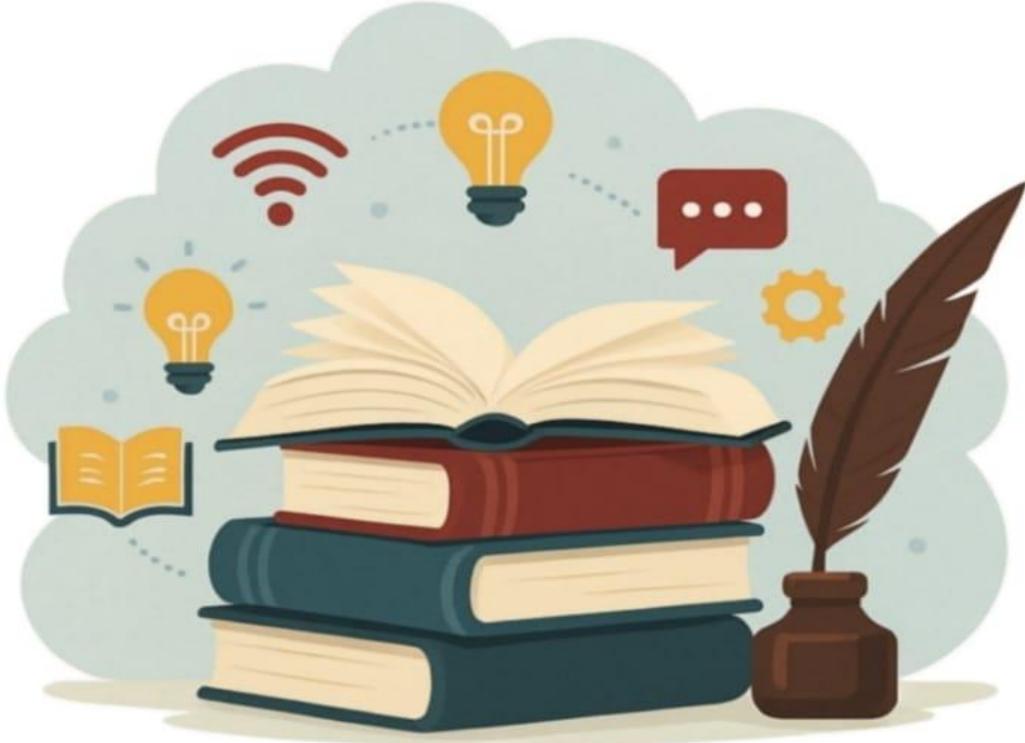


**KHALID  
HAROON**

5 1 1 4 8 2 0 0

Today's learners,  
Tomorrow's leaders.



# English Literature

ملخصات تخصص الأدب الإنجليزي

**E121 MTA**



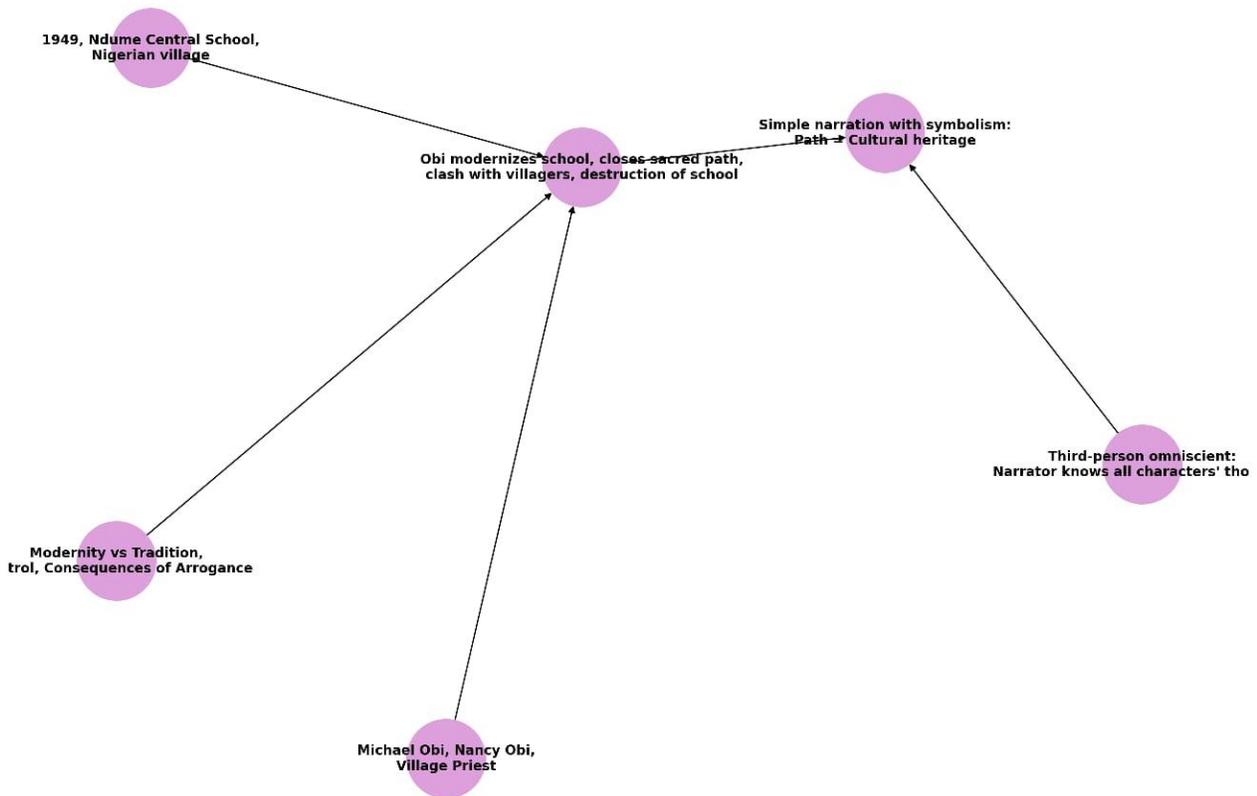
ملخصات البروفيسور



# E121: DEAD MEN'S PATH BY CHINUA ACHEBE - MTA

## ANALYSIS:

Story Elements in 'Dead Men's Path' by Chinua Achebe



### I. Characters:

- **The main character is Michael Obi:** a young, ambitious headmaster who values modernity and education and tries to reform the school without respecting local traditions. He is described as "a pivotal teacher" chosen to reform a "backward" school.
- **Obi's wife:** Nancy Obi is supportive of his vision and enjoys her elevated social status and helps with modernizing the school "the wives of the other teachers would envy her position."
- **The Village Priest (Priest of Ani):** Represents tradition and spirituality; he opposes Obi's closure of the ancestral path. He tells Obi, "Our dead relatives depart by it and our ancestors visit us by it."
- **The Villagers:** the community members who value their traditions and rebel when the sacred path is closed. They destroy the school compound after the death of a woman is linked to the blocked path.
- **The Government Education Officer:** a minor character who visits to inspect the school and authors a negative report after witnessing the damage. His visit coincides with the destruction, highlighting Obi's failure.





**2. Setting:** the time and place in which a story occurs. For example, the story is set in Ndume Central School, located in a rural Nigerian village during January 1949. The school and the sacred path create a setting where cultural tensions unfold. The physical setting includes the school compound and a footpath that connects the village shrine to the burial ground. This path becomes the central conflict of the story. The setting is both physical and symbolic, in which it represents the collision between Western modernity (the school) and African tradition (the path).

**3. Point of View:** the perspective from which the story is told. The story is told in third-person omniscient point of view, allowing the narrator to describe Obi's thoughts and motivations as well as the villagers' reactions. The narrator is not a character but has insight into the thoughts and motivations of multiple characters, especially Obi. For example, the narrator reveals Obi's inner thoughts, "It amazes me... that you people allowed the villagers to make a footpath."

**4. Theme:** central message, concern, or purpose in a literary work. The main theme is the conflict between tradition and modernity. Obi's vision of progress clashes with the villagers' deep-rooted cultural beliefs. Obi's refusal to compromise with local customs shows the danger of arrogance and cultural insensitivity. Another theme is cultural arrogance, Obi dismisses traditional values as "superstitions" and shows no respect for compromise. The story also addresses the consequences of pride and control, as Obi's insistence on change results in personal and professional failure.

**5. Style:** Achebe's style is clear, concise, and symbolic. He uses simple language to convey complex ideas, allowing the reader to see both sides of the conflict. The footpath serves as a central symbol, representing ancestral connection, spiritual beliefs, and cultural identity. Achebe also uses irony; Obi, who aimed to modernize the school, ends up responsible for its destruction. Example of symbolism, "Heavy sticks were planted closely across the path... strengthened with barbed wire". This symbolizes the rigidity and force of modernity clashing with tradition.

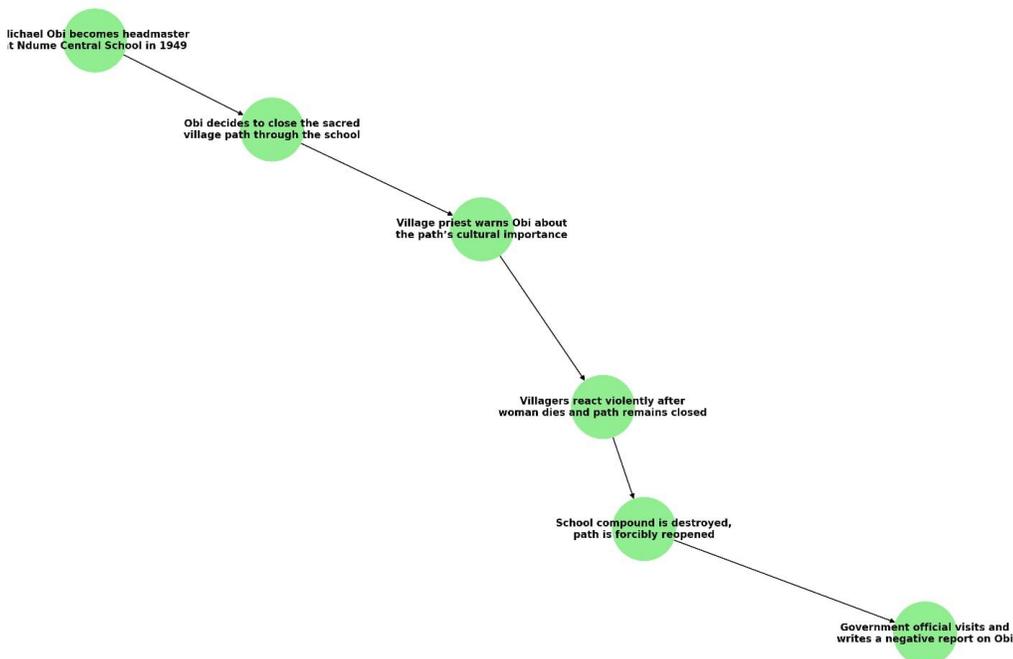


**6. Conflict:** a struggle between opposing forces, often driving the plot. For example, **the main conflict in the story is tradition vs. modernity**. Obi's efforts to modernize the school by blocking the ancestral path directly oppose the villagers' spiritual beliefs.

**7. Plot:** centers around the conflict between modernity and tradition. It follows Michael Obi as he takes charge of Ndume School and attempts to modernize it. **The conflict arises when he blocks a sacred footpath**. The **climax** occurs when the village priest pleads with Obi to reopen the path, but Obi refuses. **The falling action** includes the death of a village woman and rising community anger. **The resolution** is the destruction of the school by angry villagers. The story ends with the narrator stating, "Obi woke up next morning among the ruins of his work". However, his reforms clash with the spiritual beliefs of the villagers, leading to a dramatic conflict and eventual destruction of his work.

- **Exposition:** Michael Obi is appointed as the new headmaster of Ndume Central School in 1949. He is described as young, energetic, and passionate about modernization. The story introduces his ambition to reform the school and his wife Nancy's excitement about their new life. "He was appointed headmaster of Ndume Central School from January 1949."
- **Inciting Incident:** Obi discovers a footpath running through the school compound and decides to close it, considering it an outdated superstition. "It amazes me that you people allowed the villagers to make a footpath across the compound."
- **Rising Action:** the village priest visits Obi and explains the spiritual significance of the path, which connects the village shrine to the burial ground. Obi refuses to compromise. "Let the hawk perch and let the eagle perch," said the priest. "We cannot allow people to make a highway of our school compound," Obi replies.
- **Climax:** a village woman dies, and the community blames her soul's inability to pass through the blocked path. The tension erupts into anger and destruction. "That night the villagers came and tore up the hedges, trampled the flower beds, and pulled down one of the school buildings."
- **Falling Action:** the next morning, Obi awakens to the ruins of the school. The villagers have forcefully reopened the path, and all the efforts at modernization are undone.
- **Resolution:** the government education officer arrives and writes a negative report on the school's condition, marking the failure of Obi's leadership and his disregard for cultural values. "The white Supervisor came to inspect the school and wrote a nasty report on the state of the premises."

Plot Diagram - 'Dead Men's Path' by Chinua Achebe



---

## DEFINITIONS:

**1. Protagonist:** the main character in a literary work, around whom the central conflict revolves. For example, Michael Obi is the protagonist of the story. He is a newly appointed headmaster determined to modernize the school, and his decisions drive the central conflict of the narrative.

**2. Antagonist:** a character or force in conflict with the protagonist. For example, the village priest serves as the antagonist. He represents traditional beliefs and resists Obi's attempt to modernize the school by closing the sacred path.

**3. Irony:** a literary device in which the actual outcome is different from what is expected. For example, it is ironic that Obi, who aims to improve the school's reputation, ends up being the cause of its destruction and public disgrace.

**3. Climax:** the most intense or turning point in the plot. For example, the climax occurs when the priest confronts Obi and pleads for the path to be reopened, but Obi dismisses him arrogantly, escalating the conflict.

**4. Resolution:** the conclusion of the story's conflict. For example, the story resolves when the villagers destroy the school compound in response to the blocked path, symbolizing the failure of Obi's imposed modernity.

**5. Symbolism:** the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities beyond their literal meaning. For example, the footpath is a powerful symbol of the villagers' connection to their ancestors and spiritual traditions. Blocking it represents the disrespect and erasure of cultural heritage.

---

## ESSAY (1)

**Q: How does the theme of control appear in Chinua Achebe's story 'Dead Men's Path'?**

In Chinua Achebe's short story *Dead Men's Path*, the theme of control is central to the narrative conflict and serves as a lens through which the clash between modernity and tradition is explored. The story presents different forms of control, personal, institutional, and cultural and illustrates how misuse or misunderstanding of control can lead to unintended consequences and failure.

The protagonist is obsessed with control from the moment he is appointed headmaster. He immediately begins enforcing his vision of modernization, focused on aesthetics, discipline, and progress. His desire to control the school environment is evident when he criticizes the previous administration and aims to restructure both the physical and ideological space of the institution. When Obi blocks the sacred path that runs through the school grounds, it is a symbolic act of imposing control over tradition, asserting that his ideals are superior to local customs. Obi's attempt to control is not limited to physical structures, it extends to the people around him. He disregards the advice of his staff, mocks their perspectives, and marginalizes the local villagers. Even when the village priest visits him to explain the spiritual significance of the path, Obi refuses to compromise. His words, "*The whole purpose of our school is to eradicate such beliefs*", demonstrate a colonial mindset, one that assumes control is justified when aimed at "civilizing" others. On the other hand, the villagers also demonstrate a form of control rooted in cultural and spiritual tradition. For them, the path is sacred, a conduit between the worlds of living and the dead. When Obi disrupts this balance, their response is not passive. They reclaim control by destroying the school



compound and reopening the path, showing that control based on belief and community can be just as forceful as institutional authority.

In the end, Achebe suggests that control, when exercised without respect for others' values, leads to destruction. Obi's rigid and self-centered approach fails because it ignores the need for dialogue and cultural understanding. Thus, the story illustrates that true leadership is not about domination, but about collaboration and mutual respect.

---

## ESSAY (2)

**Q: What is the main conflict in Chinua Achebe's story 'Dead Men's Path'?**

In Chinua Achebe's short story *Dead Men's Path*, the central conflict is a cultural and ideological clash between modernity and tradition. This conflict is embodied in the character of Michael Obi, a young, idealistic headmaster, and the local villagers, who are deeply rooted in spiritual beliefs and customs. The tension arises when Obi attempts to impose modern reforms on a community without understanding or respecting its traditional values.

Michael Obi's appointment as headmaster of Ndume Central School comes with a clear vision: to modernize the school and remove what he sees as outdated practices. When he discovers a footpath that runs through the school grounds, he sees it as an obstacle to progress and decides to block it. To him, the path is nothing more than a superstition, irrelevant in the age of rationality and education. However, to the villagers, the path holds deep spiritual significance, it connects the village to the burial ground and is believed to be the route used by both the departing souls of the dead and the arriving souls of the newborn. This decision sparks a cultural confrontation when the village priest visits Obi and politely explains the importance of the path. Obi's refusal to compromise reflects his arrogance and cultural insensitivity. He insists that it is his duty to rid the community of such "backward" ideas, dismissing the priest's wisdom with a condescending smile. The conflict reaches its climax when a village woman dies, and her family believes that her soul cannot pass because the path is blocked. The villagers retaliate by destroying the school's compound and reopening the sacred path by force. In the end, Obi's vision of progress is ruined, and a government inspector's negative report seals the failure of his leadership.

To sum up, the main conflict in *Dead Men's Path* is not just a disagreement over a footpath but a symbolic struggle between two worldviews: Western modernity imposed through authority versus indigenous tradition rooted in spiritual meaning. Achebe's story warns of the dangers of disregarding cultural values in the name of progress, especially when those values shape the identity and cohesion of a community.

---

## ESSAY (3)

**Q: What does Chinua Achebe's story 'Dead Men's Path' reveal about Obi's character?**

Chinua Achebe's short story *Dead Men's Path* presents Michael Obi as a symbol of misguided modernity, an ambitious yet arrogant character whose failure to understand the value of tradition leads to personal and professional downfall. Through Obi's actions, language, and interactions with others, Achebe paints a portrait of a man whose enthusiasm for progress blinds him to the cultural realities around him.



At first glance, Michael Obi appears to be an admirable figure. He is described as “young and energetic,” with a strong desire to reform Ndume Central School. He takes pride in the aesthetics of the school compound, encouraging beauty, order, and discipline. His academic background and appointment as headmaster indicate that he is educated and driven, someone who wants to bring positive change. However, as the story unfolds, Obi’s flaws become increasingly apparent. He is presumptuous and dismissive of others’ beliefs. When he learns of the sacred footpath that runs through the school, he immediately decides to block it, believing it to be a “backward” superstition. He shows no interest in listening to the concerns of the villagers or the village priest, even when approached respectfully. His statement, “*Our duty is to teach your children to laugh at such ideas,*” reflects a patronizing attitude and a refusal to consider alternative perspectives. Obi is also shown to be rigid and uncompromising, traits that lead to his failure. His refusal to collaborate with the local community escalates a cultural misunderstanding into full-blown conflict. When tragedy strikes and a woman dies, the villagers associate her death with the closed path and destroy the school. Obi’s inability to foresee the consequences of his actions reveals a lack of emotional intelligence and leadership skills.

In conclusion, Achebe uses Obi’s character to critique the dangers of arrogant reform and cultural insensitivity. While Obi is intelligent and well-intentioned, his disrespect for tradition, self-righteousness, and inflexible thinking reveal a deeper flaw: the inability to lead with empathy. Through Obi, Achebe warns that real progress must consider and respect the values of the people it aims to serve.

---

## ESSAY (4)

**Q: What is the mistake that Michael Obi makes when he is appointed as the headmaster in Ndume Central School in Chinua Achebe’s story ‘Dead Men’s Path’? How do you think he should have acted instead?**

In Chinua Achebe’s short story *Dead Men’s Path*, Michael Obi’s greatest mistake as the newly appointed headmaster of Ndume Central School is his arrogant disregard for cultural traditions. Though young and ambitious, Obi’s failure lies in his inability to balance his vision of modernization with respect for the values of the local community. His rigid, one-sided approach leads not only to personal failure but also to the destruction of the very institution he aimed to improve.

Upon assuming his role, Obi is determined to reform the school. He invests energy in landscaping, aesthetics, and improving teaching standards. However, his fatal decision comes when he blocks a sacred ancestral footpath that passes through the school compound. Obi views the path as an inconvenient superstition incompatible with his vision of progress. He does not seek to understand its significance; instead, he mocks traditional beliefs and insists that such ideas should be eradicated, “*Our duty is to teach your children to laugh at such ideas.*” This act of cultural insensitivity triggers the conflict in the story. The path, as explained by the village priest, connects the villagers to their dead ancestors and the unborn. By closing it, Obi symbolically shuts down a spiritual lifeline of the community. His refusal to compromise or engage in respectful dialogue reveals his lack of leadership and emotional intelligence. The consequences of his decision are severe. A village woman dies, and her family believes her spirit cannot cross to the afterlife. In response, the villagers destroy the school’s compound, and a government inspector arrives shortly after to find the school in ruins. Obi should have acted differently by approaching his role with cultural humility and openness. Instead of imposing his reforms, he could have consulted with local leaders, such as the priest, and worked toward a solution that respected both the community’s values and his educational goals. For example, he might have designed a route around the path, preserving its spiritual function while maintaining the integrity of the school grounds.



In conclusion, Michael Obi's mistake was not his desire for progress, but his failure to respect the past while building the future. Achebe's story teaches that true progress requires understanding, not domination, a lesson that remains relevant in any context of leadership and change.

---

## ESSAY (5)

**Q: Discuss the representation of women in 'Dead Men's Path' by Chinua Achebe. Support your ideas with incidents from the story?**

In Chinua Achebe's *Dead Men's Path*, women play a limited but symbolically significant role, reflecting broader gender dynamics in traditional and modern African societies. Although the story primarily focuses on the conflict between Michael Obi and the local community, Achebe subtly reveals the marginalization of women within both the colonial education system and traditional structures.

The most prominent female character is Nancy Obi, the wife of the headmaster. She is portrayed as elegant, supportive, and proud of her elevated social status. Her excitement about her new life at Ndume Central School is largely based on appearances and social prestige, not educational reform. She is described as being pleased that "the wives of the other teachers would envy her position." This characterization reflects a passive role often assigned to women in postcolonial settings, where their value is tied to their husbands' status rather than their own contributions. Nancy is not involved in decision-making and does not engage with the cultural conflict at the heart of the story. More critically, the unnamed village woman who dies during childbirth plays a symbolic role in the narrative. Her death, which occurs after the ancestral path is closed, becomes the catalyst for communal anger and destruction. The villagers believe her soul cannot pass to the afterlife due to Obi's obstruction of the sacred path. Though silent and voiceless, this woman represents the spiritual and communal cost of cultural insensitivity. Her death is not just a tragedy; it is a narrative turning point that emphasizes how disregarding tradition can have real and devastating consequences. Achebe's portrayal of women in *Dead Men's Path* thus reveals a double marginalization; Nancy is sidelined in the male-dominated modern system, while the village woman is voiceless in both the traditional and modern contexts. However, their presence, especially the woman's death, serves to underline the story's moral; that progress without empathy, and leadership without cultural awareness, leads to harm not only to ideas, but to people.

To sum up, while women in *Dead Men's Path* do not have prominent speaking roles, they are crucial to the story's emotional and symbolic core. Achebe uses them to highlight the consequences of male arrogance and the overlooked voices in societal change.

---

## ESSAY (6)

**Q: If you could choose to be (or not to be) a character in Chinua Achebe's short story *Dead Men's Path*, which character would you choose? Explain your choice and support it with incidents from the story.**

If I could choose to be a character in Chinua Achebe's *Dead Men's Path*, I would choose to be the village priest, also known as the priest of Ani. Among all the characters, the priest demonstrates wisdom, patience, and a deep understanding of



the spiritual and cultural values that sustain his community. His role represents respect for tradition, peaceful dialogue, and moral clarity, all of which are essential traits in a culturally complex world.

Unlike Michael Obi, who is headstrong and dismissive, the priest engages with the conflict respectfully. When he learns that Obi has blocked the sacred footpath, he does not resort to anger or confrontation. Instead, he visits the headmaster in person and calmly explains the path's importance, saying, "Our dead relatives depart by it and our ancestors visit us by it." His tone is diplomatic, and he uses the wise proverb "Let the hawk perch and let the eagle perch" to advocate for peaceful coexistence between modern beliefs and traditional values. The priest's actions reflect emotional intelligence and cultural leadership. He understands that the path is more than a route, it is a symbol of life, death, and continuity for the villagers. His respect for collective beliefs, despite being challenged by a younger and more powerful man, shows strength of character and moral resilience. Though the priest's warning is ignored and the situation escalates into destruction, his approach is the most balanced and just. Had Obi listened, the conflict could have been avoided. Therefore, choosing to be the priest aligns with values of wisdom, humility, and cultural preservation, qualities that promote understanding in a divided world.

To sum up, the village priest is a character who embodies the virtues of tolerance, dignity, and respect for tradition. His voice, though ignored in the story, is the one that offers the most sustainable solution. In a world often divided by ideology, his example is one worth following.

---

## ESSAY (7)

**Q: What does the path represent in Chinua Achebe's story 'Dead Men's path'? What is the value it holds for the villagers?**

In Chinua Achebe's short story *Dead Men's Path*, the footpath that crosses Ndume Central School is more than just a physical trail, it is a powerful symbol of cultural identity, spiritual continuity, and ancestral connection. For the villagers, the path embodies generations of belief and practice. Its closure by Michael Obi, the school's new headmaster, not only disrupts their spiritual traditions but also represents a broader assault on their way of life.

The path serves as a sacred link between the world of living and the dead. As the village priest explains, it is used during funerals and childbirth, allowing souls to pass between realms. "Our dead relatives depart by it and our ancestors visit us by it," the priest states. For the villagers, the path is integral to their spiritual and cultural beliefs, it is a space through which life and death are reconciled, and through which tradition is physically and symbolically preserved. By blocking the path, Obi unknowingly violates a sacred tradition, triggering anger, resentment, and destruction. His view of the path as a superstition to be eradicated reflects a colonial and dismissive attitude toward indigenous customs. This cultural insensitivity leads to his downfall and the failure of his modernization project. The villagers' violent response, tearing down the hedges, trampling the garden, and destroying a school building, demonstrates the deep emotional and communal value the path holds. It is not merely about convenience or resistance to change but about defending a tradition that defines their identity and connects them to their ancestors and descendants.

In conclusion, the path in *Dead Men's Path* represents far more than a route, it symbolizes the villagers' history, spirituality, and cultural dignity. Its value lies in what it means to the community, a living expression of heritage that should be respected, not erased. Achebe uses this symbol to emphasize the importance of cultural understanding and the dangers of imposing change without dialogue or empathy.

---



# ESSAY (8)

**Q: What is the difference between Michael Obi's and the village priest's view of path? What does it show about their perspective of life in general? Q: Which arguments sound more convincing and acceptable, Mr. Obi's or the priest's?**

In Chinua Achebe's *Dead Men's Path*, the conflict between Michael Obi and the village priest centers around their differing views of a sacred footpath. This difference in perspective highlights a broader philosophical divide: modernity vs. tradition, and rationalism vs. spiritual continuity.

Michael Obi, a young, reform-minded headmaster, sees the path as an obstacle to progress. To him, it is a primitive superstition that conflicts with his mission to modernize the school. He believes in structure, logic, and the visual image of progress, stating: "We cannot allow people to make a highway of our school compound." His view of life is shaped by Western education and a desire for control, even if that means disregarding the beliefs of the community he serves. In contrast, the village priest views the path as sacred and symbolic, a spiritual link between the living and the dead. He gently explains, "Our dead relatives depart by it and our ancestors visit us by it." His life perspective is rooted in continuity, respect for tradition, and communal harmony. Unlike Obi, the priest values coexistence and tolerance, shown through his proverb. "Let the hawk perch and let the eagle perch". These differing views reveal deeper truths about each character. Obi's perspective reflects pride, individualism, and cultural insensitivity, while the priest's outlook demonstrates humility, collective wisdom, and reverence for the past.

To sum up, in terms of which argument is more convincing, the priest's position is more reasonable and culturally aware. While Obi aims for progress, his method is forceful and dismissive. The priest, on the other hand, offers a model of tolerance and negotiation, qualities essential for sustainable change in any community. Achebe ultimately shows that progress must be rooted in respect, and that ignoring tradition invites resistance and failure.

---

# ESSAY (9)

**Q: In 'Dead Men's Path,' what prevented Obi from achieving his dreams of making the school modern? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.**

In Chinua Achebe's short story *Dead Men's Path*, Michael Obi's dream of modernizing Ndume Central School fails not because of external limitations, but because of his own cultural arrogance, poor leadership, and refusal to engage with the community he serves. His inability to understand and respect the villagers' spiritual beliefs leads to the destruction of his progress and reputation.

From the beginning, Obi is portrayed as energetic, idealistic, and determined to bring reform. He focuses on transforming the school's appearance, planting gardens, and enforcing strict rules. However, he also demonstrates a disdain for tradition, particularly when he discovers a sacred footpath that runs through the school compound. Rather than consulting the community or seeking a compromise, he unilaterally decides to block the path, dismissing it as "a ridiculous superstition." The village priest, representing the community's spiritual heritage, warns Obi about the importance of the path. It connects the village to the burial ground and symbolizes the passage between life and death. Obi refuses to listen, insisting that "such beliefs have no place in a modern school." His rigid mindset and failure to consider alternative perspectives show a lack of cultural



sensitivity and emotional intelligence. The consequences of Obi's actions are severe. After a village woman dies and the path remains closed, the villagers blame the obstruction for preventing her spirit from transitioning. In retaliation, they destroy the school's garden and tear down a building, symbolically and physically undoing Obi's reforms. Worse still, the government inspector arrives shortly afterward and witnesses the destruction, leaving a negative report. Obi's failure stems from his belief that progress means erasing the past, rather than building upon it. His dream collapses because he imposes change without dialogue, cooperation, or respect.

In conclusion, Obi's modernization efforts are undone by his own unwillingness to integrate local values with educational reform. Achebe's story reminds us that true progress must be inclusive and culturally grounded, or it will inevitably face resistance and collapse.

---

## ESSAY (10)

**Q: Discuss the relationship between Michael Obi and the priest in 'Dead Men's Path'? Who presented a better argument to solve the problem? Support your answer with evidence from the story.**

In Chinua Achebe's *Dead Men's Path*, the relationship between Michael Obi and the village priest is shaped by ideological opposition and mutual misunderstanding. Their interaction symbolizes the broader conflict between modernity and tradition, and their inability to cooperate leads to the story's climax and Obi's failure. Through their brief yet significant encounter, Achebe explores how leadership and progress must be rooted in cultural sensitivity and dialogue.

Michael Obi is introduced as a young, educated, and ambitious school headmaster determined to modernize Ndume Central School. When he discovers an ancestral footpath cutting through the school grounds, he sees it as an obstacle to order and modernization. His reaction is dismissive and authoritarian. He closes the path without consulting the villagers, viewing it as a relic of backward thinking. In contrast, the priest of Ani approaches the situation with calmness and dignity. He visits Obi to explain the spiritual importance of the path, noting that it connects the villagers to their ancestors and the unborn. His language is respectful and metaphorical, exemplified in the proverb, "Let the hawk perch and let the eagle perch." This suggests coexistence and mutual respect between differing worldviews. However, Obi rejects the priest's request, smiling condescendingly and reaffirming his belief that the school's purpose is to eradicate such beliefs. Their relationship, therefore, is marked by a clash of values, Obi represents a rigid, one-sided view of progress, while the priest symbolizes continuity, cultural identity, and tolerance. Obi's lack of flexibility contrasts sharply with the priest's attempt at peaceful resolution. When assessing whose argument is more convincing, the priest's position is more thoughtful and inclusive. He acknowledges the symbolic and emotional weight of the path and proposes dialogue, while Obi imposes change through force and exclusion. The priest's argument, grounded in cultural tradition and human connection, proves more sustainable, as shown by the villagers' forceful reopening of the path and the destruction of Obi's modern project.

In conclusion, the relationship between Obi and the priest reveals the dangers of leadership without empathy. The priest, with his wisdom and restraint, presents the better solution, one that respects the beliefs of the people while still allowing room for progress.



# ESSAY (11)

**Q: How does Chinua Achebe's story 'Dead Men's Path' show the effect of white imperialism on African culture and traditions?**

Chinua Achebe's short story *Dead Men's Path* powerfully illustrates the lingering effects of white imperialism on African culture and traditions, particularly through the character of Michael Obi and his approach to leadership. Although the story is set in a postcolonial African context, the attitudes and actions of Obi reflect the internalization of Western colonial ideologies that dismiss indigenous beliefs as primitive and obstructive to progress.

Michael Obi, the newly appointed headmaster of Ndume Central School, is portrayed as a product of a Western-style education system. He is young, educated, and determined to modernize the school, which he views as backward. His mission aligns with the goals of colonial reformers to replace native customs with imported ideas of civilization and order. When he blocks the sacred footpath running through the school compound, Obi demonstrates the imperialist mindset of imposing change without local consultation or respect for tradition. The path itself symbolizes the villagers' spiritual connection to their ancestors, used for both funeral rites and childbirth rituals. In closing the path, Obi attempts to sever this cultural continuity in the name of progress. He disregards the village priest's explanation of its significance and insists that "our duty is to teach your children to laugh at such ideas." This statement mirrors the colonial rhetoric that portrayed African traditions as superstitions needing eradication. Achebe also shows how this internalized colonialism leads to Obi's failure. His reforms are not rooted in dialogue or community engagement but in authoritarian control and cultural superiority. When the villagers retaliate by destroying the school and reopening the path, the narrative demonstrates that resistance to imposed change is inevitable when it disrespects identity and belief.

In conclusion, the *Dead Men's Path* reveals how white imperialism continued to influence African societies through educated elites like Obi, who perpetuated colonial values under the guise of modernization. Achebe warns that true progress must honor, not erase, the cultural foundations of a people, and that imperialist thinking, even when adopted by Africans themselves, leads only to alienation and failure.

---

# ESSAY (12)

**Q: What is the major problem in this short story of 'Dead Men's Path'? Justify your answer.**

The major problem in Chinua Achebe's short story *Dead Men's Path* is the conflict between cultural tradition and imposed modernization, personified in the character of Michael Obi. Obi's failure to understand and respect the beliefs of the local villagers leads to the breakdown of communication, cultural tension, and the destruction of his goals.

Obi, a young, enthusiastic headmaster, is appointed to reform Ndume Central School. His vision for progress focuses on transforming the school's appearance and structure to reflect modern standards. However, his approach is deeply flawed: he views the villagers' traditions as superstitious and irrelevant. When he learns that a sacred footpath, used by villagers for spiritual purposes, runs through the school compound, he blocks it without consultation, believing it hinders development. This decision triggers the story's central conflict. The village priest explains that the path is used for funerals, childbirth, and ancestral visits, but Obi arrogantly dismisses these customs, saying "Our duty is to teach your children to laugh at such ideas." His actions represent a broader problem: disregard for local culture in the pursuit of Western ideals. The villagers interpret the



path's closure as a violation of sacred traditions. When a woman dies and the path remains closed, they associate the death with Obi's disrespect. Their retaliation, destroying the school garden and a building, is symbolic of their resistance to change that ignores their values. Obi's dreams of progress are shattered, and a government inspector arrives to find the school in ruins.

In summary, the major problem in the *Dead Men's Path* is not modernization itself, but the way it is enforced, without respect, inclusion, or cultural understanding. Achebe uses this conflict to deliver a powerful message: meaningful change must come through dialogue and mutual respect, not arrogance or control.

---

## ESSAY (13)

Q: What does the **path symbolize** represent in "*A Dead Man's Path*" by Chinua Achebe?

In Chinua Achebe's short story *Dead Men's Path*, the path is the central symbol, representing far more than a physical trail. It stands for the spiritual, cultural, and ancestral continuity that binds the village community together. Through this symbol, Achebe explores the conflict between tradition and modernity, and the consequences of disregarding cultural heritage.

The path connects the village shrine to the cemetery, serving as the passageway for the souls of the dead and the unborn. It is both sacred and functional, a symbol of life's cyclical nature linking past generations with the present and future. When the village priest explains its significance to Michael Obi, he says, "Our dead relatives depart by it and our ancestors visit us by it." This spiritual value gives the path its symbolic power as a representation of the villagers' identity and belief system. By choosing to block the path, Michael Obi, the modernist headmaster, is not simply redirecting physical movement, he is attempting to sever the community's connection to its heritage. To him, the path is a symbol of "backwardness" that must be removed in favor of modernization. But to the villagers, it is an irreplaceable part of their existence. This ideological conflict brings the symbolism of the path into sharp focus: it becomes a battleground between progress imposed from above and tradition upheld from below. The villagers' violent reaction, tearing down school structures and reopening the path, reinforces its deep meaning. The destruction is not random; it is a defense of what the path represents: memory, identity, and the sacred.

In conclusion, the path in *Dead Men's Path* symbolizes the cultural lifeline of the community. Achebe uses it to challenge the reader to consider the cost of dismissing tradition in the name of progress. True development, the story implies, must respect the spiritual and cultural paths that people have walked for generations.

---

للحصول على الملخصات الحصرية مع الشرح  
عن طريق المعهد 66837797





# للانضمام لقروبات الدراسية العامة

EL097 - EL098 - EL099 - EL111 - EL112  
EL117 - EL118 - EL119 - E120 - E121- EL122  
EL330 - TR102 - A112A/B - L201A/B  
A230A/B - E304A/B - EA300A/B

- ✓ نخبة من الأساتذة والمدرسين ذوي خبرة من خريجين / خريجات AOU بمرتبة الشرف.
- ✓ شروحات مجانية وآخر الاخبار الحصرية.
- ✓ أفضل الملخصات المجانية (المحدثة).



51148200

