

## UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT



▲ Simple storytelling can have a powerful influence on young children.

This is a speech delivered to a conference with an educational theme. In it, Adichie discusses the power and influence that simple storytelling can have, particularly on the young. She shows from her own experience how stories can cause prejudices and that new stories are then needed to redress the balance. Her argument is even more compelling because she shows how she herself was vulnerable to just such influences.

She explains how all the stories she knew when she was growing up were European in outlook, perspective and characterisation, which led her to think that all stories had to be about white people. Then she shows that some Americans tend to have a very limited and simplified impression of Africa, not realising, for example, that there is such a thing as an educated Nigerian middle class. In the last part she explains how she herself had an equally limited view of Mexican culture, influenced by American worries about illegal immigration and drugs.

In this speech, Adichie uses personal stories, or anecdotes, to persuade people that they need to hear or read a wide variety of stories to understand the peoples of the world. To rely on what she calls the 'single story' will never be enough.

## ACTIVITY 1

A01

## SKILLS

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

## ▼ IDENTIFYING KEY POINTS

Find key parts of the speech and consider what Adichie is trying to tell the reader (or in this case, the listener). Copy and complete the table, adding examples of your own.

▼ DETAIL	▼ WHAT IT TELLS THE READER
'my characters were white and blue-eyed, they played in the snow' ....	That she took the material for her stories from her reading, not from her surroundings.
'whose kinky hair could not form ponytails'	
'a beautifully patterned basket made of dyed raffia'	

## ACTIVITY 2

A01

## SKILLS

CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

## ▼ IDENTIFYING KEY THEMES

Copy and complete the following table, identifying the themes of Adichie's speech and adding any examples of your own.

▼ THEME	▼ QUOTATION	▼ COMMENT
Ignorance	'She... was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language.'	Like other examples in the speech, Adichie's room-mate knows nothing about another culture.
Prejudice		
Self-knowledge		
Importance of stories		