

The Danger of a single story

Gist of the speech:

This is a speech by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian novelist. She started reading at the age of four. She read only British and American children's books. She began to write at the age of seven. She wrote exactly the kinds of stories she read. Her Characters were white and blue eyed. They played in the snow, they ate apples and they talked lot about weather. Adichie thought that the characters in books should be foreign. She read the books of China Achebe (Nigerian writer) and Camara Laye (writer from Guinea). Then she could realize that people like her also there in literature as characters. From then she started writing about the things she could recognize. The American and British books stirred her imagination. Adichie is from a middle class family. Her father was a professor and her mother was an administrator. When she was 8 , she got a new house boy. His name was Fide. Her mother told her that Fide's family was very poor. One Saturday, Adichie went Fide's home. Fide's mother showed her a beautiful basket made from died raffia. She told Adichie that it was made by Fide's brother. Adichie was surprised. She never thought that any one of his family could make something. She heard the single story of poverty about Fide's family. Adichie went to the US for higher studies. Adichie's roommate had a single story of Africa. Her roommate thought that she shouldn't speak english and did not listen to english songs. Her roommate had only a patronising feeling towards Adichie. She thought that Africans are not equal to human beings. Adichie began to identify herself as an African when people turned to her when Africa was mentioned. The popular Images of Africa and Africans were a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, incomprehensible people waiting to be saved by a Kind while foreigner. Adichie's professor believed that Adichie's novels were not authentically African because the characters in her novels were like white people. They were educated, middle class men, the characters drove cars and they were not starving. The story about writers was that they should have an unhappy childhood to be successful. Adichie had a very happy childhood. Her grandfathers died in refugee camps. Her cousin died because he did not get adequate health care. Adichie grew up under repressive military governments. They devalued education. So sometimes her parents were not paid salaries. All these stories make Adichie, positive and negative stories. Single story creates stereotypes. Stereotypes are true but incomplete.

[Today's Class Link.](#)

[Malayalam Meaning](#)

New Words :



Repressive : repressing or oppressive. അടിച്ചമർത്തുന്ന.

Stereotypes : A widely held but fixed image or idea of particular type of person or thing.

Close knit: Having strong relationship with common interest

Activity 1 :



Read last part of the speech and answer the questions

1. Did Adichie have a happy childhood or an unhappy childhood?
2. What do you know about her grandfathers ?
3. What was the single story that the writers were expected to have?
4. Did the military governments give any importance to education?
5. Adichie speaks about the stories of her relatives, stories of her grandfathers, cousins and friends. What were the stories?
6. What is the problem of a stereotype, according to Adichie?
7. What happens when there is only a single story?

Activity 2 :



Prepare a speech on the occasion of "YOUTH DAY' in your school.

SPEECH - TECHNIQUES.

- * Repetition
- * real stories
- * Eye contact with the audience
- * Speech should be smooth, confident and charming
- * Modulation of the voice
- * Interact with the audience
- * Proper body language and gestures
- * Emotionally charged
- * Apt salutation

Activity 3 :



Critically analyse the speech of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and discuss the dangers of a single story in perceiving people and events in the world. Prepare a write-up based on the points of your discussion. (കുറിപ്പ് തയ്യാറാക്കുക)

Answer Key : >

Activity 1

1. She did have a happy childhood.
2. Her grandfathers died in refugee camps.
3. The writers should have unhappy childhoods to be successful.
4. They devalued the education.
5. She had grandfathers who died in refugee camps. Her cousin Polle died because he did not get adequate health care. Her friend Okoloma died in plane crash, because their firetrucks did not have water.
6. Stereotypes are not untrue, but they are incomplete.. They create only a single story.
7. When there is a single story it makes the story the only story and all other stories are ignored.

Activity 2

Respected teachers and my dear friends,

I am here to speak something on this occasion of Youth Day celebration. As we know, Youth Day is a holiday dedicated to the youths of a country. It is observed by 18 countries, on many dates throughout the year. International Youth Day is on August 12 officially recognized by the United Nations. In our country, it is on January 12. It is the birthday of Swami Vivekananda. The National Youth Day is observed all over India at schools and colleges, with processions, speeches, music, youth conventions, seminars etc. Swami Vivekananda's lectures and writings, deriving their inspiration from Indian spiritual tradition and the broad outlook of his Master Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. These were the source of inspiration and have motivated numerous youth. Friends, We too have to be inspired by him. Let us take an oath..... We should be devoted to goodness at any circumstances.

Let me conclude here

Thank you all

(some sentences are copied from Wikipedia)

Activity 3

Single stories lead to dangers.

We judge a matter without understanding all the sides of it. Some one say something about a thing, person or a matter to us. We blindly believe it and act. Most of us are not ready to be fully aware of it. It leads us to dangers. We should try to understand all the sides of a matter. Then only we can successfully judge it. This is what Adichie tries to convey through her speech. Adichie mentions her American roommate in her speech. Her friend had a single story about

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Africans. So she was surprised to hear fluent English from Adichie. Adichie also had misled by having a single story about Fide who was a house boy in her home. In short, single stories surely misleads us. So what we have to do is to understand all things fully, perceiving every side of it.