

## Telephone Conversation - Wole Soyinka.

- This poem satirizes racism. The speaker is a black man. He makes fun of a white Land Lady. black man is searching house for rent she wont allow the speaker until she knows whether the speaker's skin is 'dark' or 'light'.

\* The poem describes a phone call between a Landlady and the speaker, who is black, about renting an apartment. Landlady is happy, then she wants to know whether the speaker's skin is light or dark. In response, the speaker cleverly mocks her.

It seemed like a good price. Next Location. Location was fine. The Landlady promised she didn't live in the building. I [speaker] have to accept something important about myself. 'Madam' I called the Landlady I don't want to waste a trip over there. Just you know I'm black." [who am I?]

Theme: Racism and the complexity of Identity.

\* Two people are talking on the phone & the theme of racial discrimination is carried out through the dialogue form.

- ① At first the Land Lady seems ready to move forward with renting to the Speaker. [First person narrative form.]
- ② When the speaker makes a "self-confession" their conversation took exchange to a discussion of skin.

There was silence on the phone.

In that silence he realized the mentality [tension] of the Landlady. Then

- Accommodation seems fine. It is not too expensive. The location is not bad. Land Lady is not living on the premises. Only one problem is there. That is the speaker is 'African.'

[When the poem begins, it is informed that one speaker is looking for the rented flat. Price is reasonable, location is indifferent to the race and colour of the skin of the people.

African man is looking for a room to rent, and he finds an advertisement in a newspaper. The AD says that there is no problem with race white or black. As the man had bitter experiences with such ads earlier.



Now he feels happy, he makes a telephone call to the landlady, from a public telephone booth. He asks the landlady that he is a black man, is it ok for you. First she hesitates for sometimes, then she wants to know if he is completely black or half black. The man says that he is not completely black because his palms and soles are white. The lady goes silent.

[Publicly, she shows that she is not a racist but privately she shows her true attitude.]

She doesn't reveal her true dislike and disapproval for black people. The black man can stereotype the white land lady just by hearing her voice over the telephone. He imagines that her lips must be painted red with lipstick, she must be smoking & using a gold-tinted cigarette lighter. She is careful in not using the taboo word 'black'. She asks an indirect question. The black man can smell the hypocrisy of the white lady. He sees red in his eyes. The telephone booth, the red pillars, a bus passing by - all appear red to him. [He compares it with a double-decker omnibus squelching the black car on the road.]

to walk the sand, you feet make  
when you are walking in deep wet mud.

Walking Sound

Walking on Soft