

Between Two Worlds

Englisch Abitur NRW 2026 | Grundkurs | Schreiben / Leseverstehen

Context

The following is an extract from the novel *Somewhere Between* (2025) by the fictional British-Nigerian author Yemi Osei-Larbi. The novel follows Adaeze Okeke, a 17-year-old girl growing up in Hackney, East London, the daughter of Nigerian immigrants. Her parents, deeply rooted in Igbo traditions, place high value on discipline, academic achievement, and communal reputation. Adaeze attends Northfield Academy, a multi-cultural secondary school, where she is part of a close-knit group of friends. The extract takes place on a Monday morning, the day after Adaeze missed her friend Lola's garden party — an event she had secretly longed to attend. The novel explores themes of belonging, identity, and the quiet negotiations that children of immigrants make every day.

Text Yemi Osei-Larbi: Somewhere Between (2025)

= use of language

= narrative perspective

→ third person limited narrator → stays close to Adaeze

The moment Adaeze walked through the school gates on Monday morning, she felt it — that familiar tightening in her chest, the one that had been there since Friday's party. She hadn't gone. Of course she hadn't gone.

→ thoughts included / unmarked → inner voice more immediate
"You missed out," Priya said, falling into step beside her. "Lola's garden, fairy lights everywhere, music till midnight. It was perfect." She paused, glancing sideways. "Your mum again?" → world seen only through Adaeze's p.o.v. → question not answered, just like Adaeze avoids it

Adaeze said nothing. She shifted the strap of her bag and looked straight ahead.

The truth was more complicated than her mum. It was her mum's voice in her head at 7 p.m. on Friday, when she'd been standing in front of her mirror in the dress she'd bought secretly — a deep green wrap dress, the kind that made her feel like someone else, someone lighter. (dress = symbol → wish to be herself / to belong)

A good daughter does not run around at night like she has no home. She'd changed back into her school hoodie before her mother even reached the landing. → perspective weaker empathy reader (sympathizes w/ her situation)

At lunch, Adaeze sat at the edge of the table, listening to the others reconstruct the party in fragments — who'd danced with whom, who'd cried, who'd kissed someone they shouldn't have. She laughed at the right moments, nodded, performed. It was a skill she'd refined over three years at Northfield Academy: the art of being present without being seen.

But lately, the performance was exhausting her.

→ play a role → leads an exhausting double life

After school, walking home past the chicken shop and the Poundland and the bus stop where her dad used to wait for her when she was small, she took out her phone and stared at the message she'd drafted and deleted four times:

I want to be part of things. I want to go next time. → metaphor: family values, tradition → serves as a warning!

On the kitchen table at home, her mother had left out Adaeze's grandfather's photograph — as she always did on Sundays, as if to remind her. A man in a stiff suit, unsmiling, dignified.

We did not come this far, her mother liked to say, for you to become nothing.

→ mother's voice in italics → expectations always present in Adaeze's mind; her assumptions of what her mother believed / would say

* emotions shown through her body → inner conflict becomes unspoken / concrete

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Adaeze sat down slowly across from the photograph. → urge to distance herself; to be independent; to live freely

She thought about the green dress, still folded under her bed. She thought about Priya's voice — *you missed out* — and the way it had lodged itself somewhere behind her ribs. → longing

Then she picked up her phone. Her fingers hovered.

This time, she pressed send. → tried and failed before; hope? vs. futility?

Yemi Osei-Larbi, *Somewhere Between* (London: Ridgeway Press, 2025), pp. 34–36.

Tasks

1. Sum up the challenges Adaeze faces at school and at home as presented in the extract. (13 marks)

2. Analyze how Adaeze's inner conflict is presented in the extract. Focus on narrative perspective and use of language. (14 marks) ①

3. Choose **one** of the following tasks: ②

3.1 "Being caught between two cultures is not a weakness – it is a source of strength."
(Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Nigerian author*, b. 1977)

Assess to what extent this statement applies to young people with immigrant backgrounds in Britain today, taking into account the extract and your work done in class on questions of identity. (17 marks)

3.2 On the evening after pressing send, Adaeze writes an entry in her personal diary, reflecting on her decision, the tensions with her mother's expectations, and what being truly herself means to her. Write her diary entry. (17 marks)

*Note: For task 3, choose **one** of the two options (3.1 or 3.2).*

2) The extract presents Adaeze's inner conflict through a narrator who stays very close to her thoughts and through language that turns her feelings into concrete, physical images. Together these techniques make the reader understand how exhausting it is for Adaeze to constantly hide part of herself. She is caught between what her family expects and what she actually wants.

From the very first sentence, the narrator places the reader inside Adaeze's mind. The extract opens with "that familiar tightening in her chest" (l...). Her anxiety is described as a physical sensation rather than a stated emotion. The adjective "familiar" (l...) is particularly effective here, as it suggests that this feeling is not new. Adaeze has been in this situation many times before.

When Priya asks "Your mum again?" (l...), Adaeze does not reply, and the narrator does not explain her silence either. This is a typical feature of the narrative perspective: the reader only knows what Adaeze knows and feels. Other characters remain on the outside. Her silence tells the reader more than any answer could.

The next paragraph reveals what is really going on. The narrator shifts directly into Adaeze's memory of Friday night; when she stood in front of the mirror wearing the green dress she had bought secretly. The dress is described as making her feel "like someone else, someone lighter" (l...), suggesting that her everyday self feels heavy and constrained. The dress then becomes a symbol for everything she wants but feels she is not allowed to have.

At this point, her mother's voice interrupts in italics. "A good daughter does not run around at night like she has no home" (l...). The mother is not present in the scene, yet her words take over the narration completely. The formal, commanding tone of this sentence stands in sharp contrast to the warm, casual language of Adaeze's friends ("fairy lights everywhere, music till midnight", l...). This contrast in language mirrors the two worlds Adaeze is caught between.

The lunchtime scene at school develops this idea further. Adaeze watches her friend retell the party using a repeated structure: "who'd danced with whom, who'd cried, who'd kissed someone they shouldn't have" (l...). The rhythm of this list captures the excitement of the group, but Adaeze is not part of it although she is present. She "laughed at the right moments, nodded, performed" (l...). The verb "performed" is key: it emphasizes that she is playing a role rather than being herself.

The phrase "the art of being present without being seen" (l...) makes this even clearer. It sounds almost like a skill Adaeze has trained herself in, which explains why a few lines later the narrator tells us that "the performance was exhausting her" (l...). The narrative perspective stays close enough that the reader feels the exhaustion, too.

On the way home, Adaeze stares at a message she has drafted and deleted four times (cf. l...). The fact that the narrator tells us this (not Adaeze herself) shows how the narrative perspective works throughout the extract: we as readers are close to her, but we also see her hesitation from a slight distance, which makes it feel more objective and more painful at the same time.

The final scene at home brings together both the narrative perspective and the use of language. Adaeze sits across from her grandfather's photograph, which her mother has left out "as if to remind her" (l...). The phrase "as if" highlights how Adaeze interprets her mother's actions, not the narrator explaining it. Then she thinks of the green dress (cf. l...), still hidden, and of Pige's words "lodged somewhere between her ribs" (l...). This is another image that turns an emotion (Adaeze's longing) into a physical, almost painful feeling.

The extract ends with a single short sentence: "This time, she pressed send" (l...). After all the hesitation and inner conflict, this moment of decision is described without comment. The phrase "this time" again reveals that she has hesitated before, making the ending feel more like a careful step forward than a confident break with the past.

Overall, the author uses both narrative perspectives and language to show Adaeze's conflict from the inside. By staying close to her thoughts, the narrator makes sure the reader understands how much

effort it takes for Adese to maintain her double life. The language makes this conflict visible on every level of the text. The open ending leaves the reader with the same uncertainty Adese herself feels: hopeful, but not yet free.