



Watching **Rafiki**

A film by Wanuri Kahiu, 2018

Type d'activité : Questionnaire de visionnage après le film

Durée : 2 h

Introduction

Présenté et très remarqué lors du Festival de Cannes 2018, *Rafiki* de Wanuri Kahiu aborde le thème de l'homosexualité et de sa perception dans la société kenyane contemporaine. La réalisatrice nous donne à voir, avec beaucoup de sensibilité et de pudeur, l'amour naissant entre deux jeunes filles. Elles vont progressivement se découvrir, se révéler, aussi bien à elles-mêmes qu'aux yeux de leurs proches (parents, amis) et de la société.

Rafiki nous montre comment regarder l'autre, mais aussi comment affronter le regard des autres, dans un Kenya connecté à la mondialisation mais encore emprunt de traditions et de préjugés homophobes.

L'étude de ce film en classe d'anglais permet d'évoquer la culture de ce grand pays anglophone qu'est le Kenya, mais aussi d'aborder les questions de respect et de tolérance, par exemple dans le cadre d'un projet interdisciplinaire avec le cours d'Enseignement Moral et Civique.

Dans les programmes

Niveau	Objets d'étude	Compétences
Seconde	Sentiment d'appartenance : singularité et solidarité	► Compréhension orale ► Expression orale
Cycle terminal	Lieux et formes du pouvoir / Idée de progrès	► Expression écrite

Rafiki

Storyline

A film by :

Wanuri Kahiu

Genre : Drama

Year : 2018

Kena and Ziki long for something more. Despite the political rivalry between their families, the girls resist and remain close friends, supporting each other to pursue their dreams in a conservative society. When love blossoms between them, the two girls will be forced to choose between happiness and safety. *Rafiki* challenges deep rooted cynicism about same sex relationships among actors, crew, friends, and family in Kenya.

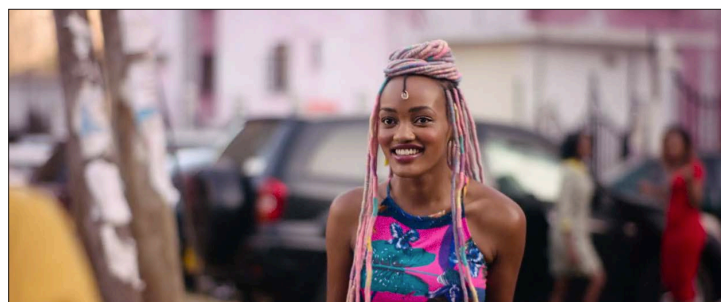


I/ Kena and Ziki

1/ Focus on Kena and Ziki, the two main characters, and describe their physical appearances and attitudes:



Kena, interpreted by Samantha Mugatsia



Ziki, interpreted by Sheila Munyiva

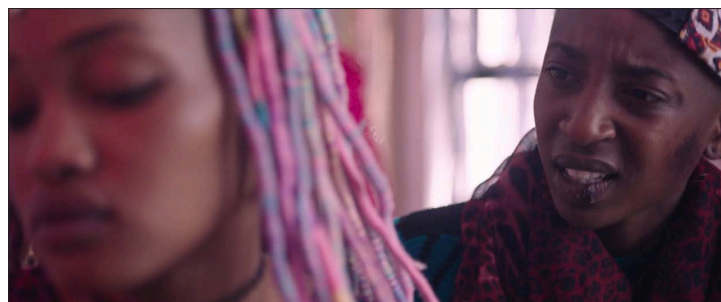
2/ Identify the two places where the two girls are alone together : what are their common points, what idea do these locations convey?

3/ Explain how the use of close-ups on the two girls expresses the evolution of their feelings throughout the movie.



Film term : close-ups

A **close-up** is a shot taken from a close distance in which the scale of the object appears relatively large and fills the entire frame to focus attention and emphasize its importance. A **tight shot** makes the subject fill almost the entire frame; also **extreme close-up** is a shot of a part of a character.



4/ Explain what the following dialogue between Kena and Ziki reveals about their expectations and their place in Kenyan society. Say what Ziki's unfinished sentence implies.

Ziki: I wish this was real.

Kena: It is.

Ziki: When we go out there...

5/ Observe the following picture of Kena: in your opinion, what does the use of the mirror suggest?



6/ Analyze what Kena implies with the sentence “You’re just a typical Kenyan girl” addressed to Ziki when they separate.

II/ The families

1/ Indicate each girl’s family background and justify with elements from the film.

2/a/ The director uses a pan from the girls to Kena’s father (interpreted by Jimmy Gathu): what impression does this technique convey to the viewer?

Film term : pan

(abbreviation for panorama shot)

A **pan** is a horizontal movement of the camera in one direction (to the right or left) while the camera remains on its position.



Starting frame of the pan



Ending frame of the pan

b/ Focus on the close-up on Ziki’s mother (interpreted by Patricia Amira) when she catches the girls kissing: what emotions does this shot suggest?

Which visual elements underline these emotions?



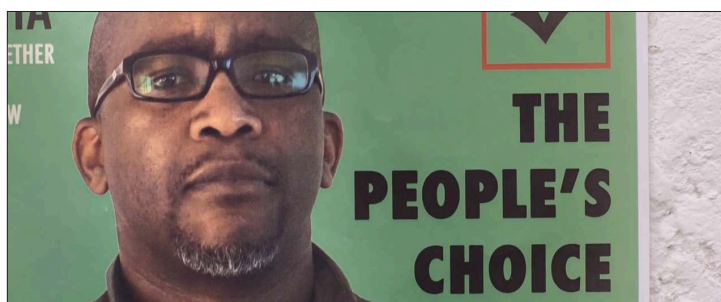
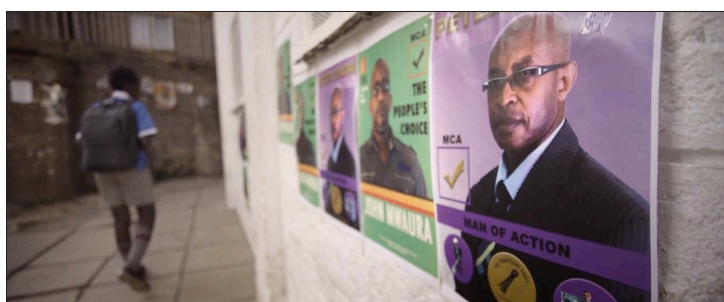
3/ Compare the relations between each girl and their mothers at the beginning and at the end of the movie.

III/ Kenyan society

1/ Observe the two campaign posters and explain the two slogans in the light of :

a/ the life of the community

b/ the girls’ relationship



2/ Explain the role of the church in the community.

Say how the church views homosexuality and justify with examples from the film.

3/a/ Find terms to qualify the role and the attitude of the following characters:

Mama Atim (Mutheni Gathecha)



Nduta (Nice Githinji)



Elizabeth (Hellen Aura)



b/ Analyzing the stares in these three pictures, say how these characters view the relation between Kena and Ziki.



4/ Quoting elements from the film, comment on the place of women in Kenyan society.

5/ Say how the relationship between Kena and Ziki is discovered, and how the community reacts to this revelation. Justify with examples.

6/a/ Explain what Tom (the gay man interpreted by Vitalis Waweru) symbolizes, and why this character never speaks.

b/ Analyze the structure and the meaning of the picture beside.



IV/ Overview

1/ Give your own interpretation of the ending of the film.

2/ In the light of the whole film, explain the meaning of the title *Rafiki* (which means “friend” in Swahili).



Éléments de correction

I- 1/- Kena : short hair, dressed in casual clothes, like jeans and T-shirt, riding a skateboard. She acts like a tomboy.

- Ziki : long colorful hair, wearing skirts or dresses, she seems influenced by trend and fashion / “girly” attitude.

2/ The girls meet on a rooftop or in an abandoned car outside their neighborhood. These two locations are remote, distant, away from the others, hidden and isolated from the rest of society. They symbolize a safe place where the girls can be themselves away from the judging stares of others.

3/ The use of close-ups and extreme close-ups on the girls evokes the fascination they have the one for the other, the fact that nothing else exists when they are together. These shots hint at intimacy and love between the characters, even when things become difficult, making their relationship impossible.

4/ This dialogue proves their feelings are genuine and sincere, so much so that they would like to express them publicly. This love is real for them but not for their community. It is a relationship which stands at the margin of society, it cannot be tolerated in mainstream Kenya. Ziki’s unfinished sentence indicates that when they leave their safe place, this love cannot be shown.

5/ The use of the mirror, separating Kena’s face in two parts indicates the two sides of the girl : the private one and the social, public one. Her identity is split between what she is deep down inside and what is expected of her.

6/ This sentence indicates that despite their sincere love, social pressure becomes too strong for Ziki. She has no choice but to accept her parents’ decision, even if it is not what she expected in life.

II- 1/ Kena comes from a middle class family, as we figure out through her parents jobs. She lives in a decent yet modest apartment. She wants to get a scholarship in order to study and become a nurse. Ziki comes from a wealthier family, as is suggested by the higher building in which she lives, and also the elevator in it, hinting at a higher social status. Moreover, Ziki is sent to London at the end of the movie, indicating her family has sufficient money for such a trip.

2/ - Kena and her mom seem very close at first. Kena appears as very present and caring, the mother seems grateful and needing the support of her daughter in order to cope with her divorce, a source of shame and difficulty. But Kena’s mother cannot accept homosexuality, for “moral” and religious reasons, she rejects her daughter.

- Ziki’s mom seems very severe and strict. However, we notice she progressively understands the nature of the girls’ relationship. She turns out to be as supportive as can be.

3/ a/ The pan breaks the isolation of the girls, it makes their surroundings concrete and real to the viewer. The viewer understands the father has seen and therefore knows / guesses / figures out what is going on between the two girls. We as viewers share some information with the father.

b/ This close-up conveys disappointment, a form of contained anger, but at the same time a sort of resignation: the mother knew about the girls’ feelings, but now she has seen and needs to act. Her eyes don’t express surprise but confirmation. Her tight mouth indicates anger, her red shirt hints at society forbidding differences.

III- 1/ - Man of action : Ziki’s father stands for power, strict rules. He does not make compromises but needs to act = the way he deals with his daughter is based on gestures and actions (slap, sending her to London).

- People’s choice : Kena’s father appears as open to dialogue, understanding, ready to help others. He seems ready to accept Kena’s relationship in spite of the social codes.

2/ The church is a central element in this community, it is where the whole community gathers. It has deep influences on people and families (see Kena’s mother reading and quoting the Bible). The church rejects homosexuality as a sin, a sign of the devil. It is opposed to some modern ideas as we see in the sermon against same-sex marriage, or in the scene of Kena’s “purification”.

3/ a/ Mama Atim = the gossip / Nduta = the schemer / Elizabeth = the rival

b/ The stares reveal that Mama Atim is eyeing the girls’ every moves, Nduta is opposed to this relation and feels superior, Elizabeth appears as jealous, she lost Ziki’s friendship or love perhaps? Their stares blame and judge the girls, but we notice they have secret feelings of their own.

4/ We understand the place of women in Kenyan society is complicated: they belong to the domestic sphere, they are considered as inferior to men, who are the bread-givers, supporting the family = see Blacksta’s proposal to Kena, the importance of having a baby boy, the girls rejected from the football game, the way men address women with obvious sexual references.

5/ The relationship is discovered by Mama Atim and Nduta, who invade the girls’ safe place. The whole community is called to see, to witness their behavior = a form of public shame. The reaction is violent: the girls are beaten, thrown to the ground among trash, revealing the place of homosexuals in Kenyan mentalities. The scene at the police station is quite revealing: the police protects society and its prejudices by not taking the girls seriously.

6/ a/ The gay man is a scapegoat, he symbolizes the whole Kenyan LGBT community, who undergoes abuses and physical violence silently. He symbolizes the helplessness of homosexuals who cannot claim, voice their difference in Kenya.

b/ The two characters are in the girls’ former safe place, which is now public. They sit on the same level, showing their equality. They both look down, proving the difficulty to come out as homosexual. The gay man sides with Kena, he shows support and understanding by his presence: Kena is not alone. They appear as outcasted from society, they need to stick together.

IV- 1/ The students can express their opinion about the return of Ziki: is she really back or not? Are the girls going to continue their relationship? The open ending can suggest hope for the LGBT community in Kenya, but also the idea that a lot needs to be done for society to accept homosexuality.

2/ “Friend” = what the girls should be to be accepted in society, what the LGBT community needs in Kenya. A way to suggest hypocrisy surrounding homosexuality in Kenya : the title indicates how the girls are seen, but not who they really are.