

CHIKOMBORERO

School Study Guide • The Boy the Forest Chose

By Jaydn Bruce • jaydnbruce.com • For Educational Use

For the Teacher

Chikomborero: The Boy the Forest Chose is the debut YA novel by Jaydn Bruce, a 17-year-old independent author from Accra, Ghana. It is the first book in the Chikomborero Chronicles series and is suitable for students aged 10-16. The novel is set in an African village on the edge of a forest and explores themes of identity, belonging, chosen purpose, and the relationship between the modern and the ancestral.

This guide is designed to support classroom reading, literary analysis, and cross-curricular discussion in English, Social Studies, and Cultural Studies. It includes comprehension questions, vocabulary, thematic analysis, and creative activities.

Curriculum connections: Identity • African literature • Oral tradition • Fantasy and mythology • Character development • Theme analysis

Synopsis

Chikomborero — called Chiks by everyone who knows him — is twelve years old. His name means Blessing in Shona, a name he has never quite believed fits him. He lives in a village on the edge of a vast forest that the villagers treat with a mixture of reverence and fear. When the forest begins to change — when strange things happen that nobody can explain — it becomes clear that Chiks has been chosen for something. But chosen for what, and by whom, and at what cost?

The novel follows Chiks as he navigates two worlds: the familiar world of his village and family, and the older, stranger world of the forest. Along the way he must decide who he is — and whether his name might be right after all.

Key Characters

Chikomborero (Chiks)

Protagonist. 12 years old. His name means Blessing in Shona — a name he doesn't feel he has earned. He is curious, thoughtful, and uncertain in the way that many young people are uncertain about who they are and what they are for.

Nyasha

Chiks's mother. She named him Blessing because of what she hoped for him, not because of what she knew. Her relationship with Chiks is one of love and high expectation — a pressure he feels without it ever being unkind.

The Forest

The forest is not simply a setting — it is an active presence in the story. Ancient, knowing, and patient. It has been watching the village for longer than anyone can remember.

Vocabulary

Key words and phrases for pre-reading and reading activities:

Word/Phrase	Meaning / Discussion point
Chikomborero	A Shona name meaning Blessing. Shona is a language spoken in Zimbabwe and parts of Zambia and Mozambique. Why might an author from Ghana choose a Shona name for his protagonist?
Chosen	Selected for a purpose, often by a power greater than oneself. What does it mean to be chosen? Is it a privilege or a burden?
Ancestral	Relating to ancestors — those who came before. How does the ancestral world appear in this story?
Reverence	Deep respect mixed with awe. How do the villagers show reverence for the forest?
Identity	Who a person is — their sense of self. How does Chiks's understanding of his own identity change throughout the story?
The wilderness	The untamed natural world beyond the village. What does the wilderness represent in this story?

Comprehension Questions

Section A — Literal Comprehension

These questions check understanding of the plot and characters.

1. What does Chikomborero's name mean, and why does he struggle to believe it fits him?

[Recall]

2. How does the village relate to the forest at the beginning of the story?

[Recall]

3. What first makes Chiks aware that something unusual is happening?

[Recall]

4. Describe Chiks's relationship with his mother Nyasha.

[Recall]

5. What does Chiks discover about himself by the end of the story?

[Recall]

Section B — Inferential Questions

These questions ask students to read between the lines.

6. Why do you think the author chose to give Chiks a name that means Blessing if Chiks doesn't feel blessed? What effect does this have on the story?

[Inference]

7. The forest is described almost as a living character. What clues does the author give that suggest the forest is aware and intentional?

[Inference]

8. What does Chiks's uncertainty about his name tell us about how he sees himself?

[Inference]

9. Why might being chosen by the forest feel like a burden rather than an honour to Chiks?

[Inference]

10. What does the story suggest about the relationship between a person's name and their identity?

[Inference]

Section C — Critical and Evaluative Questions

These questions ask students to evaluate and connect.

11. The story is set in an African village with African names, an African forest, and African ways of understanding the world. Why is this significant? What would change if the story were set in a European or American setting?

[Evaluation]

12. Chiks is 12 years old — similar in age to many readers of this book. How does the author use Chiks's age to make the story relatable? What decisions does Chiks make that feel authentic to someone his age?

[Evaluation]

13. Do you think Chiks deserves his name by the end of the book? Explain your answer with evidence from the text.

[Evaluation]

14. The author of this book, Jaydn Bruce, is himself 17 years old and from Accra, Ghana. How does knowing this change how you read the story?

[Evaluation]

Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Identity and Naming

A central question in the novel is whether a name shapes who you become, or whether who you become is separate from what you are called. Students can explore this through Chiks's arc — beginning with a name he doubts and ending at a place of understanding.

- Activity: Ask students to write a paragraph about their own name. What does it mean? Were they named for a person or a reason? Does it feel like it fits?

Theme 2: The Natural World and Ancestral Knowledge

The forest in this story is not a backdrop — it is an archive of ancestral knowledge. This connects to many African traditions where the natural world is understood as sentient, as carrying memory, as speaking to those who know how to listen.

- Activity: Research one African oral tradition that involves the natural world speaking or signalling. Present findings to the class.

Theme 3: Being Chosen — Gift or Burden?

Many great stories involve a protagonist being chosen for a purpose they didn't ask for. Chiks joins a long tradition of reluctant heroes. The novel explores whether being chosen is something to celebrate or something to survive.

- Discussion: Name another story — in any medium — where a young person is chosen for something they didn't ask for. How do they respond? How does Chiks's response compare?
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Creative Activities

Activity 1 — Rewrite a Scene

Choose a scene from the book and rewrite it from the perspective of the forest. What does the forest see, know, and feel during this moment?

Activity 2 — Character Letter

Write a letter from Nyasha to Chiks that she never sends — telling him what she hoped for him when she gave him his name.

Activity 3 — Map the World

Draw a map of the world of this story — the village, the forest, and the spaces between. Label the places that are important to Chiks's journey.

Activity 4 — Name Exploration

Research the meanings of names in a Ghanaian language (Twi, Ga, Ewe) or another African language of your choice. Present five names, their meanings, and what they tell us about the culture they come from.

About the Author

Chikomborero: The Boy the Forest Chose was written by Jaydn Bruce, who was 16 years old when he wrote it. Jaydn lives in Accra, Ghana, and has published three books independently. He has no publisher, no literary agent, and no institutional support. He built his author platform entirely himself. He is currently working on Book 3 of the Chikomborero Chronicles and a short film.

Jaydn is available for school visits. To book an author visit, contact: jaydnbruce.com or WhatsApp +233 551 443 311.

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I'm bringing reading back to Accra. One book at a time.