

## Student worksheet – Literature prize 2021



Abdulrazak Gurnah

The 2021 Nobel Prize laureate in literature, Tanzanian author Abdulrazak Gurnah, has written both novels and short stories. Refugees' experience of displacement and life in exile are recurring themes in his writing.

Gurnah is often referred to as a post-colonial author. He writes about the effects of Europe's colonisation of Africa on individual people. Gurnah portrays both characters that have migrated to England and others that migrate within the African continent.

The short story "Cages" is about Hamid, who has left behind a village in the countryside to settle in the city. The old man who took care of him when he arrived and gave him a job in a shop is now sick and dying. One day a girl begins visiting the shop. Hamid soon falls in love with her, but he also begins to think more and more about what lies outside the shop and the little neighbourhood he has kept to so far.

He thought of Rukiya often, and sometimes spoke her name, but thinking of her only made him more conscious of his isolation and squalor. He remembered how she had looked to him the first time, moving away in the late evening shadow. He wanted to touch her ... Years in darkened places had done this to him, he thought, so that now he looked out on the streets of the foreign town and imagined that the touch of an unknown girl would be his salvation.

From "Cages"

## What do you think?

Read the excerpt from the short story "Cages" and try to answer these questions:

What do you think the feeling or mood of the poem is?

Why do you think Rukiya makes Hamid feel isolated and squalid?

Why do you think the short story is called "Cages"?

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What is the most interesting part of the laureate's work?

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