

# Ajoda.

*Start with party song and dance celebrating Theresa's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday*

James        Welcome everyone. We're here to celebrate Mummy's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Joining us are her children and her grandchildren. *(To Theresa)*

Remy         Mummy, we're happy to be here with you to honour your life. We all wish we knew the secret of your vitality and your enjoyment of life? *(To audience)*

Nicholas     This joyous occasion has given us all the opportunity to think back over our own lives and we want to share some of our reflections with you.

*Everyone introduces themselves one at a time saying:*

My name is .....  
I was born in 19...  
I grew up in ..... *(pointing to the place on the map)*

Georgina     We have all been remembering our grandparents. They were very important figures in our lives.

Agnes        My grandmother lived in Lagos. I went to church with her. She was very religious. I loved her very much. She was very affectionate and told traditional stories. She was a good cook and I longed for her food. She was very hard-working, selling fabric and clothing at the market. I used to run errands for her when she was working there.

Modupe      My grandmother was a big business woman with her own shop. I loved her although she was very strict. She was very religious, and followed almost Judaic customs. No smoke from the fire on Sundays as there was no cooking, only cold food.

Theresa      My grandmother was rich, very elegant and very religious, but very loving with us children. I went to market with her. She would give me money to buy things as a special treat. I wore the farthing coins on a string around my neck.

Elizabeth    My grandmother had a tattoo on her arm with her parents' name on as it was war-time and it would stop her from being stolen away. My grandmother did her hair elaborately once a week.

Remy         My grandmother was a farmer all her life. She never liked the city life. We went from Ibadan, a big busy city where we lived, for 4 weeks every year in the school holidays. When we went

there, we helped with the planting and we enjoyed it., because we were not doing it every day. Village life was so different from city life.

*All sing Farming song (Iwe ki ko)*

*Grandpa sitting down in shop/front room, looking out at passers-by and looking out for the grandchildren. Grandma bustling and busy cooking.*

Grandpa      When are the grandchildren coming? They are late?

Grandma      They have a long way to come from the city. They'll be here soon.

*The children arrive and Grandma and Grandpa sing welcome song: "Kabo". The children kneel for a blessing and give presents. Grandma then fetches Cola and one of the children breaks it and offers blessings on his grandmother and the family.*

Grandma      Thank you children. Now, how are your parents? Are they well?

Child 1      Yes, they are well and they send their love and some money. They hope you are not working too hard on the farm.

Grandpa      We like to have the fresh food and the farming is a kind of exercise that keeps us young and fit.

Grandma      *(to one of the children)* Go to fetch water from the stream. Take the calabash.

Grandpa      *(to the other child)* You see how the new building in the village is progressing? I sit and watch it growing everyday. How are you doing at school?

Child 2      I came top of the class.

Grandpa      Good. Brilliant.

Child 1      *(carrying calabash)* Here is the water. I didn't spill any.

Grandma      *(bringing food)* Good. Today we are having okra soup and dough balls made from yam and garri.

Grandpa      *(blessing the food)* Father, we thank you for this reunion, for bringing our grandchildren safely from the city. We ask you to sanctify this food and help it to nourish our bodies. Amen.

*Everyone washes their hands. There is very whole-hearted eating with sauce and dipping. Everyone eats from the same pot.*

Grandma      Cover up your best clothes and don't drip on them.

*They finish the meal and the children clear away.*

Child 1      Can we stay for the whole week?

Grandpa      No, but I'll ask your parents to bring you again for the next festival. Now we must catch a chicken for you to take home with you.

*They go outside where Gran and Grandpa help the children to catch a chicken. The children hug their grandparents and wave goodbye.*

*Everyone sings "We go to our classes with clean hands and faces" as they get into their school positions.*

Theresa      Most of our teachers were white, especially in the Catholic schools. We learnt all about Britain, its history and its culture.

Teacher      Good morning class.

Children      Good morning teacher.

Teacher      Sit down and open your books. We have been studying about William Shakespeare and I want each of you to name me one of his plays.

Student 1    Hamlet

Student 2    Macbeth

Student 3    Othello

Student 4    Midsummer Nights Dream

Student 5    King Lear

Student 6    Richard the Third

Teacher      Well done class. And now for a history test. Let us look at the Kings and Queens of England starting with the Tudors. Henry the seventh and then .....

Student 1    Henry VIII. He had 6 wives.

Student 2    and many concubines!

Teacher      That's enough of that thank you! Who followed Henry the eighth?

- Student 3 Edward the sixth, but he died very young.
- Student 4 Then Mary Queen of Scots but her sister chopped her head off.
- Student 5 Elizabeth the first – The virgin queen.
- Teacher Well done class. Now I want to hear about what you want to do after you leave school. Some of you might even be going to study in England perhaps.
- James I want to be an accountant and work with money.
- Remy I saw my mum take money out at the Standard Bank and I thought that would be a good place to work, so I want to be a banker.
- Theresa I want to be a secretary and wear smart clothes. I want to work for a big boss and sit chatting in the office.
- Agnes I want to be a nurse because I enjoy looking after people, young children and old people.
- Modupe I want to be a teacher. I would like to gather children around me and help them to learn and watch them grow up.
- Bart I would like to be a lawyer or an architect with a big car.
- Teacher You will all have to work very hard if you want to go to England to study and to bring honour to your families.

*Everyone sings "Goodbye Teacher, Goodbye Friends" as they clear the school scene.*

- Nicholas We all have memories of leaving Africa and our families to study in England.
- Theresa *(to Remy)* Your father is a highly respected gentleman in our community. You must make sure you keep up to that standard. He is respected because he loves helping people and above all he is very keen on education. This is why he is sending you to England to go and study. When you get to England, try to learn their culture. They are well-dressed and well-mannered. That is what I want you to bring back to me. I'll be missing you and I know you'll be missing me, missing my cooking, your sisters and brothers, but it's only three years. I want you to have it in mind that you go there to study, to learn a trade and to bring it back. Then you can buy a car and a house for yourself and a car for me.

- Margaret My brother, take Mummy's advice. Remember whose son you are. Keep to your studies. In any country there are many groups, good and bad. Stay with the good groups. We will all miss you, so come back and we'll all be happy. God be with you and abide with you.
- Remy I'll miss you. Thank you for all your advice and your help over the years. I'll work hard and in due course I'll come back. I'll be waiting for and expecting your letters and I'll write to you. I can't wait to go to England.
- Theresa I am giving you money which I have saved for years. Spend it wisely. I am not a young woman any more. Finish your studies in record time and come back to me. God bless you.
- Margaret Here's a warm jacket. Put it on before you get off the plane because it will be cold in England.
- Georgina For girls there were opportunities to study, but our parents were also thinking about finding us good husbands.
- Esther I'm going to study nursing so I can take care of people. I've made this decision. I want your blessing.
- Elizabeth Daughter, the Lord will protect you wherever you go. Do whatever they want you to do. In three years you will come back home and I'll be very proud of you.
- Bart Be a good girl. If three years is too much and you want to get married you can come back, but 3 years is not so much if you can make it. I will keep my eyes open for a nice lawyer or a doctor, but I think a doctor, so you can work together in the hospital. Now, I'm not going to let you go without organising a celebration. Everyone will join in dancing and singing, so you remember your home.

*Everyone sings Irin Ajo Lawa Yi song as a suitcase is brought on and everyone stands around it. As they list the items they mime placing them in the case.*

- Georgina These are some of the things we took with us on our journeys
- James A warm coat
- Elizabeth A small carved figure (Ife bronze, a symbol of Yoruba), a gift from my grandmother
- Samuel Food for journey and dried food
- Esther The Holy Bible in Yoruba

- Theresa      A photograph of my mother smiling to cheer her up
- Remy        A photo of my family... a whole family portrait and a mirror from the hall at home
- Bart         A blanket
- Nicholas    An umbrella to keep the snow off
- Remy        A leather suitcase (made from crocodile skin)

*People take placards out of the case with people's names on and hold them up. Georgina fastens and picks up the suitcase.*

- Georgina    When we came, we came to study and then go back home to work in Africa. Some of us came to do our nursing training. When we arrived, by ship or plane, we were met and welcomed.
- Agnes        When we arrived in England, we were very warmly received and escorted. People were holding up signs with our names on placards. We were greeted and we were taken straight to our reserved accommodation.

Welcomer 1 I am from the British Council. You are very welcome.

Welcomer 2 I am from the Girl Guides. I came to wish you good luck with your studies in England.

Welcomer 3 I am from the Christian Missionary Society. Let me show you where you need to catch your train.

*The placards are put away and people pull out their letters.*

Modupe     My dear Mummy,  
 This is just to let you know that we arrived. I'm happy to tell you that we had to have an exam for admission the following day and we excelled. We did very well, me and my sister, even better than most of the English girls.  
 These girls they haven't got any experience about African people at all. After the first lecture we were all washing our hands and the English girls are watching me. One of them suddenly jumped up "She is going white – look at her palms - she is changing into a white girl." So I said "What is this? everyone coming around me and dancing? What is the problem?" She said, "Look at your hand!" and I said, "My hand has always been like this".

Agnes        Dear Mummy.

Can you believe that the very first day I came, I went into my bed and the cold was so much that I said to myself “Oh, somebody must have put water into this bed”. I pulled off all the blankets and I was looking. “Who must have done this?” Then I realised there was no water. So the next day, when the nursing sister came round, she said “You need a water bottle to put in your bed before you go in it”.

- Bart            Dear Mummy,  
I miss you. I’ve got an English Mummy here who is looking after me. She is always looking for some ways to please me so that I don’t miss home very much. She got me a gas heater. I always keep it close to me because it’s so cold, but one day I didn’t know that my trousers caught fire. The only thing I saw was smoke coming up and then my trousers were on fire. It was terrible.
- Theresa        Dear Mummy.  
Britain is not as beautiful as we hoped. The roads, they are not paved with gold and we didn’t see the queen. My landlady , she’s very stingy. I am always hungry. She has a cat and a dog inside the house. You know I don’t like cats and dogs.  
Oh Mama, I’m missing you. I miss my home. Mama, it is very cold!!
- Felix            Dear Mummy,  
Contrary to your fear, we got here safe. I met up with friends from Nigeria and we travelled all the way to Wales. When we got there we were hungry and we looked for somewhere to eat but as soon as we arrived, all the lady servers ran away. We stood for nearly ten minutes and there was nobody. Maybe they’d never seen a black person before and they were frightened. Eventually one of them plucked up the courage and came out and asked us what we wanted. We point at this and that. Do you know what I put on my food? Because I was nervous? I wanted salt – I put sugar. You just lost yourself. You were that nervous. They made us feel so unwelcome.
- Georgina      My dear Papa,  
This is a new place and it’s different from Nigeria. The cold! And this is supposed to be spring. We went and we got top clothes and vests and everything. By the time we are finished dressing we will weigh so heavily. Apart from that, everything is fine. I’ll write to you again, God Bless you. Goodbye.
- James         We were invited into British homes for Christmas when we were students. For me, that was when I was studying at what is now called Metropolitan University.

- Elizabeth My first Christmas in London was very cold with a lot of snow. I woke up in the morning and went to collect my bottle of milk at the door. I could not open the door, so I rang the landlady and told her I was not able to get out. She rang the fire brigade who came to get rid of the snow. In the afternoon, my landlady invited me for a Christmas dinner, roast turkey and a bottle of wine to go with it.
- Bart Christmas 1962. My landlady told me it was the worst winter in a decade. I went to watch people shopping and to see the decorations. In Nigeria we don't have decorations, and we do shopping, but mainly for the family. It's a time to have new clothes to wear on Christmas Day to the service. In London I found the streets were extra quiet with nobody about, snow all over and very cold.  
My landlady gave me Christmas dinner at home. After the meal I had nothing to do. I was sad and cold so I covered up in bed. For me Christmas that year started and finished on 25<sup>th</sup> December. At home it would have continued for a week.
- Everyone sings a Christmas Carol (Oh come all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant..... merging into the African song Elu ago go, as the suitcase is brought back on.*
- Agnes After we finished our studies, our parents wanted us to come back to Africa. They want to see you and they find jobs for you.
- James When we went back to Africa at the end of our studies, we bought gifts for ourselves and our families.
- Bart Walking stick you could sit down on for my father.
- Modupe Shoes and bags
- Remy Gas lamp because of interrupted electricity supply
- Elizabeth Jewellery, pendants and ear-rings
- Theresa An Imperial typewriter
- Remy We all came back to Africa to work and brought with us our experiences in England. I learned how important it is to turn your hand to everything and not just order people about.
- James We all worked in different fields in the new independent Nigeria which was born in 1960. It was a time of growth and development. Nigeria was building universities, schools, roads, everything and I was involved. Those who had studied in England had a lot to offer.



*Group arrange themselves for the 'These Hands' sequence*

- James            These hands have worked in construction. Supervising the building of roads and houses, schools and universities.
- Margaret        These hands have worked to design a university kitchen, and train the staff that fed the university.
- Bart              These hands have trained a new generation of civil servants in Nigeria.
- Remy             These hands have counted money and managed staff in banks.
- Esther            These hands were the first Nigerian woman's hands to professionally photograph weddings and ceremonies and prime ministers.
- Theresa            These hands have typed 80 words a minute and written shorthand at 120 words per minute. These hands have rocked children and cooked and run youth clubs.
- Elizabeth        These hands have travelled and bought and sold shoes and bags and earrings.
- Nicholas         As we got older, many of us decided to return to England. This was not always an easy decision.

*Scene 1*

- Husband         I am considering going back to England, at least for a while. I plan to stay for about three years and this is why I have called this family gathering.
- Wife              Well darling, I am surprised. You want to leave me alone with the children? This is the time we need to be together to bring up these children. To make matters worse, you are leaving me. What if you find another woman in England? Then you would forget us and abandon us.
- Son                Mum, I am on your side. I am very surprised that you have not even told Mum about this before this family meal. You should bring Mummy and all of us along, or is there something overseas that you do not want us to know about?
- Husband         We have family in America, Amsterdam and England. I want to visit them. It's easy to fly from Europe to America, just a short flight, so we can all be in touch. Perhaps I'll go just for one year and see how things go.

- Daughter I hope Daddy will send us nice clothes and jeans. I'm going to tell all my friends, "Daddy's abroad." So I hope you'll send me nice shoes so I can show off. Don't let me down.
- Wife You'll need to send us some money. I'm still working, but the salary will not be enough for the expenses. I'll have to pay the rent, the school fees and school uniforms. We have to eat, and remember grandma, your mother, is here. I'll have to look after her as well.
- Grandma I want to be hearing from you from time to time. You know that I'm getting old. I would not like to die while you are away. So go as quickly as possible and come back soon.
- Son Daddy, I've heard so much about England and I want to come with you now.
- Father You must finish your secondary schooling first. Then you can study further in England and it will be easy for you to pursue any profession you wanted to. So stay home and finish your school studies first. I'll send for you at the proper time. For the moment, I'll send you nice shoes and you can go to church and show them to your friends. Tell them your daddy lives in England.
- Daughter I'd like to come too. I could look after you over there. I don't want you to forget me.
- Mother Don't worry. He won't forget you. He'll come back. And I'll wait for you husband.

*Women sing "My bonnie lies over the ocean, my bonnie lies over the sea...."*

London scene:

Remy My father had bought me a new house and car in Africa and wanted me to stay, but I wanted to come back to England. I had a wife here and all my children were born here. They have all been to my home in Africa and none of them like it. They don't speak African languages. My children could not survive out there to be honest. There is nothing for them there. It's just the past for them.

*London street scene with sounds 'Standard, Standard' .... 'West End Final'.....'Going for a song. Get your bananas here'.... 'The next train on platform 2 is delayed'..... 'Nee-naw, nee-naw' .... Squealing brakes..... Umbrellas and rain sounds.*

Remy I had been missing the sight of the red bricks in Brixton. When I came back I rushed out of the station to see the brick buildings. When I was away, I really missed it severely. If you are fed up with London you are fed up with life.

- James            So Adventure brought us here. Old age has caught up with us. Now we are here to enjoy our retirement.
- Tunde            My daughter is living in England. She called my wife to come over to help her care for the grandchildren. So, OK, I cannot live alone so I thought I shall have to follow her and do whatever. And we have been enjoying it here.
- Modupe          I get involved with many groups, especially the over 50s group. I'm the only Nigerian there, others are from Sierra Leone and Ireland and England. We meet every week, have lunch and play bingo and sometimes we have a coach outing. One way and another, we have a social life. And of course I've always been very active in the church.
- James            Speaks about being a victim support volunteer and his work in the magistrate's court .....
- Nicholas        Something about Ajoda and their social network and activities and the importance of being together with fellow-Africans.... And every week, we meet for keep fit exercises.

*Short burst of exercise class to keep fit*

- Remy            We have made our lives here now and we enjoy them. When you live here as a minority and put your heart into this place, you are welcome. I love the discipline of the winter, when you work hard and eat well and dress well. When we meet fellow Africans we sing and dance and eat together.
- Theresa          Africans are happy people and we like to celebrate our culture in song and dance.
- James            This year we celebrated Mamma's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was a very special occasion. Congratulations to Mummy on an amazing life and thanks to her for reminding us that we all need to remember and celebrate our long lives both in Nigeria and here in England

*Final song Shay shay*