no take time something will happen for this town and when that thing will happen it is because they cannot think as other people are thinking. In Pitakwa and Diobu New York, everybody is talking about the trouble, preparing about the trouble, making money whether na transport or trade. But in Dukana Pastor Barika is saying the world will soon end. And Chief Birabee is only chopping money from people, no plan. And Zaza is going about, no shoe, and big loin cloth for him waist and no shirt with foto of white woman prouding and insulting young men. I think to myself, if trouble begin proper, Dukana go see pepper.

Agnes sweet like tomato. I am telling you. If Agnes was not living in Dukana, I will have gone to Pitakwa to look at the motor since. But because she is in Dukana, I must stay here so I can be able to see her always. And I see her plenty. In the morning, in the afternoon and for night, I must always pass in front of their house. And when I am passing there I must talk loud or laugh plenty or make any type of noise which will make her know that I am passing. And sometimes she will appear and greet me. Sometimes I will see her as she is working or hear her as she is singing. And I will say to sitting and used his stick on my head. Everybody kept quiet. I stopped laughing by force. That is how my own things are. Every time trouble. Always. So I kept quiet with several people shouting little shouts inside my head from the policeman's stick's blow. I said to myself, 'trouble don begin.'

The man with the fine shirt stood up. And begin to talk in English. Fine fine English. Big big words. Grammar, 'Fantastic. Overwhelming. Generally, in particular and in general.' Haba, God no go vex. But he did not stop there. The big grammar continued, 'Odious, Destruction. Fighting'. I understand that one. 'Henceforth. General mobilisation. All citizens. Able-bodied. Join the military. His Excellency, Powers conferred on us. Volunteers. Conscription'. Big big words. Long long grammar. 'Ten heads. Vandals. Enemy.' Everybody was silent. Everywhere was silent like burial ground. Then they begin to interpret all that long grammar plus big big words in Kana. In short what the man is saying is that all those who can fight will join the army.


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54 apprentice 55 who works for a more skilled person in order to learn that person's trade. 59 Dukana City in Southern Nigeria.
60 plantain, 61 kochbanana, 65 jolly, 66 happy, 68 Pitakwa nickname for Port Harcourt, capital of River State in the Niger Delta with about 2m inhabitants. 69 Diobu neighbourhood in Port Harcourt, 77 pepper here: trouble, 116 haba! good grief, 116 no go vex is not going to be offended, 121 to confer to transfer or give.

**Sozaboy: Novel in Rotten English**
Ken Saro-Wiwa’s novel is set in Nigeria during the civil war (1967–70), also called the Biafra War. Eastern Nigeria seceded from the country and became The Republic of Biafra for three years. A lot of children were forced to fight as soldiers in this conflict in which more than one million people died. The story is told from the perspective of a child-soldier (“sozaboy”).

I am free-born of Dukana and that is where I went to school. I am the only son of my mama and I have no father. It is my mama who sent me to St. Dominic’s school in Dukana where I passed my elementary six with distinction. In fact, I am very clever boy in school and I like to work hard always. It was very hard for my mama to pay my school fees but she tried hard to make me finish in that school.

When I passed the elementary six exam, I wanted to go to secondary school but my mama told me that she cannot pay the fees. The thing pained me bad bad because I wanted to be big man like lawyer or doctor riding car and talking big big English. In fact I used to know English in the school and every time I will try to read any book that I see. So when I see that I cannot go secondary, I was not happy. However, that is my luck.

So my mama told me that I should learn to be driver. Because Dukana people have one lorry which they call ‘Progres’. But they have no driver and they have to go and get driver from another country to drive the lorry. And this driver is very rich man because he gets salary every month and every day he must get chop money. And the lorry is his house so he does not spend money to get house. My mama say that if I am apprentice to this driver, after some time I will get my own licence and then I can get my own lorry to drive. And if I save my salary and my chop money, I can buy my own lorry and then I will be big man like any lawyer or doctor. So I like that and after we have paid money to the driver of the ‘Progres’ plus one goat and one bottle of Gordon gin and one piece of cloth, I become his apprentice.

Every day, early in the morning, ‘Progres’ must leave Dukana very early with passenger and it will stop in every village to collect more passengers till it reach Bori where we will stop for chop and then we will continue till we reach Pitakwa. There we will stop in the motor park and all the passengers will come down. We will wait there till afternoon when the passengers have bought all their goods and then they will enter ‘Progres’ and when they are plenty or they have full the

12 distinction excellence; 29 chop money here: shopping money for buying food; 42 Bori town in Southern Nigeria where the author was born
lorry, we will return to Dukana. Always we must reach Dukana before night time unless something is wrong.

I myself as apprentice driver in 'Progres', I am prouding plenty. Because I take my work serious. And as I am going to Pitakwa every day, I am learning new things. In the motor park, I must speak English with the other drivers and apprentice and passengers.

Even some time I will see all those small small books they are selling in the park. And as I used to get chop money every day, I will use some of the money to buy the books and improve my English. [...]

It was beautiful new moon for Dukana. You can see all the plantain and banana as they are standing straight and tall inside the moon. No wind at all. And the people are beating drum and dancing in another part of the town. True, true, these Dukana people no get sense at all. How can they be dancing, singing and jollying when there is trouble for the country? If they no take time something will happen for this town and when that thing will happen it is because they cannot think as other people are thinking. In Pitakwa and Diobu New York, everybody is talking about the trouble, preparing about the trouble, making money whether na transport or trade. But in Dukana Pastor Barika is saying the world will soon end. And Chief Birabe is only chopping money from people, no plan. And Zaza is going about, no shoe, and big loin cloth for him waist and no shirt with foto of white woman prouding and insulting young men. I think to myself, if trouble begin proper, Dukana go see pepper.

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You know as we people in Dukana dyey make our thing. If you like a girl you cannot show it to everybody openly. It is not as they used to do it in the cinema, those white people, kissing every time. No. In fact, if you love a girl in Dukana then you must beat her small small. That will show that you love her. But I don't think Agnes is just like those stupid Dukana girls. Even, she can discuss anything you like. She is a clever girl. Very clever girl. I must marry her. [...]

The man with the fine shirt sat down and we all sat down too. Plenty of talking.

"Silence!" shouted the police. "Silence, I say!"

The people cannot understand him. They were laughing because of how he was shouting. Myself too.

I was laughing. Then the police came to where I was sitting and used his stick on my head. Everybody kept quiet. I stopped laughing by force. That is how my own things are. Every time trouble. Always. So I kept quiet with several people shouting little shouts inside my head from the policeman's stick's blow. I said to myself, 'trouble don begin.'

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Ken Saro-Wiwa, Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English, 1985

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**Fact file**

*The Biafra War (1967–70)*

On 30 May 1967 a new state called The Republic of Biafra in eastern Nigeria was proclaimed. Because most of the oil resources were in that part of the country, the Nigerian government did not want to accept the secession. Few foreign nations recognized the new state of Biafra. In the end the Biafra army did not have enough resources to withstand the constant attacks from the Nigerian army so the formal surrender of Biafra on 12 January 1970 came as no great surprise.
1. Summarize what you learn about the narrator and the girl he fancies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>narrator</th>
<th>girl</th>
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2. Analyze how Saro-Wiwa uses the narrative perspective to create suspense.

3. Explain how Saro-Wiwa uses certain details to present a Nigerian setting.

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**Fact file**  
**Nigerian English**

The variety of English spoken by Nigerians often depends on the educational background of the speaker. But it may also depend on the situation. In that case, you might compare it to speaking a German dialect. Dialects can make conversations sound more familiar or relaxed. In addition, in order to distinguish themselves from the former colonial rulers, many speakers of Nigerian English also try to use words from their indigenous languages. Nevertheless, Standard (British) English is the basis for official communication.