Dancing with Strangers: Stories from Africa

Before Reading

BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES (PAGE 60)

ACTIVITY 1  BEFORE READING AFTER EKATERINA
Open answers. Encourage discussion.

ACTIVITY 2  BEFORE READING BREAKING LOOSE
Encourage discussion around these statements. Numbers 1 and 4 are in fact definitions from the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary.

ACTIVITY 3  BEFORE READING REMEMBER ATITA
Encourage students to discuss and speculate, but do not confirm their guesses or predictions at this stage. Factual answers are given below for your information only.
1 Two.
2 One is dead, one is ill.
3 She recognizes Laker at once, and remembers her well, but Laker doesn’t remember Atita until the end of the story.
4 Yes, one.
5 No.
6 Love and friendship.
7 Mostly happy because Atita finds Laker, who finally remembers her.

ACTIVITY 4  BEFORE READING A GATHERING OF BALD MEN
Accept any answers, asking students to give reasons for their decisions.

After Reading

ACTIVITY 1  AFTER READING
1 Tom Ranger, in A Gathering of Bald Men. He has just entered the bar on the corner of Pretoria Street and seen Caleb, looking very depressed.
2 Ekaterina, in Ekaterina. She is in the main hall of the airport building at Johannesburg, and has just seen the man she has married by proxy, Savvas Athanassiades.
3 Okema, in Remember Atita. Atita has just returned from the hospital, where she has seen Laker for the first time since their childhood.
4 Daniel (Professor Akoto), in Breaking Loose. He has just been thrown out of Yasmin’s father’s funeral by Yasmin’s mother, who is furious with him for trying to have a relationship with her daughter.

ACTIVITY 2  AFTER READING
Suggested answers:
MARCIA: You’re looking unhappy, Nothando. What’s up?
NOTHANDO: It’s Caleb. I’m worried about him.
MARCIA: Why, what’s the matter with him?
NOTHANDO: Well, this morning he found a bald patch on top of his head.
MARCIA: A bald patch? How big was it?
NOTHANDO: Very small – the size of a coin.
MARCIA: Oh dear! So what did he say when he discovered this very small bald patch?
NOTHANDO: He was in the bathroom and he screamed like a madman! I almost dropped my coffee!
MARCIA: Just like a man! They think a little thing like that is the end of the world. What did you say to him?
NOTHANDO: Well, of course, I told him that baldness just showed how strong and sexy he was!
MARCIA: Well, you’re right. Caleb’s got nothing to worry about. He’s looking great these days!
NOTHANDO: Yes, I know. But he was very upset about it, I can tell.
MARCIA: Was he? I’m sure he’ll get used to it soon. He’ll forget all about it by lunchtime, I expect.
NOTHANDO: No, I don’t think so. He was so upset that he forgot to take his mobile phone to work with him.

ACTIVITY 3  AFTER READING
Suggested answers:
1 These words come from Breaking Loose.
2 The hidden word is DIGGING.
3 It is important in the story because Daniel says that modern writers are digging deep, going back to their beginnings to gain inspiration. He is also trying to do that in his own writing. Influenced by him, Yasmin also tries to dig deep, finding out all she can about her own culture. What links these two characters from different races is a common interest in people’s culture and roots; the word ‘digging’ symbolizes this.

ACTIVITY 4  AFTER READING
Suggested answers:
1 Sadness
2 Sickness
3 Ramophone
4 Uitaris
5 Library
6 Funeral
7 Rateful

1 These words come from Breaking Loose.
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MARCIA: His mobile phone? That’s a bad sign.
NORTHANDO: I know. He always takes it everywhere he goes.
MARCIA: Yes, I’ve never seen him without it. But he’ll probably go back for it at lunch-time.
NORTHANDO: Maybe. Anyway, I’m just not going to worry about him any longer.
MARCIA: That’s my girl! Put him right out of your mind!

ACTIVITY 4 AFTER READING
Any answers are acceptable, provided they fit the sense and the grammar of the passage. Some alternative answers are given.

Dear Yasmim,
You have chosen a difficult path in life (love). You are trying to break (get) away from family and friends, and go your own way. You and Daniel must think (talk) about this very carefully before you decide what to do. Marriage to him would upset (hurt) your mother very much, so take things slowly. Don’t worry if some people are unkind (horrible, nasty) to you. What really matters is you and Daniel, nothing else. Your mother will accept your relationship one day. She only wants what is best (right) for you. Show the world how much you love each other, and everything will be fine in the end.
Auntie Leila

ACTIVITY 5 AFTER READING
Correct Order: 5, 4, 3, 8, 7, 2, 9, 6, 1
5 MOTHER: ‘What about the new girl, son? What does she do?’
4 OKEMA: All she can think about is finding her friends.’
3 MOTHER: Oh dear, that won’t be easy, will it?’
8 OKEMA: ‘No, she’s out every day, looking for them.’
7 MOTHER: ‘Why did she leave Gulu when she was young?’
2 OKEMA: ‘Because her grandfather, Won Okech, died.’
9 MOTHER: ‘Ah, I remember Won Okech! Be kind to her, son.’
6 OKEMA: ‘Oh, I will. And she takes care of me, too.’
1 MOTHER: ‘You children all have to take care of each other.’

ACTIVITY 6 AFTER READING
Open answers. Encourage discussion.

ACTIVITY 7 AFTER READING
Both haiku are about Ekaterina.

Notes for the teacher:
This activity helps students to think about the stories they have read, and what they see as the themes, or points of interest in the story. It also helps them to practise the key vocabulary of the stories. There are no right or wrong answers for this activity, provided that the haiku accurately reflects some aspect of the story.
- For classroom work students can work in pairs or small groups to write their haiku. When all the groups have finished, there can be a guessing competition, with other groups guessing which story each haiku is about. Other possibilities include a haiku recital (each group in turn reads out their haiku to the class), and a poster display.
- If students are doing their reading at home, writing a haiku is a creative way of showing they have read and understood the story. Haiku can be written in students’ own reading diaries, or shared with the class. A good way is to keep a big ‘Reviews Book’ in the classroom, and each student writes their haiku in the book for other students to read.
- Haiku don’t rhyme or scan, but must keep to the 5 / 7 / 5 syllable rule. They can be one long sentence, or a number of short sentences, or just phrases. They can be funny, or sad. Avoid using characters’ names. These examples for the other stories in this book show some different ways language can be used in haiku.

A Gathering of Bald Men
Finding a bald patch sends him on a strange journey and transforms his life.

Breaking Loose
Sometimes there’s no choice, you must break with tradition and follow your heart.

Remember Atita
Can the children sleep, with gunfire in the distance? Fear is in the air.