Thank you for joining Maryland Humanities as we embark on the tenth year of One Maryland One Book, our state's largest reading and discussion program. Since the program's launch in 2008, readers across Maryland have embraced our annual tradition of bringing people together from across the state through the reading of one book, selected by a dedicated group of literary enthusiasts. Each year we explore the power of literature with fellow readers—from book clubs at workplaces and libraries to students in high school and college. This shared experience lies at the heart of One Maryland One Book. Whether you've read with us every year or are new to the program, welcome!

This year's book offers Marylanders a glimpse into the lives and home of a post-colonial Nigerian family. The first novel by acclaimed author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Purple Hibiscus weaves a gripping tale through the teenage narrator, Kambili, who takes us into the life of a prominent and wealthy Nigerian family with a private secret—a successful and devoutly religious yet physically and psychologically abusive father. While a continent away, the story of Kambili and her family is wretchedly familiar. In the U.S., it's not difficult for any of us to identify someone we know who has experienced the fear and oppression of abuse. As Kambili comes of age, she and her brother experience respite at their aunt's house, where there is a freedom and warmth absent under the strict dictates of their father. The contrasts between those homes is striking, but a glimmer of hope remains as the siblings discover more about themselves and about life as the story builds to a dramatic crescendo.

We encourage you to pick up a copy of Purple Hibiscus and join the conversation at one of our many public discussion programs across the state. A program of the Maryland Center for the Book at Maryland Humanities, One Maryland One Book is made possible each year through the generosity of our sponsors and community partners. We greatly thank them for their support.

Find out how to get involved at www.onemarylandonebook.org.

Sincerely,

Stephen Sfekas, Board Chair
Phoebe Stein, Executive Director
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is the leading African writer of her generation. She grew up on the campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and left Nigeria for the U.S. at the age of 19.

Among her many accolades, Ms. Adichie has been awarded a Hodder fellowship at Princeton University (2005-2006) and a fellowship at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University (2011-2012). In 2008, Ms. Adichie earned a coveted MacArthur Genius Award.

Ms. Adichie’s work is read around the world, and has been translated into over thirty languages. Her first novel *Purple Hibiscus* won the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize, and her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, won the Orange Prize (now the Bailey’s Women’s Prize), which is the world’s top prize for female writers. Her 2013 novel *Americanah* has received numerous accolades, including the National Book Critics Circle Award. It was named one of *The New York Times* Top Ten Best Books of the Year.

Ms. Adichie has been invited to speak around the world. Most notably her 2009 TED Talk, *The Danger of A Single Story*, is now one of the top ten most-viewed TED Talks of all time, with over five millions views. Her 2012 TED talk, *We Should All Be Feminists*, has started a worldwide conversation about feminism, especially after it inspired a song by Beyoncé. It was published as a book in 2014.

Her most recent book, *Dear Ijeawele, or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions*, was published in March 2017.

Ms. Adichie is committed to assisting young aspiring writers. As one of her commitments, she leads an annual Writers Workshop in Nigeria, for which applications come from around the world.

**ABOUT THE BOOK**

Fifteen-year-old Kambili and her older brother Jaja lead a privileged life in Enugu, Nigeria. They live in a beautiful house, with a caring family, and attend an exclusive missionary school. They’re completely shielded from the troubles of the world. Yet, as Kambili reveals in her tender-voiced account, things are less perfect than they appear. Although her Papa is generous and well respected, he is fanatically religious and tyrannical at home—a home that is silent and suffocating. As the country begins to fall apart under a military coup, Kambili and Jaja are sent to their aunt, a university professor outside the city, where they discover a life beyond the confines of their father’s authority. Books cram the shelves, curry and nutmeg permeate the air, and their cousins’ laughter rings throughout the house. When they return home, tensions within the family escalate, and Kambili must find the strength to keep her loved ones together. *Purple Hibiscus* is an exquisite novel about the emotional turmoil of adolescence, the powerful bonds of family, and the bright promise of freedom.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Rh.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Rh.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

Rh.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Rh.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text.

Rh.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.11-12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.11-12.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
Part I: Geography and Definitions

**DIRECTIONS:** Use your own searching skills to answer the following questions.

1. In what part of Africa is Nigeria located?
2. What are the names of the three ethnic groups that make up the majority of Nigeria’s population?
3. Define the term *colonialism*.

Part II: The Igbo Culture

**DIRECTIONS:** Go to the following website about Igbo culture:
http://www.kwenu.com/igbo/igbowebpages/Igbo.dir/Culture/culture_and_socialization.html

Use the information you find there to take notes in the following chart to determine the main characteristics of the Igbo culture in pre-Colonial Nigeria. Use bullet points and put everything in your own words!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENT OF THE IGBO CULTURE</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religion &amp; beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women &amp; family</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditions &amp; rituals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Law &amp; justice</td>
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</tbody>
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Part III: Colonization

**DIRECTIONS:** Go to the following website about colonialism in Africa:
http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m7b/activity2.php

Use the information you find there to respond to the following questions.

1. Why did Europeans first go to Africa?
2. What is nationalism? What are some of the negative aspects of nationalism?
3. How did European colonists view themselves?
4. Why did some missionaries support European colonization of Africa?
5. Explain how the following approaches allowed European nations to rule over Africa:
   - Economic Companies: Direct Rule:
   - Indirect Rule:
   - Settler Rule:

Part IV: Closing Question

**DIRECTIONS:** Respond to the following question after completing the Web Quest.

Based on the background knowledge you acquired today regarding the Igbo culture and European colonization, what conflicts or disagreements do you imagine would have arisen between the two groups (the Igbo and the Europeans) during the period of colonization? What misunderstandings may have occurred between the two groups?
Chapter 1 (pages 3-16):

- The very first line begins with an allusion to the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, which portrays the clash between Nigeria’s white colonial government and the traditional culture of the indigenous Igbo people. What is the significance of Adichie starting this novel with such an allusion? What mood does it create for the beginning of the story?

- The narrator describes the religious traditions her family follows every Palm Sunday. Reread the first paragraph, analyze the significance of the characters who are participating in the traditions of Palm Sunday, and predict what those roles might mean throughout the novel.

- The narrator describes her mother’s actions after Papa breaks the figurines and adds imagery of her mother two weeks prior “when her swollen eye was still the black-purple color of an overripe avocado...” (10-11). What can we infer from this description of Kambili’s mother? What can we infer from the casual way Kambili inserts this description?

- What is the purpose and effect of the following simile that the narrator uses to describe Jaja’s defiance toward his father: “Jaja’s defiance seemed to me now like Aunty Ifeoma’s experimental purple hibiscus: rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup. A freedom to be, to do”? (16).

Chapter 2 (pages 19-26):

- Because the Igbo are a patriarchal society, marriage holds the utmost significance in order to procreate and continue the family line. However, it is common for a man who has a barren wife to procreate with a woman other than his wife, or even take a second wife. Why is it significant that Mama pointed out Papa’s rejection of other women to her own children? (20). What does the reader learn about Mama’s character through these comments?

- What does the reader learn about Kambili’s perception of Mama and Papa’s love for one another? (21). Why is this significant for the reader?

- The military coups of Nigeria were both successful and unsuccessful since the country’s independence from the British Empire in 1960. The coups discussed in the novel were a permanent feature of Nigerian culture from 1966-1999. What did Papa mean when he stated “But what we Nigerians needed was not soldiers ruling us, what we needed was a renewed democracy”? (25).

Chapter 3 (pages 27-36):

- Adichie makes it clear in this chapter that Nigeria is now ruled by a military regime, and therefore the soldiers can act with exemption from punishment. How is the theme of freedom versus tyranny illustrated through Kambili’s thoughts and comments in this chapter?

- Analyze the impact of the following simile: “Silence hung over the table like the blue-black clouds in the middle of rainy season” (32). What tone does it create and why is it significant?

- The paragraph immediately after Kambili and Jaja scrubbing Mama’s blood off of the floor is about an execution that was shown on television. What is the significance of this event and the characters’ reaction to it following what they just witnessed with their parents?

- For what, in Papa’s eyes, did Mama need to be forgiven? What is ironic about Papa’s beliefs and his actions?

Chapter 4 (pages 37-51):

- Why was Ade Coker arrested? What are the implications of his arrest in regards to the Head of State using violence to suppress and discourage free speech? Does suppression of free speech happen in today’s society? Explain.

- Adichie uses the rhetorical device anaphora, or the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses, when she writes “I needed him to touch the back of my neck...” and “I need him to hug me...” and “I needed him to smile at me...” (39). What is the purpose and effect of this device?

- What mood does Kambili’s statement, “I was stained by failure,” create for the reader? (39). Have you ever felt this way about yourself? Explain.

- How is the theme of perception versus reality reflected through Kambili and her classmates? How is it reflected through the Achike family thus far in the novel?

Chapter 5 (pages 52-70):

- Kambili describes her determination to be the first in her class as “balancing a sack of gravel” on her head every day at school and “not being allowed to steady it” with her hand (52). What things in your life have you had to balance to achieve something better for yourself? Can you empathize with the pressure Kambili feels she is under?

- Several times throughout the chapter Papa is called “omelora,” or “The One Who Does for the Community” by the villagers (56). Why is he so revered in Abba? Do you think Papa gains something internally from their admiration? Explain.

- What is the significance of Papa’s silence when Ade Coker said, “Imagine what the Standard would be if we were all quiet”? (58).

- Why are Kambili and Jaja instructed to stay at Papa-Nnukwu’s house for only 15 minutes? What does Papa’s traditionalist father constantly remind him of?

- Discuss how the impact of colonialism becomes evident throughout the chapter, including the economic divide between the classes.

Chapter 6 (pages 71-88):

- Aunty Ifeoma comes to visit and when speaking to Mama, calls her “nwunye m,” or “my wife” (73). Why is it significant that she accepts Mama in such a way? What does Papa’s reaction to that term of endearment tell the reader about his beliefs?
Chapter 7 (pages 89-109):

- Why is Aunty Ifeoma’s “fearlessness” uncomfortable and forbidding to Kambili? (76). How does Kambili’s outlook about Papa change when Ifeoma is interacting with him? How does she disrupt the order of Papa’s family?

- List several examples found throughout the chapter that reflect the economic differences between Papa’s family and Aunty Ifeoma’s family. Why is it important to note these differences? What can the reader infer about Kambili’s views about these differences surrounding her family?

- Similar to her classmates, Kambili’s cousin Amaka takes her silence and reserve for privilege and snobbishness. Is there some truth to Amaka’s and her classmates’ assumption? Why is Kambili unable to speak when faced with someone who expresses herself?

- Before picking up Papa-Nnukwu to join on the trip to Ezi Icheke, Kambili explains to her aunt that Papa does not want them to have a relationship with their grandfather because he is a pagan, to which Aunty replies that he is “not a pagan,” but a “traditionalist” (81). Research the difference between paganism and traditionalism in the Igbo culture and analyze why it was important for Aunty to clarify the difference.

- When Jaja and Kambili discuss wanting to go to Nsukka, why does her throat tighten “at the thought of five days without Papa’s voice, without his footsteps on the stairs”? (108).

Chapter 8 (pages 110-139):

- What has the reader learned about Kambili thus far through the way she perceives her surroundings and through other people’s views of her? Does the way Kambili narrates the story affect the reader’s perception of Nigeria and the Igbo people? Provide several examples from this chapter for support.

- What are some examples of Amaka’s rejection of the Eurocentric colonial mindset? Why might her viewpoint be significant in relation to the previous question?

- When Aunty Ifeoma laughed about the schedule Papa gave his children to follow while visiting, Kambili’s “mouth felt dry,” her “tongue clinging to the roof” of her mouth (124). Why does Kambili yearn for the strict order and silence of her home? How do the family dynamics differ in each household, and why are the differences significant?

- Why are Aunty Ifeoma’s hibiscuses purple, rather than another color? Of what are they a result? Why is their existence significant to the story thus far?

Chapter 9 (pages 140-161):

- What is the opening mood of this chapter, and how is it created by the author?

- Aunty Ifeoma suggests that Kambili read a book titled Equiano’s Travels, or the Life of Gustavus Vassa the African (143), also titled The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings by Olaudah Equiano. Research the summary of this novel and then determine why Kambili’s aunt might have chosen this specific text for her to read.

- What is the significance of Aunty Ifeoma stating to Jaja “Defiance is like marijuana—it is not a bad thing when it is used right” when discussing the legendary king of ethnic Nigerians Jaja of Opobo? (144).

- Aunty Ifeoma covers for Jaja when Chima asks him about his deformed finger (145). However, Kambili wonders how her aunt knows about the incident, and Jaja says when Aunty asked, he told her the truth. What is peculiar about Kambili’s thoughts regarding telling the truth about these situations? Why does she want to remain loyal to her family’s secret?

- How is the motif of governmental corruption interspersed throughout this chapter? Cite several examples, then analyze how the lack of a democratic government directly impacts the rights of the people.
Chapter 12 (pages 217-239):

- After Kambili and Jaja are sent to Aunty Ifeoma’s so she can heal, Kambili observes several aspects of nature, such as “the smell of freshness in the air” due to rain, and the air “filling with flapping, water-colored wings” (218). Why are her descriptions of nature emphasized in the first few pages of the chapter, given what she has just experienced with her father?

- Amaka asks Kambili if it was her father who hurt her and, for the first time, she admits to the truth. Why won’t Kambili look at Amaka to see her reaction to this response? Does Papa still have “control” over her?

- Kambili overhears Aunty Ifeoma and her friend discussing the leadership at the university, and Obiora explains, “The university becomes a microcosm of the country” (224). Look up the definition of microcosm and analyze what Obiora means in regards to the spread of tyranny.

- Why is Aunty Ifeoma’s house searched? Why is she warned by the special security men to “be careful”? (231).

- What is the significance of Jaja killing the chicken with a “precision…a singlemindedness that was cold, clinical”? (235). How has Kambili begun to see her brother? Is their bond as strong as it was in the past? Why or why not?

Chapter 13 (pages 240-253):

- What larger statement might the author be making about religion in Nigeria in regards to the casual nature of St. Peter’s Catholic Chaplaincy versus the rigidity of Kambili’s Catholic church St. Agnes? Use details of both to support your response.

- How is the story about Professor Okafor’s son a lesson about oppression and tyranny?

- For the first time in the novel, the reader sees Aunty Ifeoma using violence to reprimand her child (245). Are Aunty Ifeoma and Papa more similar than it seems? Or does this act of violence represent something other than Papa’s forms of discipline?

- Mama flees to Aunty Ifeoma’s house after Papa breaks a small table over her belly, killing the fetus Mama was carrying (248), and after Mama speaks with Papa, “she looked like a different woman from the one who had come out of the taxi that morning” (250). Why does Mama continue to make excuses for Papa’s violence?

- As they arrive at their home in Enugu, Jaja notes “the purple hibiscuses are about to bloom” (253). What do they symbolize? Why does Jaja mention them right before the flashback to Chapter 1?

Chapter 14 (pages 257-270):

- Knowing what you learned in Chapter 1 about Palm Sunday, how is the first paragraph contradictory to what the religious day is supposed to represent? (Students might need to do more research about the religious events surrounding Palm Sunday to answer this.)
Chapter 17 (295-307):

- How has Papa’s abuse created “a different silence” that might never be repaired between Jaja, Kambili, and Mama?
- Are the updates of the family members and Father Amadi what was to be expected, or do their new lives show the reader things that are unexpected?
- Do Jaja’s upcoming release from prison and the death of the Head of State both represent hope for the family and for Nigeria? Or do these events represent a false hope that has been a part of the Achike family for the majority of their lives?
- Identify and analyze a passage in the novel that reflects Kambili’s growth in her understanding of her father’s strengths and weaknesses.

AFTER READING ACTIVITY:

TED TALK “WE SHOULD ALL BE FEMINISTS”
- Have students view the following TED Talk by Chimamanda Adichie: “We Should All Be Feminists” (29:28 minutes) https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_we_should_all_be_feminists

PRE-VIEWING:
- Define “feminist.” Discuss various responses.

DURING VIEWING:
- Why is the story about being the class leader significant?
- Why does an African woman tell her that she is “corrupted by Western books?”
- What type of person is most likely to be a leader?
- How are the gender roles defined? How do Nigerians define masculinity?
- How are girls taught to behave in the Nigerian society?

AFTER VIEWING:
- A journalist gave Adichie advice about being a feminist and told her, “Feminists are women who are unhappy because they cannot find husbands.” How can this advice be disproven by the women in the novel?
- What are Adichie’s beliefs about how Nigerians raise their daughters versus their sons? Relate her ideas to how Kambili, Jaja, and their cousins are raised. Support your response with evidence.
- What is Adichie’s definition of feminism? Do you agree with her definition?

WRITTEN RESPONSE:
- Does Adichie accurately reflect the patriarchal society of Nigeria in Purple Hibiscus? Support your position with examples from the text and the TED Talk.
- Does today’s society teach young men to be vulnerable? Did Jaja and Obiroa show their vulnerabilities at times, or did they see them as a weakness? Use examples from the text for support.
- Do you agree or disagree with Adichie’s statement, “Culture does not make people; people make culture?” Support your position with real-life examples and examples from the text.
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Maryland Humanities is an educational nonprofit organization. Our mission is to create and support educational experiences in the humanities that inspire all Marylanders to embrace lifelong learning, exchange ideas openly, and enrich their communities. To learn more, visit www.mdhumanities.org.