b> Research Nigerian clothes and fabrics – ankara, adire, akwete, batik, agbada, caftan, wrapper, iro and buba.</p>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is Simi surprised to learn Iyanla is the priestess of Oshun?</li> <li>What does 'stupor' mean?</li> <li>What is a 'fila'? (cap)</li> <li>What does the chief mean by stating that Baba Morayo says the time is not right?</li> <li>Why does Iyanla oppose the proposal to fill in Oshun's lake?</li> <li>Why does Jide call Simi an ajebutter?</li> </ul>	<p>Write a newspaper report describing the role of the chief of Ekita.</p> <p>Write a proposal to the chief of Ekita arguing that Oshun's lake be filled in. Consider all the reasons – economic, safety, cultural – why the area might be better off without the lake.</p>	<p><b>RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:</b> Learn about the traditional Yoruba religion. How is it different to other religions you may know about?</p>
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why is Simi embarrassed when Jide turns up unexpectedly?</li> <li>Why does Jide come to Ekita?</li> <li>Why does Simi snap at Jide constantly?</li> </ul>	<p>Write a description of Iyanla's shrine. Can you surmise what some of the items signify?</p>	<p><b>RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:</b> Learn more about shrines and how they might be used in worship. How are shrines used in different parts of the world?</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do the children playing beneath the tree cause Simi to think about?</li> <li>• Can you predict where Jay is taking Simi?</li> </ul>		
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is the landscape/topography of this part of Ajao different?</li> <li>• How do we see the effect of Oya and Oshun's quarrel in Ajao and neighbouring areas like Ekita?</li> <li>• How do you think Simi feels about spending her holidays in Ajao now?</li> <li>• Why do you think Jay becomes uncomfortable when they discuss the forbidden lake and the legend of Layo?</li> <li>• Why is Simi surprised to learn Jay goes to school in Lagos?</li> <li>• What is Ajao known for?</li> </ul>	<p>Write a diary entry about Simi's day out with Jay, detailing the highlights of the day.</p> <p>Write an article exploring why Ajao might be experiencing climate change.</p>	<p><b>GEOGRAPHY:</b> Draw a topographical map showing the different features of all the areas – Lagos, Ajao, Ekita.</p> <p><b>MUSIC:</b> Simi and Jay bond over music and film. Research the genre of music the stars they mention play. Which instruments make up the bass sound of Afrobeat?</p>
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What descriptive language does the author use to set the scene for the drum festival?</li> <li>• What can you infer about the significance of drums in Nigerian culture?</li> <li>• Why is Simi able to join in with the dancing despite being terrified?</li> <li>• What do you think the role of dance is in the community?</li> <li>• How would you describe the mood at the end of this chapter?</li> </ul>	<p>Turn this scene into a playscript.</p>	<p><b>DRAMA/DANCE:</b> Recreate this scene using dance. Consider your set and stage directions.</p>



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15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do some villagers fear the gods are angry with them?</li> <li>• How does Jide win over the elders?</li> <li>• Why is the unfriendly man called Baba Morayo?</li> <li>• Why is he so angry at Oshun and Iyanla?</li> <li>• Why do you think the elders overlook Baba Morayo's rude behaviour?</li> <li>• What does Baba Morayo mean by 'I do not have a name any more'?</li> </ul>	Retell this scene from Baba Morayo's viewpoint. Consider everything he is feeling at the moment, and why he threatens to destroy Oshun's shrine in the forest.	<b>POLITICS/DEBATE:</b> What role do the elders play in running the community? Debate if this is a helpful way of doing things.
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think Iyanla isn't keen on doing anything about the increasing number of children being lost to the lake? Why?</li> <li>• Why does Iyanla need to go to the shrine?</li> <li>• Why is Simi furious to learn she has an uncle?</li> <li>• Why did Simi feel like an alien at school?</li> </ul>	'You cannot run away from your fate. What is meant to happen, will happen.' Debate this topic. Write your points for or against the motion.	
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does Toyin ask Simi for help?</li> <li>• What is the significance of Iyanla's face being painted white?</li> <li>• Why can't Simi stop following the call of the golden bird?</li> <li>• How does Simi snap out of her trance?</li> </ul>		<b>PHSE:</b> Simi experiences some really vivid dreams and finds it difficult to decide what has actually happened. Discuss how dreams can help us process our feelings or experiences we might feel anxious about.



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<p>18</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the weather affect Biola's mood?</li> <li>• Why did Biola blame herself for Toyin's disappearance?</li> <li>• Iyanla finishes off the story of Toyin's disappearance with a proverb. What does she mean?</li> <li>• Iyanla believes in the goddesses and that Layo's story is real, but Biola does not. How do their beliefs affect:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o how they deal with Toyin's disappearance?</li> <li>o their choice of profession?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are you surprised Simi was allowed to have swimming lessons? Why?</li> </ul>	<p>Create a true crime podcast episode recounting the story of Toyin's disappearance and examining the evidence? What elements would you highlight?</p> <p>Write a character description of Biola using the new information we have from her childhood.</p>	<p><b>MUSIC:</b> Plan the music to accompany your podcast. How would you convey mood and tone?</p>
<p>19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do the girls run away from the stream?</li> <li>• How does Iyanla know it is Jide at the door?</li> <li>• How does Simi reassure and calm Bubu?</li> <li>• Why do you think Iyanla is quiet on the drive to Ekita?</li> <li>• What explanation does Iyanla give for the sweltering heat?</li> <li>• Based on the story so far, which of the goddesses is the more temperamental?</li> </ul>	<p>Make some predictions about what might happen next.</p>	<p><b>MUSIC:</b> Research and make a playlist that Bubu would enjoy.</p>
<p>20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the dry storm represent? Which of the goddesses is winning?</li> <li>• Do you think Jide believes deep down in the legends?</li> </ul>		



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the signs that something is wrong in Ajao? Can you pick out some phrases and words that show this?</li> <li>• Why does Baba Morayo go to the lake every day?</li> <li>• Do you think Baba Morayo is happy when the chief tells him they have decided to fill in the lake?</li> <li>• Do you think that most of the villagers now support the lake being filled in?</li> </ul>		
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do the people of Ajao react to Simi recounting her visit to Layo's bubble?</li> <li>• What does it mean if someone has been 'hypnotized'?</li> <li>• What convinces Simi that her trip to the world of the quicksands is not a dream?</li> <li>• Why are Simi and Jay sent away to Lagos?</li> <li>• Describe the atmosphere in Ajao?</li> <li>• What do you infer from the worsening storm?</li> <li>• The sky is illuminated by a strange blue light exploding out of the water. What do think this signifies?</li> </ul>	Turn the scenes of this chapter into a script.	<b>PHILOSOPHY:</b> Mama Ayoola says if these kinds of things are meant to happen, they will happen. What do you think about this? Do you think we can intervene to change an outcome?
22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is the storm confined to Ajao and the area around it?</li> <li>• Why is Simi disappointed when she gets to her father's house?</li> <li>• Simi's dad groans loudly when she tries to explain why she's been sent</li> </ul>	Write a character description for Imona. What can you infer about her?	<b>NIGERIAN CULTURE:</b> Research the Orishas – compile a fact file for your favourite goddess.



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	<p>away from Ajao. Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think the bird's apparition and the snatches of birdsong Simi hears in the house in Lagos are real? Explain your reasoning.</li> <li>• How does Simi react to the hustle and bustle of Lagos? How long has she been away?</li> <li>• Why does Simi find it difficult to distract herself from thinking about the situation in Ajao despite the comforts of Lagos?</li> <li>• How is she feeling when she calls her mum in London?</li> </ul>		
23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why does Simi want to return to Ajao?</li> <li>• What makes it urgent she returns?</li> <li>• Why is Simi trembling as she explains to Jay why she has to try to go back before the lake is filled in?</li> <li>• Why is Jay so upset about Simi's plans? Compare this to his beliefs in chapter 20.</li> <li>• How does he try to stop her?</li> <li>• Do you think Simi believes in fate?</li> </ul>	Write the next part of the story, predicting what Simi will do next, if she gets to Ajao.	
24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do Simi and Jay travel to Ajao?</li> <li>• What image does the phrase 'angry rain' conjure?</li> <li>• Why does Simi tease Jay by calling him an ajebutter?</li> </ul>	Write a letter from Jay to Simi explaining his reasons for calling Moktar?	<b>CULTURE:</b> Mr Balogun has a distinct way of speaking. Why do you think this is the case? Research Pidgin English and how widely it is spoken in West Africa.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does Mr Balogun think Iyanla will be successful in getting a favourable answer from Oshun?</li> <li>Is Simi right to deceive Imona? Discuss.</li> <li>Is Simi brave to go back to Ajao and try to rescue Toyin and Morayo? Explain your reasoning.</li> <li>Why does Jay ask Simi not to be angry with him?</li> </ul>		
25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do the first two children Simi encounters in the world of the quicksands try to make her understand the rules?</li> <li>Why does Temitope hide Simi's necklace?</li> <li>Why does Layo laugh at Simi when she is first brought before him?</li> <li>How does she recognize the bird?</li> <li>What does 'everything was desolate and ruined' mean? How does the author show this?</li> <li>How does the bird stop Simi from escaping? Describe what happens.</li> </ul>		<p><b>ART:</b> Draw Simi's impression of the world of the quicksands. Decide what features you will highlight and discuss your reasons for doing so.</p>
26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How and why does the bird cause the quarrel between the goddesses?</li> <li>Simi is relieved and happy to lead the children from the bubble back to Ajao as Layo suggests, but they don't want to go. Why do you think this is the case?</li> <li>Why do the children hate the magic bird?</li> </ul>	<p>Retell this chapter from Layo's perspective – consider all the emotions he experiences, particularly towards Simi.</p>	



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why does Layo keep forcing Simi back in the lake?</li> <li>Why does the magic bird attack Toyin?</li> </ul>		
27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is the power of the blue stone activated?</li> <li>How does Simi defeat the magic bird?</li> <li>What does it mean to open something 'gingerly'?</li> <li>Who is Adunni?</li> <li>What happens to the bird?</li> <li>How is the world of the quicksands restored to its former beauty?</li> </ul>	Write a two-paragraph summary of events in this chapter and why they are important.	<p>Create a magic talisman – what materials would you use and what powers would yours have?</p> <p><b>PHSE:</b> Do you think Adunni was right to interfere with Layo's fate?</p>
28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why was Simi the best person to put things right?</li> <li>Why does Toyin choose to stay in the world of the quicksands?</li> <li>Why was Morayo able to return to Ajao?</li> <li>How has the weather changed when Simi and Morayo return to Ajao? What do you think has brought about the change?</li> <li>What does Iyanla's incantation cause to happen?</li> <li>What replaces Oshun's lake?</li> <li>What agreement do the goddesses make about immortality?</li> </ul>	Write a letter from Toyin to Biola, explaining why he ran away to the world of the quicksands and asking her to be happy.	<b>ART/DESIGN:</b> Design a garden paradise – what trees, plants and animals would you have in it? What would the weather be like? Would you have seasons?



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- Describe the change in Bubu.
- How does Baba Morayo feel when he sees Morayo?
- Why has Biola come to Ajao?
- What makes Biola finally believe that Toyin didn't drown in the lake?
- How do the villagers celebrate their return and the sealing of the lake?
- Do you think Simi will be the next priestess of Oshun? Why?

Write a book review, including your own reflections and why you think others should read the book too.

Compare your predictions from earlier – were any of them right?

**ART:** After reading the book, decide what elements you'd like to highlight and design an alternative cover.

