



The Other Side of the Truth

By Beverley Naidoo

Teacher's Guide
By Laurie Rozakis, Ph.D.



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Synopsis

Chapter 1

Sade Solaja, age twelve, sees her mother shot dead outside their home in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1995. The soldiers, part of Nigeria's corrupt military government, were aiming for Sade's father, an outspoken journalist.

Chapter 2

The next day, Sade and her younger brother, Femi, age ten, learn they are to be immediately smuggled out of Nigeria to London.

Chapter 3

Given less than an hour to pack, the kids can take only a few items. Sade takes a special dress and purse that her mother made for her. Papa's brother Uncle Dele has arranged for passports and hired a woman, Mrs. Bankole, to escort them. Once in London, they will be met by Papa's brother, Dr. Solaja, a university professor.

Chapter 4

Mrs. Bankole, a coarse and bejeweled woman, gives Sade the name Yemi and Femi the name Ade, the names of her own children.

Chapter 5

Their passage through customs is tense.

Chapter 6

The flight passes in a blur because the children are disoriented by their mother's death and their own hasty departure from Nigeria.

Chapter 7

The customs agent in London examines Mrs. Bankole's suitcase for contraband, but find only Nigerian clothing and crafts that she is going to resell. By the time they

finally clear customs, there is no sign of Uncle Dele.

Chapter 8

Furious to be stuck with Sade and Femi, Mrs. Bankole takes them by subway to Victoria Station, where she meets a man and deserts the kids. Sade and Femi are stranded in a strange place with virtually no money, inadequate summer clothing in the bitter British winter, and no directions to their uncle's college.

Chapter 9

Sade and Femi find their way to the London College of Art, but Uncle Dele cannot be located. Later, we learn that he has been threatened and has gone into hiding.

Chapter 10

Sade and Femi are alone on the cold streets of the huge unknown city. They walk for hours, finally entering a shop that smells like Lagos, but they have no money. They next try to take shelter in an alley, but a bum chases them away and steals their bag of possessions. The children walk into a video shop just as some hooligans trash the place, so the owner assumes that Sade and Femi are accomplices and calls the police.

Chapter 11

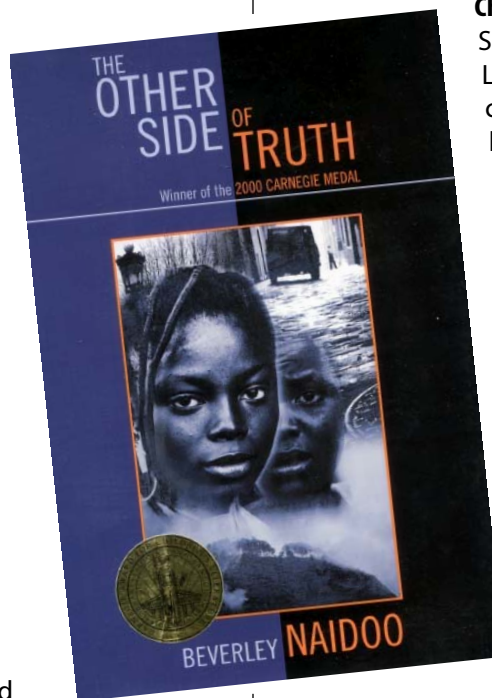
In a flashback, Sade remembers when the police took their father into custody for defying Nigeria's corrupt leaders. Back in the present, the children are taken to the police station.

Chapter 12

In another flashback, Sade recalls her parents talking about the atrocities the soldiers are committing.

Chapter 13

Robert, a red-headed emergency social worker, places the children with Mrs. Graham, her young twins, and her son Kevin. Mrs. Graham is kind, but Kevin resents having to share his room with Femi.



Chapter 14

Sade has a flashback to her mother's murder.

Chapter 15

Jenny, a black social worker, interviews the children. She is kind and looks reassuringly like Sade's statue Iyawo, but still Sade does not reveal much: she gives their first names but provides her mother's maiden name, Ibadan, rather than their real last name, Solaja.

Chapter 16

In secret, the kids call home, but the phone is dead. Later, they try calling with Mrs. Graham's help, with the same lack of success.

Chapter 17

The children meet the kindly Mrs. Appiah from Ghana, who extracts more of their story and takes them to Mr. Nathan, the immigration lawyer. The adults work on getting the children temporary admission to London.

Chapter 18

Sade and Femi go to immigration, are fingerprinted, and try to reassure themselves that they will soon be safe with Uncle Dele and Papa. But there's the chance that Papa will be assassinated before he can join them in England.

Chapter 19

The children are placed in a foster home with Mr. and Mrs. King (Gracie and Roy) from Jamaica, but even the couple's kindness cannot relieve the children's loneliness and alienation.

Chapter 20

Sade and Femi are enrolled in school. The teacher, Mr. Morris, pairs Sade with an immigrant from Somalia, Mariam. Sade is upset that Kevin is in her class. To add to Sade's worry, Femi is retreating into himself and has become virtually silent, not even playing his beloved sports.

Chapter 21

School is a frightening plunge into Western culture, relaxed discipline, ethnic harassment, and peer intimidation. Classmates Donna and Marcia bully Sade.

Chapter 22

Sade has flashbacks to her father and homeland.

Chapter 23

Marcia destroys Sade's homework and humiliates her in front of the class.

Chapter 24

Sade tries to call her uncle, but since she has used her mother's last name, she cannot reach him.

Chapter 25

Donna and Marcia tell Sade that if she doesn't steal a lighter from the store owned by Mariam's mother and uncle, they will beat Femi up.

Chapter 26

Sade steals the lighter and feels disgusted with herself.

Chapter 27

Mariam trusts Sade with her story of the horror of her experiences in Somalia: her father disappeared and she and the rest of her family trekked all the way across the country to Mogadishu to a refugee camp. They stayed there for six years before coming to London. Mariam's young brother Hassan refused to come to London with them and so has been lost as well.

Chapter 28

Mrs. Appiah has found Papa! He is being held in prison for traveling on a forged passport. Sade and Femi are able to speak to him on the telephone.

Chapter 29

Sade and Femi visit Papa in prison and tell him of their experiences since they were together last.

Chapter 30

Papa and the children exchange a series of letters in which they express their love for each other, their courage, and the disappointing news that Papa's request for asylum has been denied. The Nigerian police are trying to frame Papa for Mama's murder and thus have him extradited.

Chapter 31

Sade decides to bring Papa's case to the attention of the newscaster she sees on television every night, the man she calls "Mr. Seven O'Clock."

Chapter 32

The Kings want to drive the children to London, but Sade insists that she and Femi must go alone to make their case. The children wait for hours in the cold, but Mr. Seven O'Clock kindly invites them in when he finally emerges from the studio.

Chapter 33

A few days later, Papa's story does make the news. The

family is delighted that many more people will know about Papa's plight and the cruel military dictatorship in Nigeria.

Chapter 34

The news story sparks a demonstration on Papa's behalf outside the prison. Sade and Femi go into the prison to visit Papa and are shocked to see Uncle Dele, back from hiding.

Chapter 35

Papa writes a letter to the children about the story of the leopard and the tortoise. The story symbolizes the importance of keeping up the struggle for freedom and truth.

Chapter 36

Sade tells Mariam about having stolen the lighter, but to her astonishment, Mariam and her family already know. The bullies have also forced Mariam to steal from the store and her mother and uncle have counseled her to go along with it to avoid worse trouble. Mr. Morris calls Sade into the hall to speak with her alone. Before he can say anything, she faints. She is weak from hunger, having eaten little while her father is on his hunger strike.

Chapter 37

Sade makes a Christmas card for Mariam's family and apologizes for the theft. She blames herself for her mother's death.

Chapter 38

Uncle Dele is interviewed on television and speaks with great passion about his brother's courage in the face of oppression.

Chapter 39

Sade is not recovering from her breakdown. Mrs. Appiah brings cards from the class. Marcia and Donna have gotten into trouble. Mr. Morris has also sent a letter in which he explains that he had wanted to speak to Sade in private about a TV interview of the entire class.

Chapter 40

Sade's spirits lift. Mrs. Graham and Kevin come over with Christmas gifts; Kevin invites Femi to join his sports club. Papa has been transferred, but no one knows where.

Chapter 41

Papa arrives on Christmas morning, free! Uncle Dele explains that Sade and Femi saved their father. When

Papa gives Femi his Christmas gift, goalkeepers' gloves that Mama had bought before her death, Femi finally breaks down in tears. Papa has also brought gifts for Sade: her Iyawo and Oka statues.

Chapter 42

Sade writes a letter to her grandmother with news and her love.

Timeline of Modern Nigerian History

- 1960-1966** First Republic of Nigeria
- 1960** Nigeria joins with Liberia and Togo in the "Monrovia Group," an organization of African states.
- 1962** Northern People's Congress (NPC) controls the federal government. Violence in the western region forces the Yoruba Action Group (AG) to split in two.
- 1965** Elections trigger violence in the western region.
- 1966** The Nigerian army stages its first coup. Rioting erupts against the Igbo minority in the north; about 30,000 people die.
- 1967** Igbo form the Republic of Biafra. The Nigerian government refuses to yield control over the oil-rich south east region, sparking the Biafran War.
- 1967** General Gowon seizes the government and abolishes the old system of three federal states, creating a new federation of twelve states.
- 1970** Biafran War ends; approximately 2 million people are dead.
- 1974** General Gowon reneges on a promise to restore civilian rule in 1976.
- 1975** Gowon overthrown by General Murtala Mohammed.
- 1976** Mohammed succeeded by General

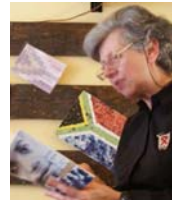
	Olusegun Obasanjo.		
1979	Civilian rule by the Nigerian parliament is restored, and the constitution is altered to a more "American" system of checks and balances. Shehu Shagari becomes president.	1992	Babangida cancels the presidential primaries, bans leaders of both parties, and pushes the date of the presidential election back to the summer of 1993.
1981	General strike results in the expulsion of more than 1 million foreign (non-Nigerian) African workers.	1993	Moshood Abiola elected; Babangida annuls elections and has Abiola imprisoned.
1983	Shehu Shagari reelected president. Major-General Muhammed Buhari subsequently overthrows Shehu Shagari, suspends the Constitution, and arrests Shagari and other civilian politicians.	1993	Babangida forced to resign; interim military government under civilian businessman Ernest Shonekan.
1985	General Ibrahim Babangida overthrows Buhari. "Structural Adjustment Program" freezes salaries while import prices increase, squeezing the Nigerian middle, working, and poor classes.	1993	Movement for the Advancement of Democracy hijacks a Nigerian airliner to Niger to protest official corruption. 1993 Senate impeaches their president, Iyorchia Ayu. General Sani Abacha abolishes the constitution and assumes control of the government.
1987	Babangida postpones return to civilian rule to 1992.	1994	Government establishes the "Petroleum Trust fund" to disburse profits from the oil industry for public use.
1988	Government reduces fuel price subsidies as part of its austerity program. In response, transporters raise their prices 50-100 percent, triggering strikes among the rest of the population, especially students. Police kill strikers in Jos. Fuel prices are lowered again, making Nigeria a source of smuggled fuel to neighboring countries.	1996	Military government executes political activists who opposed government oil policy in the southeast region (Royal Dutch Shell), including Ken Saro-Wiwa.
1989	Babangida's government refuses to legalize 13 independent political parties. The army continues to rule the country. Civil and academic reaction is strongly negative.	1996	Nnamdi Azzikiwe, Nigeria's first president, dies.
1991	Government decreases the number of states to 21 from 19.	1996	Moshood Abiola's wife Kudirat shot by an unknown gunman.
1992	Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, with 88.5 million people (Egypt is second with 52 million). Nigeria's GDP is second in Africa (\$35 million to South Africa's \$90 million), but per capita income is only \$395.	1997	Government raises gasoline prices by 338 percent, introduces a 5 percent value-added tax, and devalues the currency by 386 percent.
		1997	Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, former vice-president and Abacha's political opponent, dies in prison, leading to charges that he was poisoned.
		1998	General Sani Abacha dies unexpectedly of a heart attack. Nigeria's "Provisional Ruling Council" (29 military officers) swear in General Abdusalam Abubakar as the new head of state.

- Moshood Abiola dies in prison of heart disease.
- 1999** Former General Olusegun Obasanjo wins election as president of the Third Republic of Nigeria.
- 1999** President Obasanjo orders troops to raid the town of Odi in the Niger Delta, in response to the murders of twelve policemen at the hands of local militia; The troops razed the town of Odi.
- 2000** Sharia law is established in the predominantly muslim Zamfara state; Eleven other states in the north soon follow suit. Religious riots erupt in Kaduna over the implementation of Sharia law. The Obasanjo administration establishes the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to tackle the human and ecological issues in the Niger Delta region of southern Nigeria.
- 2002** The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled against Nigeria in favor of Cameroon over the disputed oil-rich Bakassi peninsula territory. Religious riots erupt over the Miss World pageant hosted in Abuja; the pageant is subsequently moved to London.
- 2003** President Olusegun Obasanjo wins reelection as president. President Olusegun Obasanjo is sworn in for a second term as president.
- 2004** Ethnoreligious violence erupts in Plateau State; President Obasanjo declares a state of emergency there.
- 2006** The National Assembly of Nigeria votes against a constitutional amendment to remove term limits; President Obasanjo is prevented from contesting a third term in office. Obasanjo meets with his Cameroonian counterpart, Paul Biya, and U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Anan in New York to resolve dispute talks over Bakassi. Nigerian troops begin to pull out of Bakassi; Bakassi becomes Cameroonian territory.

2007 The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) releases the names of 24 candidates for the presidential elections. Vice President Atiku Abubakar is excluded from the list. Umaru Yar'Adua, Governor of Katsina State, is elected president of Nigeria

Author Sketch

Beverley Naidoo was born in 1943 in Johannesburg, South Africa, to an affluent white family. Her father was a composer and music copyright manager; her mother, a broadcaster and theater critic. Naidoo grew up in South Africa under apartheid, an experience that has shaped her entire life. She says: "I was brought up with the usual conceptions most white South Africans have, completely taking for granted the services of our cook-cum-nanny, whose own three children lived over three hundred kilometers away. I still feel intensely angry about the racist distortions of reality passed on to me as a child."



Naidoo earned a B.A. from the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, in 1963. The following year, she became politically active and was detained for a year under the provisions of the "Ninety Days" solitary confinement law. When she was twenty-two, Naidoo moved to England, where she has lived since.

In England, Naidoo earned a B.A. from the University of York in 1967. A year later, she earned a certificate of education, and began teaching primary and secondary school, a career she held from 1969-1985. Naidoo then worked as an advisory teacher in Cultural Diversity and English in Dorset, England. She also worked for the Bournemouth Education Directorate, Bournemouth, England, during 1997-98, and has been a visiting fellow at the University of Southampton School of Education since 1992. In 1991, Naidoo earned her Ph.D. from the University of Southampton.

Despite her busy and successful career as a teacher and scholar, Naidoo found time to return to her experiences in South Africa in her research and writing. In the early 1980s, Naidoo began research on the image of South Africa in nonfiction children's books in England. According to Naidoo in *Censoring Reality*, her study "demonstrates [that] the images conveyed through

most materials available in schools and public libraries do not reflect the reality of apartheid and racist domination." At the same time, Naidoo worked with the Education Group of the British Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, an organization that gave victims of apartheid access to legal help and also helped children learn about South Africa.

Naidoo's writing career for children started by accident through her involvement with this organization. When the group "decided to find someone who could write a work of fiction which would convey some of that reality, I think, much to the surprise of the others, I volunteered!" she explained in *School Library Journal*. The result was *Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story*, which was banned by the apartheid government of South Africa. Naidoo writes on her website that the book-banning spurred her to continue to write. In 1989, Naidoo published a sequel, *Chain of Fire*.

Naidoo continued her examination of freedom, family, and exile in *The Other Side of Truth*. As she accepted the Carnegie Award for this novel, Naidoo told her audience: "It matters to me deeply that in acknowledging this book, you are acknowledging the existence of a submerged world of refugees in our very midst. Equally, I am honoured that you are acknowledging my particular writer's map to provide a route into that world."

Critic's Corner

The Other Side of Truth won both the Carnegie Medal and the Jane Addams Book Award. The novel was also named a Best Book for Young Adults by the American Library Association and won the Smarties Silver Medal.

Reviews were laudatory. *The Other Side of Truth* is a "harrowing story," observed *School Library Journal's* Gerry Larson, which Naidoo presents "with political insight, sensitivity, and passion." Through her "compelling characters," Larson continued, "Naidoo has captured and revealed the personal anguish and universality of the refugee experience." And in the opinion of a *Horn Book* critic, *The Other Side of Truth* is not only true to its political and ethical objectives, "it succeeds as a first-rate escape-adventure story as well." *Publishers Weekly* critic noted: "The inclusion of real facts about African countries, such as the government's execution of Nigerian activist writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, makes Naidoo's story more poignant, while the immediacy of the parallel

story, in which Sade must deal with similar obstacles on a smaller scale (e.g., powerful school gangs), makes the novel more accessible."

Selected Other Works by Beverley Naidoo

Fiction

- Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story*, 1984
- Free As I Know* (editor), 1987
- Chain of Fire*, 1989
- Letang's New Friend*, 1994
- Trouble for Letang and Julie*, 1994
- Letang and Julie Save the Day*, 1994
- No Turning Back: A Novel of South Africa*, 1995
- Global Tales: Stories from Many Cultures* (editor, with Alun Hicks and Chris Donovan), 1997
- Where Is Zami?*, 1998
- The Other Side of Truth*, 2000
- Out of Bounds: Stories of Conflict and Hope*, 2001
- Baba's Gift*, 2002
- Web of Lies*, 2006
- Burn My Heart*, 2008

Nonfiction

- Censoring Reality: An Examination of Books on South Africa*, 1985
- Through Whose Eyes?: Exploring Racism: Reader, Text, and Context*, 1992

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- Children's Literature Review*, Volume 29, Gale (Detroit, MI), 1993.
- Gallo, Donald R., editor, *Speaking of Ourselves, Too*, National Council of Teachers of English (Urbana, IL), 1993.
- St. James Guide to Young Adult Writers*, 2nd edition, St. James Press (Detroit, MI), 1999.

Periodicals

- Booklist*, March 15, 1986, Hazel Rochman, review of *Journey to Jo'burg*, p. 1086; December 15, 1996, review of *No Turning Back*, p. 724.
- Horn Book*, September-October, 1990, review of *Chain of Fire*, p. 607; March-April, 1997, Amy Chamberlain, review of *No Turning Back*, pp. 202-203; November-December, 2001, review of *The Other Side of Truth*.

Publishers Weekly, December 16, 1996, review of *No Turning Back*, p. 60.
School Librarian, May, 1989, Maureen A. Porter, review of *Chain of Fire*, p. 75.
School Library Journal, May, 1987, Beverley Naidoo, "The Story behind *Journey to Jo'burg*," p. 43; May, 1990, Marcia Hupp, review of *Chain of Fire*, pp. 108, 113; September, 2001, Gerry Larson, review of *The Other Side of Truth*, p. 231.
Times Educational Supplement, April 26, 1985, Gillian Klein, review of *Journey to Jo'burg* and *Censoring Reality*, p. 26; March 10, 1989, Peter Hollindale, "Bound to Protest," p. B15.

Internet

"Beverley Naidoo Website," www.beverleynaidoo.com/
 "Timeline of Nigerian History,"
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Nigerian_history

General Objectives

1. To analyze the political situation in Nigeria in 1995
2. To understand why Sade's mother is killed
3. To appreciate Papa's haste in getting his children to safety
4. To trace how the children make their way in London
5. To probe the meaning of the novel's title
6. To analyze the symbolism in the novel
7. To recognize the novel's theme
8. To describe the novel's plot
9. To identify the novel's flashbacks
10. To understand the novel's ending

Specific Objectives

1. To appreciate Papa's extraordinary bravery in reporting the truth about Nigeria's military dictatorship in 1995
2. To understand how Uncle Tunde smuggles the children to safety
3. To appreciate the kindness of the foster families that help the children
4. To probe why Marcia and her gang bully Sade and how this parallels the situation between Papa and the "brass buttons"
5. To analyze why Femi shuts down and refuses to communicate
6. To explore the symbolism of the dress and purse

that Mama makes for Sade as well Sade's two statues, Iyawo and Oko

7. To assess the role of the media in saving Papa's life
8. To explore why Sade finally collapses
9. To compare and contrast Sade and Mariam
10. To determine the author's message about freedom and truth

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Beverley Naidoo's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

Flashback: a scene that breaks into the story to show an earlier part of the action. Flashbacks help fill in missing information, explain the characters' actions, and advance the plot. *The Other Side of Truth* contains a number of flashbacks that help illuminate Sade's life in Nigeria and her feelings about her mother's murder and her own exile. For instance, most of Chapter 14 is framed as a flashback as Sade relives her mother's death. The flashbacks are set off in italics to make them easy to distinguish from the rest of the text.

Style: an author's distinctive way of writing. Style is made up of elements such as word choice, sentence length and structure, figures of speech, and tone. An author may change his or her style for different kinds of writing and to suit different audiences. In poetry, for example, an author might use more imagery than he or she would use in prose. In *The Other Side of Truth*, Naidoo uses the epistolary form (letters) as well as conventional narrative text to tell her story. We see this in Chapter 30, for instance, as Papa and Sade exchange letters while he is imprisoned.

Symbolism: occurs when an image stands for something other than what was expected. The ocean, for example, may be said to symbolize "eternity" and the phrase "river to the sea" could stand for "life flowing into afterlife." In most instances the symbol does not directly reveal what it stands for; rather, the meaning must be discovered through a close reading of the literary work and an understanding of conventional literary and cultural symbols. For example, we realize that the "stars and stripes" stands for the American flag. We know this because we are told it is so, for the flag itself in no way looks like the United States. Without cultural agreement, many of the symbols we commonly accept would be meaningless. *The Other Side of Truth* is rich in symbols. Sade's beautiful dress and purse symbolize her life before her mother's death. The customs agent cuts the

purse open, symbolizing how Sade's life has been rent in pieces. Then a vagrant steals the dress and purse, symbolizing how Sade's former life is gone forever, never to be the same again.

The Importance of Setting

Most of the novel is set in London, but the key setting is Nigeria, because Nigeria controls the plot. Nigeria, officially the Federal Republic of Nigeria, is a country in West Africa and the most populous country on the African continent. Nigeria shares land borders with the Republic of Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroon in the east, Niger in the north, and borders the Gulf of Guinea in the south. Since 1991, its capital has been the centrally located city of Abuja; previously, the Nigerian government was headquartered in Lagos.

Nigeria has an extensive history, but the novel focuses on 1995. The modern Nigerian state was born on October 1, 1960, when the country declared its independence from Great Britain. Ethnic and religious tensions following independence led to the Nigerian Civil War. As a result, from 1966 until 1999, Nigeria was ruled (except the short-lived second republic, 1979-1983) by military dictators who seized power in coups and counter-coups. Nigeria re-achieved democracy in 1999 with the election of Olusegun Obasanjo as its president.

With its economy and infrastructure devastated by years of military rule, corruption, and mismanagement, Nigeria is now reforming and rebuilding itself to be a modern, prosperous nation. It is taking advantage of its position as sub-Saharan Africa's most populous country to push for a more prominent role in African and international politics. Such examples are its chairmanship of ECOWAS and the deployment of peace-keeping troops to Liberia and Sierra Leone, and the African Union with troop deployments to the Sudan. Nigeria is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.

Despite these positive developments, problems abound in Nigeria, such as endemic corruption; widespread crime, most notably the international 419 scams; and ethnic and religious strife, particularly between Christians and Muslims in the northern half of the country and insurgents in the oil-rich Niger Delta. The Niger Delta conflict is hampering Nigeria's oil production capabilities and affecting international oil prices.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Fiction

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
Jane Kurtz, *The Storyteller's Beads*
Alice Mead, *Girl of Kosovo*
Alice Mead, *Year of No Rain*
Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*
Margo Raven, *Circle Unbroken*
Deogratias Stassen, *A Tale of Rwanda*
Rebecca Tingle, *Far Traveler*
Gloria Whelan, *Listening for Lions*

Nonfiction

Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*
Floyd Cooper, *Mandela: From the Life of the South African Statesman*
Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria*
Karl Maier, *This House has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*
Eghosa Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence*
Anne Rosenberg, *Nigeria—the Culture*
Lizzie Williams, *Nigeria: The Bradt Travel Guide*
David Wisiniewski, *Sundiata: Lion King of Mali*

Audio

The Other Side of Truth

DVDs and Videos

Cry the Beloved Country
A Dry White Season
The Gods Must be Crazy
Heat of the Sun
Heart of Darkness
Life on Earth
Nowhere in Africa
Mama Africa: She's in Your Soul
Mandela: Son of Africa, Father of a Nation
Mister Johnson
National Geographic: Africa
Out of Africa
The Power of One

Internet

Beverley Naidoo Web site
<http://www.beverleynaidoo.com>
Chris Dunton, "Looking beyond Your Borders: Interview with Beverley Naidoo about ... *The Other Side of Truth*." <http://www.mg.co.za/mg/books/>
The Library Association Carnegie Medal Winner: Background on Beverley Naidoo and *The Other Side of Truth*. <http://www.la-hq.org.uk/>

Beverley Naidoo Interview
<http://www.puffin.co.uk/>

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Beverley Naidoo's *The Other Side of Truth* should include these aspects:

Themes

- bullies
- culture
- foster care
- history
- London
- maturity
- media
- murder
- Nigeria
- oppressive political regimes

Motifs

- speaking out against oppression and injustice
- living in Nigeria with a close-knit family
- witnessing your mother's murder
- being smuggled into London
- adapting to a new culture
- being bullied by classmates
- trying to hold on to your birth culture
- being cared for by benevolent foster parents
- being intimidated and murdered by military regimes
- using the media to save your father's life

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. His strong hands grip her, trying to halt the growing scarlet monster. But it has already spread down her bright white nurse's uniform. It stains the earth around them. (Chapter 1, p. 3)
(Papa is a courageous journalist who dares to write the truth about Nigeria's corrupt military dictatorship. But his courage comes at a price: repeated death threats and attempts on his life. This time, the assassins miss their mark and shoot his wife instead. She dies in his arms. This is the inciting incident in the novel that sets the

plot into motion.)

2. "Don't trouble him. Just give him a message. Tell him: if we get the family first, what does it matter?" (Chapter 1, p. 6)
(The assassins call up with this threatening message right after they kill Mama. This is Sade's first brush with the danger her parents have faced all along. She now realizes that the entire family is at risk. Readers understand that Papa must get his children to safety immediately.)
3. But when Sade looked up in the direction of the flower stall, the place where Mrs. Bankole had been standing with Mr. Bad Temper was empty. (Chapter 8, p. 52)
(Uncle Tunde hired Mrs. Bankole to escort Sade and Femi to their Uncle Dele in London. When the children arrive, however, Uncle Dele is nowhere to be found. Mrs. Bankole takes the children with her to meet her friend, whom Sade calls "Mr. Bad Temper." Mrs. Bankole then deserts the children. Readers can likely not imagine the terror that Sade and Femi feel to be all alone in a foreign country, with inadequate clothing and virtually no food or money.)
4. But what could you do when you were up against people who told powerful lies? (Chapter 23, p.136)
(Sade is being bullied by Marcia, Donna, and several of her other classmates. In this scene, the bullies destroy Sade's homework and humiliate her in front of the English teacher, Mr. Morris. Sade's situation parallels her father's, on a smaller scale, of course. Papa stands up against the bullies, but he pays a terrible price for his courage.)
5. "A Nigerian journalist, Mr. Folarin Solaja, currently being detained after attempting to enter Britain illegally, is at the center of a growing dispute." (Chapter 33, p. 201)
(Papa has managed to escape Nigeria and come to London, but he traveled on forged documents. As a result, he is being held in prison awaiting a decision on his status as an alien. Sade alerts the media to his plight, which helps mobilize action on his behalf. This shows that Sade shares her parents' intelligence and courage.)
6. I am very sorry. (Chapter 37, p. 221)
(Intimidated by Marcia's gang, Sade stole a lighter from the store owned by Mariam's uncle and mother. In this scene, she makes them a Christmas card with this apology on it. The author increases the effectiveness of the apolo-

gy by timing it to coincide with Christmas, the traditional season of forgiveness.)

7. Papa, frail and supported by Uncle Dele's arm, stood smiling in the doorway. (Chapter 41, p. 241) *(On Christmas morning, Papa appears at the Kings' home. He has been freed from jail because of Sade's courageous action in alerting the media. This is the best gift the children could have received, to know that their father is free and safe.)*
8. In an instant Femi's face crumpled and distorted in a battle against sobs and tears. (Chapter 41, p. 244) *(Papa has given Femi his Christmas gift: a pair of goalkeepers' gloves, one larger than the other. The larger one is intended for Papa; the smaller, for Femi, so they can play together. Mama bought the gloves just before she died. Femi had reacted to his mother's death, the children's exile, and their father's imprisonment by shutting down. He rarely spoke; he did not cry. The gloves and his father's safety break through his shock. Now, he can begin the long healing process.)*
9. There, gleaming against the starched white cotton, lay her own ebony Iyawo! ... It was indeed Oko! (Chapter 41, p.245) *(Sade had a cherished set of statues: Iyawo is the female statue; Oko is the male one. When she and Femi had to leave home so quickly, she was unable to take her statues with her. Papa has brought them to her. They represent her future as well as her past, the hope that one day her life will once again be complete.)*
10. The characters in this story are all fictional. However, we hear about three political figures who were real people. (Author's Note, p. 249) *(In the Author's Note, Naidoo explains that the novel incorporates fact into the fiction. For instance, Ken Saro-Wiwa was a well-known Nigerian writer who was hanged with eight other people in November 1995. They had protested that an area in Nigeria had been polluted and robbed by multinational oil companies and the military government. By blending fact into the fiction, Naidoo makes the novel seem even more realistic and compelling.)*

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is

important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. When and where does the novel take place? *(The novel opens in Nigeria in 1995 and then continues in London, England.)*
2. Why are the government assassins trying to kill Papa? *(Papa is a muckraking journalist who reveals Nigeria's corrupt military dictatorship. The assassins want him to stop writing the truth.)*
3. How do the children get to London? *(Uncle Tunde gets them false passports and hires a woman, Mrs. Bankole, to escort them on the airplane from Nigeria to London.)*
4. How does Sade help her father get released from jail? *(She contacts the media, a newscaster she calls "Mr. Seven O'Clock." This kind man alerts everyone about how Nigeria's corrupt military regime has attempted to silence Papa, killed Mama, and now tries to frame Papa for her death.)*
5. What Christmas gifts does Papa bring for Sade and Femi? *(He brings Sade her two ebony statues: the female figure of Iyawo and the male figure of Oko. Papa brings Femi two goalkeepers' gloves, one for Femi and one for himself, so they can play together.)*

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. How do you think Mrs. Bankole justifies her decision to desert the children in Victoria Station? *(Of course there is no justification for leaving the children on their own, but Mrs. Bankole no doubt feels that she was hired merely to bring them from Nigeria to London. She was not hired to care for them if their uncle did not pick them up. Further, her life might very well be in danger if she stays with the children because they might still be the targets of the corrupt Nigerian military dictatorship.)*
7. What do the dress and bag that Mama made for Sade symbolize? *(They represent love, tradition, and family. When the customs agent cuts open the bag, she is mutilating Sade's family, just as the murderers did. When the vagrant steals the dress and bag, Sade feels her last link to home slipping away.)*

8. What does the title mean?

(It represents the family's new life, with a renewed determination to help free their homeland from its cruel military dictatorship.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Did you find this novel more didactic (educational) or entertaining? Explain your answer.

(While the novel does teach a stern moral lesson—the cost of the truth as well as its vital importance—it has enough suspense to be highly entertaining. It is grim but nonetheless rich in fascinating description and detail.)

Did you find Sade a believable character? Why or why not?

(Readers are likely to find Sade believable because while she is very brave and heroic, she is also very much a typical twelve-year-old: she does not know how to handle many situations and she cries with pain and sorrow. She also gives into the bullies to save her brother, which is a realistic detail.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Explain how you would deal with a bully like Marcia.
12. Working with a partner, role-play a dialogue between Sade and Femi in which they discuss their feelings about the experiences they have undergone together.

Across the Curriculum

Language Arts

1. In an essay, explain when it might be preferable not to tell the truth.
2. The novel opens with a quotation from John Donne. Write a brief biography of Donne and explain how the quote fits the novel's themes.
3. The book is dedicated "To all young people who wish to know more." Explain what "truths" young people must know to be educated and function successfully in the world.
4. Naidoo uses many British terms, such as "queue" for line. Make a glossary of at least ten British terms and their American equivalents.
5. Mama has many aphorisms, such as "Truth keeps the hand cleaner than soap." Find six of these sayings in the novel and explain their meaning.
6. Nigeria has a rich literary heritage. Wole Soyinka, for example, is the first African Nobel Laureate and Nigeria's most famous writer and playwright. Other well-known Nigerian writers and poets include Chinua Achebe, John Pepper Clark, Ben Okri, Sonny Oti, and Ken Saro Wiwa. Choose one of the writers on this list, read one

or more of their works, and explain what you learned about Nigerian values and culture from it.

Drama

1. Gracie and Roy King make the children welcome in their home. Perform a brief skit to show how you would welcome two traumatized refugee children to America.
2. Debate whether or not Papa should have been given political asylum in England.
3. Sade is surprised to learn that her mother had feared for the family's safety, although she did not try to prevent her husband from writing the truth. In a roundtable discussion, decide whether or not Papa was correct to place his family in danger. When do the rights of the individual—if ever—outweigh a person's obligation to the survival of the group?
4. Mr. Morris writes to Sade that the producers of the news program Making News want the class to be part of a show on refugees. Work with some classmates to create this news show.
5. Imagine that you are Sade or Femi. Give a speech in which you explain your experiences as described in the novel.

Art / Music

1. When she leaves Nigeria, Sade takes a special dress and purse that her mother made for her. Make a special keepsake for someone whom you love.
2. Nigeria has been called "the heart of African music" because of its role in the development of West African highlife and palm-wine music, which fuses native rhythms with techniques imported from the Congo, Brazil, Cuba and elsewhere. Famous Nigerian musicians include Fela Kuti, Femi Kuti, King Sunny Ade, and Ebenezer Obey. Report on Nigerian music, sharing some songs that you like with the class.
3. Design a poster for a movie version of *The Other Side of Truth*.
4. Create a new cover for the novel. Be sure that your cover captures the novel's themes.
5. Write a song about the events in this novel. Your song can be any form you wish, such as a ballad or rap song.

Geography and History

1. The novel is set in part in London, one of the

greatest tourist destinations in the world.
Make a travel brochure for London.

2. Sade's name comes from the Yoruba language. Prepare a glossary of at least five Yoruba words and their definitions.
3. The novel is a mix of fact and fiction. For instance, Sade and Femi are fictional characters, but Nigerian activist writer Ken Saro-Wiwa was real and was indeed executed by the Nigerian government. On a chart, show six fictional elements in the novel and three factual ones.
4. Sade and Femi must get passports quickly. Find out how to get an American passport, including the cost.
5. Gracie and Roy King prepare Nigerian food for the children. Make some food from your cultural heritage to share with the class.
6. Nigeria's national football team, the Super Eagles, made the World Cup in 1994, 1998, and 2002. The team also won the African Cup of Nations in 1980 and 1994. Explain how European football is played and describe its popularity in Europe.

Science/Math

1. The Nigerian Film Industry (nicknamed "Nollywood") is famous throughout Africa. Many of the film studios are based in Lagos and Abuja, and the industry is now very lucrative for these cities. List the top-grossing Nigerian films in the last five years.
2. Find out what health precautions, if any, a visitor must take when traveling to Nigeria.
3. The novel is set in London and Nigeria. Calculate the distance between Nigeria and London, as well as the travel time.
4. Nigeria is widely associated with international 419 scams, fraudulent schemes to extract money from victims. Explain how these scams work and how people can protect themselves against them.
5. Nigeria, as with many developing countries, suffers from a polio crises as well as periodic outbreaks of cholera, malaria, and sleeping sickness. Choose one of these diseases and describe its symptoms, method of transmission, and treatment.
6. Make a bar graph showing the number of refugees who have come to America from any ten countries, including Africa.

Alternate Assessment

1. Write a critical review of the novel for publication in the school newspaper.
2. Draw or paint a mural showing the main events in the plot.
3. List the top five Nigerian names for boys and the top five Nigerian names for girls. Then choose one name from each column and explain its meaning.
4. Mariam is from Somalia. In a report, describe the situation in her home country in 1995.
5. Learn to speak with a British accent. Then read a page from the book in a British accent.

Vocabulary Test

Directions: Match each word in the left column from *The Other Side of Truth* with its definition in the right column.

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| _____ 1. verandah | A. uproar |
| _____ 2. verdict | B. irritable, moody |
| _____ 3. grave (adjective) | C. porch |
| _____ 4. listless | D. brusque |
| _____ 5. sullen | E. extremely important |
| _____ 6. urgent | F. serious |
| _____ 7. elegant | G. sophisticated |
| _____ 8. clamor | H. cringe, recoil |
| _____ 9. flinch | I. decision |
| _____ 10. curt | J. lacking spirit |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blanks provided.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| A. Folasade | F. Folarin |
| B. Femi Solaja | G. Mrs. Bankole |
| C. Uncle Tunde | H. Uncle Dele |
| D. Joseph | I. Mrs. Graham |
| E. Mama Buki | J. Mr. Nathan |

- _____ 1. Sade's aunt, her mother's sister
_____ 2. university professor
_____ 3. Sade's father, a newspaper reporter
_____ 4. twelve-year old Nigerian girl who becomes a refugee in London
_____ 5. the family's servant
_____ 6. ten-year-old boy who loves sports
_____ 7. woman hired to bring the children to London
_____ 8. the children's first foster mother
_____ 9. Nigerian lawyer and relative who arranges for the false passports
_____ 10. London lawyer who helps the family with immigration issues

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. The novel opens in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1995.
_____ 2. When the children are smuggled to London, Sade brings with her two heavy ebony statues that her mother made for her.
_____ 3. Mrs. Bankole, a coarse and bejeweled woman, gives Sade the name Jenny and Femi the name Robert, the names of her own children.
_____ 4. The children find their way to the London College of Art, but Uncle Dele cannot be located.
_____ 5. The children try to take shelter in an alley, but a bum chases them away and takes their bag of possessions.
_____ 6. Sade tells the social worker the entire story of their situation, including their first and last names and telephone number at home.
_____ 7. The children are enrolled in school. The teacher, Mr. Morris, pairs Sade with an immigrant from Somalia, a girl named Mariam.
_____ 8. Donna and Marcia tell Sade that if she doesn't steal a lighter from the store owned by Mariam's mother and uncle, they will beat Femi up.
_____ 9. Papa is being held in prison but is not allowed to have any visitors at all. The kids are upset that they can't see him.
_____ 10. Sade makes a Christmas card for Mariam's family and apologizes for the theft.

Part III: Quote Identification (30 points)

Briefly explain why each quote is important in the novel.

1. Sade watched them carry Mama away under a blinding-white sheet.
2. Mrs. Bankole was nowhere to be seen.

3. But what could you do when you were up against people who told powerful lies?

4. I am very sorry.

5. The characters in this story are all fictional. However, we hear about three political figures who were real people.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Identify the author's message in the novel. What is the theme of *The Other Side of Truth*?
2. Provide three details from the novel that make *The Other Side of Truth* seem to be nonfiction, even though it is really fiction.
3. Rank the difficulties Sade and Femi face from most to least difficult. Include at least five challenges they face.
4. What function do Marcia and her gang serve in the novel?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Choose the word or phrase that best completes each of the following statements.

1. The story opens in Lagos, Nigeria, in **(1995, 2005)**.
2. The customs agent in London examines Mrs. Bankole's suitcase for contraband, and finds **(food and medicine, clothing and crafts)** that she is going to resell.
3. The children find their way to **(Oxford University, London College of Art)**, where Uncle Dele works, but he cannot be located.
4. Next, the children try to take shelter in an alley, but a vagrant chases them away and takes their **(money, backpack)**.
5. Then the children go to immigration and are **(photographed, fingerprinted)**, which upsets Femi very much.
6. After Sade begins school, the teacher, Mr. Morris, pairs Sade with **(Mariam, Olude)**, an immigrant from Somalia.
7. Donna and Marcia bully Sade into stealing a **(candy bar, lighter)** from the store owned by Mariam's mother and uncle.
8. Sade decides to bring Papa's case to the attention of the newscaster she sees on television every night, the man she calls **(Television Man, Mr. Seven O'Clock)**.
9. Sade makes a **(Christmas card, fruit cake)** for Mariam's family and apologizes for the theft.
10. Kevin invites Femi to join his **(study group, sports club)**, which Femi accepts.

Part II: Matching (30 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blanks provided.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. Marcia | A. twelve-year-old Nigerian girl |
| _____ 2. Kevin Graham | B. Papa's brother; a lawyer |
| _____ 3. Mr. and Mrs. King | C. son of the children's first foster mother |
| _____ 4. Sade | D. ten-year-old Nigerian boy |
| _____ 5. Femi | E. warm, friendly social worker from Ghana |
| _____ 6. Uncle Tunde | F. kindly Jamaican foster family |
| _____ 7. Folarin Solaja | G. a journalist who writes the truth |
| _____ 8. Mrs. Bankole | H. Sade's aunt |
| _____ 9. Mama Buki | I. woman who smuggles the children to London |
| _____ 10. Mrs. Appiah | J. class bully |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the story.

1. the dress and little purse that Mama made for Sade

2. the statues of Iyawo and Oko

3. the story of the Leopard and the Tortoise

4. Femi's Christmas gift of goalkeepers' gloves

5. makeup and garish jewelry

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. How does Sade's battle with the bullies parallel her father's struggle in Nigeria?
2. Trace the novel's plot. Include the rising action, climax, and conclusion.
3. Explain why Naidoo wrote the novel. What was her purpose?
4. What role does the novel's setting play in the story? Why is the setting so important in this novel?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

- 1. C 6. E
- 2. I 7. G
- 3. F 8. A
- 4. J 9. H
- 5. B 10. D

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- 1. E 6. B
- 2. H 7. G
- 3. F 8. I
- 4. A 9. C
- 5. D 10. J

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- 1. T 6. F
- 2. F 7. T
- 3. F 8. T
- 4. T 9. F
- 5. T 10. T

Part III: Quote Identification (30 points)

1. Papa is a courageous journalist who dares to write the truth about Nigeria's corrupt military dictatorship. But his courage comes at a price: repeated death threats and attempts on his life. This time, the assassins miss their mark and shoot his wife instead. She dies in his arms. This is the inciting incident in the novel that sets the plot into motion.

2. Uncle Tunde hired Mrs. Bankole to escort the children to their Uncle Dele in London. When they arrive, however, Uncle Dele is nowhere to be found. Mrs. Bakole then takes the children with her to meet her friend, "Mr. Bad Temper," and deserts the children. Readers can likely not imagine the terror that Sade and Femi feel to be all alone in a foreign country, with inadequate clothing and virtually no food or money.

3. Sade is being bullied by Marcia, Donna, and several of her other classmates. In this scene, they destroy her homework and humiliate her in front of the English teacher, Mr. Morris. Sade's situation parallels her father's, on a smaller scale, of course. Papa stands up against the bullies, but he pays a terrible price for his courage.

4. Intimidated by Marcia's gang, Sade stole a

lighter from the store owned by Mariam's uncle and mother. In this scene, she makes them a Christmas card with this apology on it. The author increases the effectiveness of the apology by timing it to coincide with Christmas, the traditional season of forgiveness.

5. In the Author's Note, Naidoo explains that the novel incorporates fact into the fiction. For instance, Ken Saro-Wiwa was a well-known Nigerian writer who was hanged with eight other people in November 1995. They had protested that an area in Nigeria had been polluted and robbed by multinational oil companies and the military government. By blending fact into the fiction, Naidoo makes the novel seem even more realistic and compelling.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- 1. 1995
- 2. clothing and crafts
- 3. London College of Art
- 4. backpack
- 5. fingerprinted
- 6. Mariam
- 7. lighter
- 8. Mr. Seven O'Clock
- 9. Christmas card
- 10. sports club

Part II: Matching (30 points)

- 1. J 6. B
- 2. C 7. G
- 3. F 8. I
- 4. A 9. H
- 5. D 10. E

Part III: Identification (20 points)

1. Sade's beautiful dress and purse symbolize her life before her mother's death. The customs agent cuts open the purse, showing how Sade's life has been rent in pieces. Then a vagrant steals the dress and purse, showing that Sade's former life is gone forever, never to be the same again.

2. The statues of Iyawo and Oko stand for Sade's heritage and her culture. They show her that she can bring her past with her where ever she may be and never lose sight of her homeland and its values.

3. The story of the Leopard and the Tortoise symbolizes the importance of keeping up the struggle

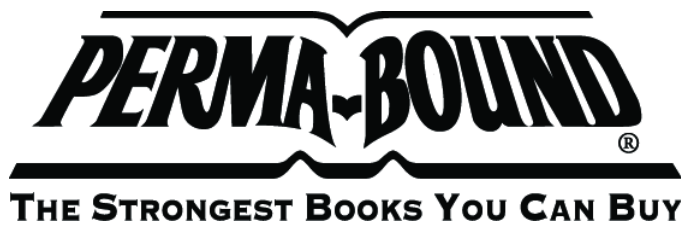
for freedom and truth.

4. Mama bought the gloves before her death. There is one for Femi and a larger one for Papa. The gift reminds Femi of what he has lost through exile and he finally breaks down and cries. He will now be able to heal and to move on to make a new life in London.

5. Mrs. Bankole wears a lot of makeup, especially lipstick, and garish jewelry. Mama, in contrast, wore neither. The makeup and jewelry serve as shorthand for a cheap and untrustworthy woman.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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