Int. j. adv. multidisc. res. stud. 2026; 6(5):700-702

Received: 28-07-2026
Accepted: 08-09-2026

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

Reflecting the Times: Style and Setting in Chimamanda Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus*

[1] Chidiebere Godwill Enyia, [2] Damian Chibueze Onah, [3] Joseph John Angulu, [4] Nyeche Linda Chituru, [5] Akinbinu Paul Olarewaju, [6] Nwadike Maria-Jane Chinasaokwu, [7] Nwachukwu Ebere Mercy

[1] Department of English and Literary Studies, Hezekiah University, Umudi, Nkwere, Imo State, Nigeria
[2] Department of Medical Laboratory Science, University of Nigeria Enugu Campu, Enugu State, Nigeria
[3] Department of Languages and Communication Studies, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria
[4] Department of English and Communication Art, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria
[5] Department of Linguistics and Literary Studies, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria
[6] Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria
[7] Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbaram Campus, Anambra State, Nigeria

DOI: https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049X.2026.6.5.6905
Corresponding Author: **Chidiebere Godwill Enyia**

Abstract

Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus of* 2003 set in postcolonial Nigeria during the 1980s and 1990s when the wounds of Coups and Military dictatorship in Nigeria held sway. It is a novel whose subject Matter is largely focused on the experience of a Nigerian Family, a time of political and social turmoil. The novel is a bildungsroman that focuses greatly on family relationships as well as religious and cultural ideas. For instance, the passage describing Kambili and Jaja's first meal at their Aunt's house in Nsukka provides a stark contrast to the oppressive atmosphere in Enugu as a result of her father's abusive nature. Also the freedom and vibrancy of Aunty Ifeoma's household despite their financial limitations bewilders Kambili while lifting the restrictions on her life and exposing her to radically diverse values and beliefs. In this regard Adichie foreshadows the development of Kambili's character through the immense contrast between her own house and the Nsukka households. This style in the novel is creatively powered with lots of literary imageries and devices that help the message in the novel to be refreshing and current.

Keywords: Postcolonial Nigeria, Family Relationships, Religious and Cultural Conflict, Character Development, Military Dictatorship

Introduction

It is important to note that Adichie emphasizes the symbolic setting and style in this passage to powerfully convey the disparity in attitudes of Kambili, Aunty Ifeoma's family, and Eugene Family [1]. In this novel, Adichie explore themes of abuse, oppression and religious and cultural conflict to express her disatisfactions with gender oppression, male dominance and female exploitation. The setting of the novel is primarily in the city of Enugu in the eastern Nigeria, Abba and Nsukka are also mentioned in the novel as the story progressed. This setting is symbolic and carries a lot of meaning in regards to the novel's message. However the specific time or period of the events in the novel were not explicitly stated but it is likely set in the late 1980s or early 1990s. It is important to note that the time of the setting of Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus* explores the period of political unrest and instability in Nigeria and how this conflict affects the lives of the characters in the novel, particularly the Achike family. In terms of the subject Matte and style, one of the main themes explored in *Purple Hibiscus* is the impact of religious and cultural conflict on individuals and families. The Achike family is at the centre of the story because the events of the novel revolve around them. The setting of *Purple Hibiscus* is not just a backdrop for the characters experiences but it also plays a major role in shaping their identities and world views.

Adichie's Novel

Adichie's Novel is set in both the physical and temporal settings of Enugu, Nigeria during the late 1990s. The physical setting of Enugu is characterized by its typical climate, lush vegetation and sprawling urban landscape.it is also a city that is shaped by its colonial past and recent history of political turmoil. The temporal setting of Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus* is significant because it takes place during a period of great political instability in Nigeria. This instability is reflected in the characters' lives and in the events of the story. It is pertinent to note that the setting of this novel provides a back drop for the characters experiences and helps to create a sense of tension and urgency. For instance, one of the main themes of the novel is the conflict between traditional values and modernity. This conflict is reflected in the setting of Enugu, which is a city that is caught between its traditional roots and its modern aspirations. This tension is reflected in the characters' lives and in the events of the story. For example, Kambili's struggle to reconcile her own desires with her father's expectations is a reflection of this larger conflict.

Political and Religious Conflict in the novel

The political and religious conflict in the novel affects the characters through the character of Papa; father of the family and the husband of Beatrice. Papa is a devout Catholic and a very religious man who believes in the importance of family honour and respect. However his strict adherence to these values leads to violence and abuse within the family. This conflict is further intensified by the fact that papa is a wealthy and influential man in Enugu and he uses his power and influence to control and manipulate others. In this regard, the setting of Enugu adds to the sense of Pressure and conflict in the novel.

For instance, Enugu is a contemporary city in Nigeria that has been affected by colonialism, and the resulting cultural and religious conflicts. This is reflected in the relationship between Eugene Achike's father known as Papa Nnukwu and his son Eugene who do not believe in the traditional religion of his father and sees him as hearten. Also, the character of Aunty Ifeoma who is a University lecturer and a convert to Catholicism is quite illustrative. Aunty Ifeoma's experiences and perspective are shaped by her background and the history of Enugu. She is the ideal woman of the 21st century while Beatrice may be understood as the African woman of the past. For example Aunty Ifeoma education makes her unconstrained by convention, making her an enlightened, bold and a strong woman whom other women aspire to become. Aunty Ifeoma's character and education is symbolic in the novel. The author adopts this style of contrast between Aunty Ifeoma and Beatrice the wife of Eugene Achike to portray a silent point on women emancipation and liberation. Her character projects womanhood in a positive light. This is exemplified when she says, she considered stuffing sand into the mouth of a woman who accused her of killing her husband and her "unconventional" stance on marriage (She does not believe a woman should endure an abusive marriage) Aunty Ifeoma upholds female personalities which the patriarchal structure represented by Eugene has repressed.

Another way that the setting of Enugu affects the characters is through the city's economic and social conditions. Enugu is a city that has experienced both prosperity and poverty, and this is reflected in the experiences of the characters. For instance, papa's family is wealthy and has a large house and servants, while Aunty Ifeoma's family is not as well off and leaves in a more modest home. The economic and social disparities in Enugu also contributed to the tension and conflict between the characters. One more example of how the setting of Enugu affects the characters is through the presence of the Military. The Military has a large presence in the city and it is often seen as source of power and authority. This is reflected in the character of Papa who has connections with the military and uses this to exert his control over others. The Military Presence in the novel also creates a sense of fear and insecurity among the characters, as they are never sure when or if violence will erupt.

Annalisa Oboe's article "The politics of Reading and Writing in Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus*, explores the subject matter and setting of *Purple Hibiscus* in an insightful manner: "The novel is set in Enugu, Nigeria, a post-colonial city that bears the scars of the Civil War of the late 1960s and which was one of the cradles of the Biafran Separatist Movement in the late 1960s [3]. The historical background of the novel is that of a city that was already scared by past violence and military regimes, which are still am important and lonely presence in the novels plot" (126). The article discusses how the novel is set against the backdrop of political oppression and how this affects the characters ability to express themselves.

In a similar vein, Sandra Abosede Oluwole's article "Writing about colonialism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus* is apt and pertinent. The article explores the ways in which Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's novel *Purple Hibiscus* deals with the legacy of colonialism in Nigeria [2]. Oluwole [2] argues that Adichie uses the novel to highlight the ways in which colonialism has had a lasting impact on the country's economy, politics and culture. Thus, Oluwole [2] remarks that; Adiche's use of the setting of a large city in post-colonial era is crucial to her interrogation of the legacy of colonialism. The setting of Enugu, a city known for its coal mines and industry reflects the historical realities of Nigeria. Adiche's depiction of life in the city, the frustration of its inhabitants ad their struggle to adjust to the changes brought by the Colonial era, reflects the historical and cultural realities of Nigeria (127).

It is significant to note that Adichie's writing is powered by a definable purpose and style which makes the structure, grammar, sytax and the lexicon words in the novel insightful. Also, the novel reflects the experiences of Women and Children in postcolonial Nigeria. Thus, Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus* is important for understanding the complex history and legacy of colonialism and military dictatorship in Nigeria. Adiche's choice of setting is very significant in all ramifications. The novel explores the aesthetics of metaphor in the setting of the novel which makes the work unique. For instance, Adiche's description of the horrible conditions in papa Nnukwu's home supports the view that the colonial economy ruined the lives of many Nigerians. The protagonist's grandfather whom Adichie called papa Nnukwu lost everything as a result of the economic changes and instability of the civil war. The author's descriptions of the squalor and gloom of the grandfather's home, his health problems and his inability to live a life of dignity are al linked to the cruelty of the British colonial government.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the subject matter is centered on themes of family, tradition and Faith. The novel follows the story of Kambili, a young girl who is living in a strict traditional family with his father, Eugene who is a wealthy business man; Kambili's father is extremely religious and believes that

strict discipline and control are the only ways to raise his children. However, this strict control has a negative impact on Kambili and her brother, Jaja. They are forced to keep their true thoughts and feelings hidden and they are not allowed to have any autonomy or freedom. This creates an atmosphere of fear and tension in the family. It is important to note that the subject Matter of the novel is developed through the setting. One of the main themes of the novel is the conflict reflected in the oppression of women and gender inequality which the author criticizes through the character of Aunty Ifeoma and Jaja. This tension is reflected in the characters' lives and in the events of the story. For instance, Kambili's struggle to reconcile her own desires with he father's expectations is a reflection of this theme of women oppression.

Another aspect of papa's identity and power is his adherence to traditional Nigerian values, especially those related to family honour and respect. He sees himself as the head of the family and expects his children to follow his strict rules and expectations. Any deviation from theses Norms seen as betrayal and can result in severe punishment. This is seen mostly in the character of Kambili, and Beatrice papa's daughter and wife respectively. Kambili is not allowed to express herself or question her father's authority likewise Beatrice the wife of Eugene Achike whom she physically abused constantly.

It is instructive to note that the Adiche's setting in *Purple Hibiscus* reflects the historical and cultural realities of Nigeria, including its history of colonialism and its struggle for independence. The characters in the novel are also affected by these realities, as they grapple with issues such as identity, religion and abuse. The novel suggests that these issues are not unique to Nigeria but are universal experience of people in post-colonial African societies. The setting also highlights the brutality of a rigid Zealous father and the evils of a dictatorial military junta. One striking feature of the novel is its simplicity; Adiche employs simple and straight formal language to communicate her tragic idea o a wealthy Nigerian Family as it breaks up tragically. Her use of language is very superb. The description of event, incidents, character, setting, acting ad atmosphere in the novel is very vivid and realistic.

Conclusion

Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus* explores themes of gender and social inequality in Nigeria through the experience of the Female protagonist Kambili, Beatrice and aunty Ifeoma. These characters reveal the complexities and constraints of women's lives in postcolonial Nigeria and ways in which the experiences of women are shaped by patriarchal norms and economic and social structures.

References

1. Adichie. Chimamanda Ngozi *Purple Hibscus.* London: Penguin Books, 2003.
2. Oluwole SA. Writing About colonialism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus*. Research in African Literature. 2016; 42(2):123-136.
3. Oboe Annalisa. The politics of Reading and Writing in Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus.* Journal of Literary Studies. 2010; 26(1):1-15.