TOMORROW IS TOO FAR

By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
‘Tomorrow is Too Far’, is a reflective story, told in second person perspective by a female narrator, whom looks back on the events of several of her childhood summer’s spent with her Grandma in Nigeria. The story is not linear and switches back and forth through the different events of the summers and to present day. It tells of the summer of her older brother, Nonso’s, death and the impact it had on the narrator herself, the her family. As it is revealed the narrator caused her brothers death, by challenging him to climb a tree and then scaring him by telling him there was a snake, “echi eteka”, the ‘Tomorrow is Too Far Snake’. Having to keep the secret about the brothers death ultimately breaks up her family and puts more distance between them all.
CHARACTERS

- Unnamed female narrator
- Nonso – narrator’s older brother
- Dozie – cousin of Nonso/Narrator
- Grandmama – Nonso/Narrator
- Mother – Nonso/Narrator
- Father – Nonso/Narrator
- Mgbechibelije – Dozie’s Mother
THEMES

- Empowerment
- Family
- Gender – Patriarchal views
- Regret
- Violence
KEY QUOTES

■ “She didn’t show you, because she said girls never plucked coconuts.” (pg. 188)
■ “...You asked Grandmama why Nonso sipped first even though Dozie was thirteen, a year older than Nonso [...] Grandmama said Nonso was her son’s only son [...] the one who would carry on the Nnabuisi name.” (pg. 188)
■ “You knew Grandmama had never liked your mother [...] That black American woman has tied up my son and put him in her pocket.” (pg. 190)
■ “When she went into Nonso's room to say good night, she always came out laughing the laugh. Sometimes you pressed your ears to keep the sound out [...] She never left your room with that laugh.’ (pg. 190)
■ “That word – ‘hate’ – hangs in the air between you both like an accusation.” (pg. 192)
■ “Even at ten you knew that some people can take up too much space by simply being, that existing, some people can stifle others.” (pg. 195)
■ Dozie’s word - "hate" - floats around in your head now. Hate. Hate. Hate. The word makes it difficult to breathe.”(pg. 196)
■ “What did you want, that summer, what did you want?” (pg. 197)
The narrator is crying for herself more than Nonso. She obviously deeply regrets her actions and now has to live with the guilt that she bestowed upon herself when she was young and ignorant, when she couldn’t deal with being the ‘invisible’ sister any longer. Her going back and reflecting on the memories, show her obvious guilt as she, in the end, caused her family to be torn apart. Now that she is older she truly understands that her actions as a young girl, had consequences, consequences she can see now.
The second person narrative allows the reader and the narrator to connect to one another. With this connection the story becomes more personal, and the reader goes through the events and emotions that the narrator experiences. This also allows the reader to have visceral reactions to the narrator’s actions, allowing them to understand, empathise with the narrator or even condemn the narrator.
THE DYNAMICS OF THIS EXTENDED FAMILY. SHOW THE RELATIONSHIP AND INTERACTIONS.
CAN WE EXCUSE OR UNDERSTAND THE NARRATOR’S ACTIONS? WHY?

- This is really comes down to personal opinion. The readers are able to connect to the story a lot more easier with the narrative being told in second person. But whether they identify with her situation is truly a matter of opinion. The less the reader feels connected to the story, the less-likely the actions of the narrator are seen as justifiable.
IN ELIMINATING NONSO, WAS LIFE BETTER FOR THE NARRATOR? WHY?

- The narrator wanted the recognition/love her grandma gave to Nonso, she killed her brother. Although she regretted it, for a while she was happy because she got what she wanted. But soon everyone faded away from her so she was left alone. Though she carried around regret and guilt, her life was relatively easy, not better or worse.
CULTURALLY, WE SEE THE REASON NONSO IS GIVER PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT. HOW HAS THIS IMPACTED THE NARRATOR, BEING HIS ‘INVISIBLE’ SISTER?

- As being the ‘invisible’ sister, this impacts the narrator greatly, as the story focuses on the patriarchal values of the grandma. As the men have the power, and are more preferred, whereas the narrator has less opportunity. As a consequence when she was younger, she acted out for attention/recognition from her grandma and parents as they had paid more attention to Nonso.
WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS OF THIS STORY? ARE THERE ANY WEAKNESSES?

- The weaknesses are the family’s weak bond with each other, as they all love Nonso, and ultimately, his death, tears their family apart. This leaves the narrator and Dozie with a lot of regrets, and the mother and father in divorce. One of the strengths within the story is the family’s strength and durability, as they go through devastating times.