

THE ACADEMY SERIES

BOOK TWO

History

THE TIME TRAVELLER'S JOURNAL

Historical Mystery • Adventure



PRESENTED BY
HIRRA ACADEMY

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BOOK TWO

History

THE TIME TRAVELLER'S JOURNAL

Historical Mystery • Adventure

A Hirra Academy Story

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PART I

The Journal

Chapter 1

The Forgotten Shelf

Mr. Bello wrote the assignment on the board in his usual unhurried hand, as though he had all the time in the world and fully expected the class not to share his patience.

Choose one historical event. Explain how we know it happened.

"Not what happened," he said, turning to face JSS2. "How we *know* it happened. There is a difference, and by the end of this term, I expect all of you to understand it."

Amina Yusuf copied the question into her notebook without much enthusiasm. History, to her, had always been a subject made of names and dates that refused to stay in her head, years that blurred into other years, battles that felt as distant as the moon.

"This is easy," Daniel Okoro whispered from the next desk, already sketching a small map in the margin of his own notebook, the way he sketched everything. "Independence. 1960. Done."

"That's the event," Amina whispered back. "Not how we know it. He's going to want more than a date."

Daniel shrugged, unbothered. He rarely worried about assignments the way Amina did, and it rarely seemed to cost him anything.

At break time, still turning the question over, Amina wandered into the school library not the main reading room, where the newer textbooks lived in neat rows, but the narrow back section past the librarian's desk, where the shelves were older, the books were older, and almost no one went unless they were lost.

She wasn't entirely sure why she went there that day. Later, she would tell Daniel it was an accident. Later still, she would stop believing that herself.

One shelf near the back had partly collapsed, its books slumped sideways into the gap behind it. Amina knelt to straighten them, more out of habit than purpose, and her fingers found something that wasn't a book at all. A slim, leather-bound journal, wedged flat against the wall as though someone had placed it there on purpose, then made sure it wouldn't easily be found again.

The cover was worn soft at the corners. Inside, the handwriting was small, careful, and dense — dates, place names, descriptions of buildings and conversations and events Amina half-recognised from the textbook covers she'd never bothered to open. Photographs, brittle with age, were tucked between some of the pages. Newspaper clippings, yellowed and thin, were pasted into others.

And here and there, without warning, an entry simply stopped.

By morning, the city had changed. What happened next was—

The rest of the page was gone. Not torn carelessly, Amina noticed, but removed cleanly, close to the spine, as though someone had taken their time about it.

She flipped forward, another gap then another. Whole sections of the journal had been taken out, leaving only enough behind to prove that something important had once been there.

On the final surviving page, in the same careful handwriting as everything before it, a single sentence stood alone.

"If you want to know what happened, find the missing pages."

Amina sat back on her heels, the assignment on the board entirely forgotten.

She found Daniel by the mango tree near the gate at lunch and dropped the journal into his hands without explanation. He turned it over once, opened it to the first missing gap, and looked up at her with an expression that was trying hard to stay skeptical and not quite managing it.

"Where did you find this?"

"The old shelf behind the library desk." Amina tapped the final page. "Someone hid this on purpose, Daniel. And someone else went through it afterward and took pages out."

"Or it just fell apart from being old," Daniel said, though without much conviction. "Books do that."

"Pages don't remove themselves cleanly at the spine, someone did this."

Daniel studied the sentence on the final page a moment longer, and Amina watched something shift in his face. The same shift, she suspected, that had just happened in her own.

"Alright," he said finally. "Say you're right. Say someone hid this and someone else took pages out of it. Where do we even start looking for pages that could be anywhere?"

Amina turned back to an entry near the middle of the journal, one of the few still complete and read it again, more carefully this time. Buried in the description of a market day long past was a single line, almost incidental, mentioning a photograph kept in a very specific place.

"We start," she said, "with this."

WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

History is the study of the past, but it depends entirely on evidence, the traces people leave behind, whether written, photographed, spoken, or built. Historians call these traces *sources*, and much of historical work involves finding sources, examining them carefully, and figuring out what they can and cannot tell us.

Reflection Questions

1. Why does Mr. Bello ask the class to explain *how we know* a historical event happened, rather than just what happened?
2. What makes Amina suspect the missing pages were removed on purpose rather than simply lost to age or damage?
3. If you found an old document with parts missing, what would you want to know before trusting anything it said?



Chapter 2

The Photograph

The photograph mentioned in the journal turned out to be exactly where the entry said it would be in a slim folder inside a filing cabinet in Mr. Bello's classroom, labelled only "Archive Materials — Uncatalogued" in handwriting too old to be his own.

Mr. Bello raised an eyebrow when Amina asked to see it, but didn't ask why, which Amina found almost more unsettling than if he had.

The photograph showed a Nigerian community from decades earlier, a market square, low buildings, a cluster of people frozen mid-motion by a camera that had, judging by the photograph's soft edges, been old even when the picture was taken.

On the back, in the same careful handwriting as the journal, someone had written a single line.

"This is where the story begins."

"Same handwriting," Daniel said, comparing it against a page of the journal spread open beside it. "So whoever hid the journal also hid this."

"Or it's the same person who took the pages out," Amina said. "We don't actually know those are the same person yet."

Daniel gave her a look. "You just made that distinction up on the spot."

"I did not. Mr. Bello talks about it all the time. Two people can leave evidence in the same place without being the same person." Amina squinted at the photograph's edge, where a faint label had been printed beneath the image. "Look, there's a place name here but i don't recognize it."

Neither did Daniel. They brought it to Mr. Bello, half expecting him to simply tell them the answer and end the mystery on the spot instead, he studied the photograph for a long moment and set it down with obvious care.

"That name isn't used anymore," he said. "The place still exists, it simply goes by something else today. Names change more often than people realize, community renames itself and sometimes a new authority renames it for them."

"So how do we find out what it's called now?" Amina asked.

"The same way you'd investigate anything else, you don't rely on one source. You compare this photograph against maps, older newspaper records, and if you're fortunate, someone who remembers." Mr. Bello tapped the desk between them. "One source can tell you what someone remembered, or what someone chose to record. Several sources, compared carefully, can help you understand what actually happened.

Remember that, it will matter more than almost anything else I teach you this term."

Daniel was already turning the photograph over again, tracing the edge of the image with one finger. "There's something in the background here, half cut off looks like it could be a compound wall maybe a landmark."

Amina leaned in. He was right. It was faint, easy to miss, but it was there, a detail neither of them would have noticed without looking twice.

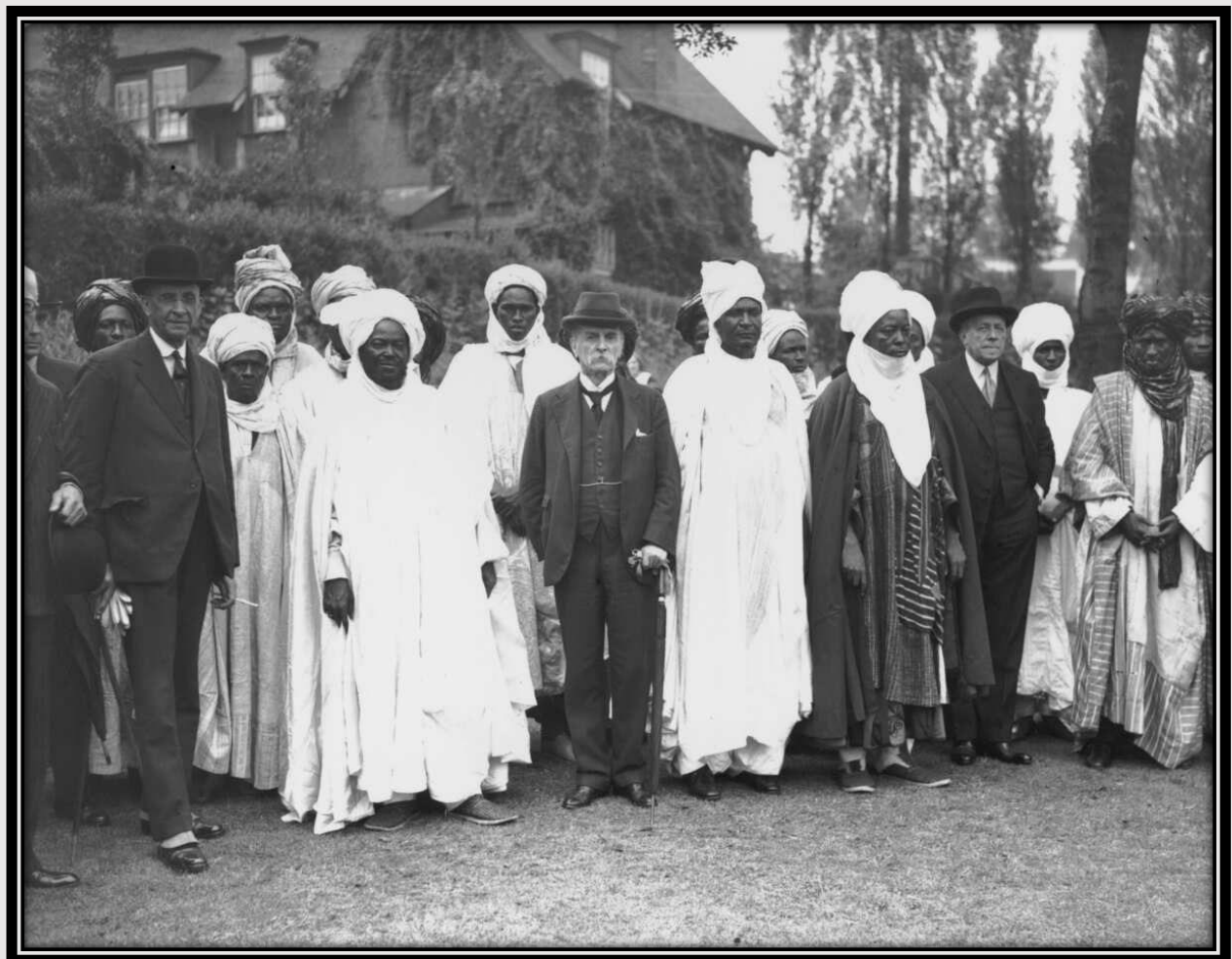
"That's the kind of thing a photograph can show you that a written account might skip entirely," Mr. Bello said, watching them. "A writer describes what seems important to them. A camera captures whatever happened to be standing in front of it, important or not. That's why historians value photographs not because they tell the whole story, but because they sometimes tell you the part nobody thought to write down."

WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

Photographs are considered *primary sources* of evidence created at the time of the event, rather than written about it later. They can reveal details a writer might have overlooked or chosen not to mention, but they also only show a single moment from a single angle, chosen by whoever held the camera. Place names across Nigeria have changed many times over the decades, sometimes due to community decisions and sometimes due to changes in administration, which is why old records can be difficult to match to modern locations without careful cross-checking.

Reflection Questions

1. Why does Mr. Bello say historians should compare several sources rather than trust just one?
2. Why might a place's name change over time? Can you think of an example from your own area?



PART II

Before Colonial Rule

Chapter 3

The World Before Them

Tracing the photograph's community backward turned into the biggest research task Amina had ever taken on bigger, certainly, than any assignment Mr. Bello had given the class directly, though she noticed he seemed entirely unsurprised by how far she and Daniel had already gone with it.

"Before you can understand what changed," he told them, when Amina finally admitted how stuck they felt, "you have to understand what was already there. You keep looking at this community as if its story starts with the photograph."

So they went further back.

Old maps, community records donated to the school archive years earlier, and most usefully, Mr. Bello suggested the memories of Amina's own grandmother, who still spoke of her childhood village with the easy detail of someone describing yesterday rather than sixty years gone.

Amina's grandmother did not simply tell her about "pre-colonial Nigeria," a phrase that meant almost nothing to Amina when she first wrote it in her notes. She talked instead about a council of elders who settled disputes before any court existed for miles. About a market that ran on a fixed cycle every few days, drawing traders from communities Amina had never heard of about naming ceremonies, oral histories passed down at night, craftsmen whose work was traded far beyond where they lived.

"We didn't call it a system," her grandmother said, laughing slightly at the word. "It was simply how things worked. Every community had its own way, the Hausa-Fulani emirates ran differently from the Yoruba kingdoms, and both ran differently again from Igbo communities further east, or the old Kanem-Borno lands to the north. Nigeria wasn't one thing waiting to happen. It was many things, each already whole, long before that name existed at all."

Back at school, Daniel had been busy with maps of his own, cross-referencing what Amina's grandmother described against records Mr. Bello had pointed them toward.

"She's right," he said, spreading three maps across a desk. "Look this one shows trade routes running between kingdoms that had nothing to do with each other politically, but traded constantly. This one shows the old emirate boundaries in the north. None of this lines up with how the country looks today."

"So the borders we know now didn't exist yet," Amina said slowly, the idea settling into place.

"Not even close. These were societies with their own governments, laws, economies, religions, art, everything a country has, just organized differently, and not all combined under one name."

It was while cross-checking one of the community records against the journal that Amina found it, a single line in one of the journal's still-complete entries, describing a traditional political institution in careful, admiring detail. The very next page was one of the missing ones.

"Why would someone remove a page about this?" Amina asked, running her thumb along the torn edge. "It's not even about colonial rule yet. It's just describing how the community governed itself."

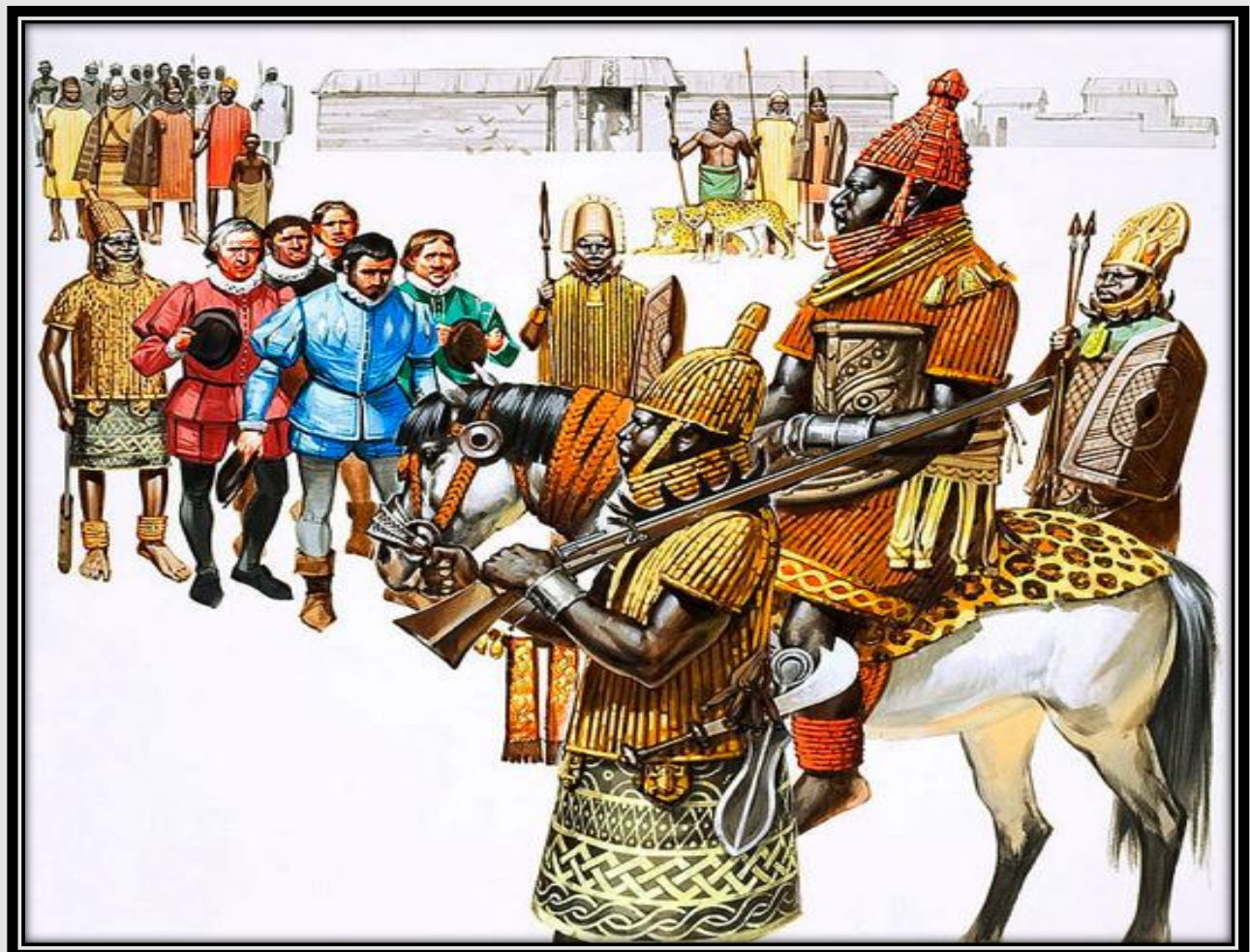
Daniel had no answer for that. Neither, for the first time, did Amina but she copied the line into her notebook anyway, certain it would matter later, even if she couldn't yet say how.

WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

Long before colonial rule, the region that became Nigeria contained many distinct societies with established political, economic, and cultural systems including Hausa-Fulani emirates in the north, Yoruba kingdoms in the southwest, Igbo communities largely organised around councils and age-grades in the southeast, and the historic Kanem-Borno empire, among many others. These societies had their own governance structures, trade networks, legal customs, and artistic traditions, and were not simply "waiting" to become a single country. Nigeria's borders and identity as one nation were established later, primarily through colonial administration.

Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important to understand pre-colonial Nigerian societies before studying colonial rule?
2. What kinds of sources does Amina use to learn about the community's pre-colonial history? Which do you think is most reliable, and why?
3. Why might it matter that different regions of pre-colonial Nigeria were organised in different ways?



Chapter 4

The Map With No Country

The map was the strangest piece of evidence they'd found so far not because it was damaged, but because, at first glance, it appeared to be wrong.

It showed a region with familiar rivers and familiar coastlines, but almost nothing else matched what Amina expected. No "Nigeria" was written anywhere across it. Instead, the land was divided into names she didn't recognize, kingdoms and territories with borders that curved through places she knew as entirely different regions today.

"This can't be right," she said, turning it over as though the correct version might be printed on the back.

"It's not wrong," Daniel said, already tracing one of the borders with his finger, the way he traced everything. "It's just old. This map was drawn before Nigeria existed, so of course it doesn't say Nigeria on it."

Amina sat with that longer than she expected to need to. She had always understood, in a distant sort of way, that countries hadn't always existed. But there was a difference between knowing a fact and holding a map that proved it, its borders drawn by someone who had never once needed the word "Nigeria" to describe where they lived.

Mr. Bello, when they brought it to him, seemed pleased in a way that had nothing to do with the mystery itself.

"Now you're looking at a map correctly," he said. "A map isn't just a picture of where things are. It's evidence of how someone understood their world at the time they made it. This one was drawn to show kingdoms and trade routes not modern countries, because modern countries, in this part of the world, didn't exist yet."

"So who decided where the borders would go? The ones we have now?" Amina asked.

"Mostly, colonial powers dividing territory to suit their own administration, often without much regard for the kingdoms, trade routes, or communities the new borders cut straight through. That's a story for a later chapter of your investigation." He nodded at the map. "For now, notice something else. What does this map choose to show, and what does it leave out?"

Daniel squinted at it. "It shows kingdoms and trade routes, smaller villages, maybe or anything the mapmaker didn't think was important."

"Exactly. A map represents the priorities of whoever drew it. This one was likely drawn by a trader, or someone connected to trade notice how carefully the routes are marked, compared to almost everything else." Mr. Bello handed it back to them. "Maps are historical sources, the same as a photograph or a letter. But like any source, they show you a perspective, not a complete picture."

That evening, comparing the old map against a modern one spread beside it, Amina found herself sketching her own rough diagram, the trade routes from the old map layered over the roads of the new one, the kingdoms replaced by states, the same rivers running through both, patient and unconcerned with whatever borders humans decided to draw beside them.

"It's the same land," she said, half to herself. "Just organized differently every time someone with enough power decided to reorganize it."

Daniel, for once, didn't have a joke ready. He just nodded, and went back to tracing the map's old, vanished borders.

WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

Before colonial rule, political boundaries across the region reflected kingdoms, trade networks, and cultural groupings rather than fixed national borders. Modern Nigeria's borders were largely established during the colonial period, when European powers divided African territory — often at conferences held in Europe, with little regard for existing kingdoms, ethnic groups, or trade routes, which is why some communities found themselves split across new borders while others were combined with groups they had little previous connection to.

Reflection Questions

1. Why doesn't the old map show a country called "Nigeria"?
2. What does Mr. Bello mean when he says a map "represents the priorities of whoever drew it"?



PART III

Colonial Nigeria

Chapter 5

The New Rules

The journal's next complete entry jumped forward with none of the gentleness Amina had expected. One page described a market day much like any other. The next, only a little further on, described soldiers, officers, and a flag that did not belong to the community flying over its central square.

"Colonial administration," Mr. Bello confirmed, when they brought the entry to him. "This is where it begins, at least for this particular community. But I want you to notice something before you go further, the journal doesn't simply say 'colonial rule began.' It describes what changed for ordinary people. That's a much more useful kind of history."

It was Daniel who found the letter, tucked into an envelope pressed between two pages near the entry, brittle enough that he handled it like it might dissolve.

It was written by a traditional leader, whose story Amina vaguely remembered from a Civic Education novel a younger cousin had been reading, but someone else entirely, a leader from this community, addressing a complaint to an unnamed colonial office about a new tax that had been imposed without warning or consultation.

"We were not asked. We were only informed, after the decision had already been made on our behalf."

"That's different from what the old school newspaper said," Daniel said, pulling out a photocopy Mr. Bello had shown them the week before, part of the archive's general collection. The newspaper account described the same tax policy in brisk, approving language — a modernising measure, it called it, bringing order and structure to the region's administration.

"So which one is true?" Amina asked. "The letter or the newspaper?"

Mr. Bello didn't answer immediately, which by now Amina had learned usually meant he wanted her to sit with the question a while longer before he offered anything.

"Ask yourself who wrote each one, and why," he said eventually. "The newspaper was likely written for a colonial or administrative audience, describing a policy in terms that made it sound reasonable and necessary. The letter was written by someone directly affected by that same policy, describing how it actually felt to have no say in a decision made about his own community."

"They're both true," Amina said slowly, working it out as she spoke. The newspaper is true about what the policy was supposed to do. The letter is true about what it actually felt like."

"Now," Mr. Bello said, something like approval in his voice, "you're thinking like a historian."

Amina copied both sources carefully into her notebook, side by side, the way Mr. Bello had shown them, not choosing one over the other, but holding both, and noting exactly where and why they disagreed. It felt strange, at first, to leave a question genuinely unresolved. But it also felt, she was beginning to realize, considerably more honest than picking whichever answer was easiest.

WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

Indirect rule, the system through which British colonial authorities governed much of Nigeria, worked differently in different regions, but generally relied on existing or newly appointed local leaders to enforce colonial policies — including taxation often without meaningful consultation with the communities affected. Historians today use both official colonial records and local accounts, such as letters and oral histories, to build a fuller picture of how these policies were actually experienced, since official records alone often reflect only the perspective of the administration that produced them.

Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important to ask who created a source and for what purpose?



Chapter 6

The Pages They Took

The next missing pages were the most deliberately removed of any Amina had found so far not simply cut close to the spine, but with a small, careful tear at the top, as though someone had started to remove them in a hurry and then slowed down partway through.

What survived around the gap was enough to tell her the missing section had described resistance though resistance to what, exactly, the surrounding entries only hinted at.

"There isn't just one kind of resistance," Mr. Bello told them, when Amina admitted she'd expected something more dramatic like soldiers, uprisings, the kind of resistance she'd half-imagined from old films. "Communities resisted colonial policies in many different ways. Some organized open protests. Some simply refused to cooperate with unjust orders, quietly, at real personal risk. Some focused on preserving what colonial authorities discouraged or banned outright — festivals, languages, naming traditions. In some historical contexts, resistance became armed conflict. But that was never the only form it took, and often wasn't even the most common one."

Daniel had been cross-referencing the surrounding entries against community records donated to the school archive, and looked up with the particular focus he usually reserved for maps.

"There's a record here of a protest, just people refusing to move forward in a line at a tax collection point. It matches something in the journal, right before the gap starts."

"So the missing pages might have described exactly that," Amina said. "A peaceful protest. Why would someone want that removed? It's not even the dramatic part."

It was a question none of them could answer that day. But it was Amina, going back over the journal's surviving pages that evening, who noticed something she'd missed before a faint discolouration along the inside edge of several other torn pages throughout the journal, always in the same pattern, always removed with the same careful, unhurried precision.

"Whoever did this wasn't careless," she told Daniel the next morning, showing him the pattern. "And they didn't just do it once, in a panic. They came back to this journal more than once, over what must have been years, and each time, they removed exactly the pages they wanted gone. That's not an accident. That's a decision someone kept making."

Daniel didn't have a joke ready for that either. He just looked at the pattern of careful tears, and for the first time since Amina had shown him the journal, he looked genuinely unsettled by it.

"Then it's not really about what happened, is it," he said slowly. "It's about who didn't want us to know it happened."

WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

Resistance to colonial rule across Nigeria took many forms beyond armed conflict, including peaceful protest, non-cooperation, and the deliberate preservation of cultural and religious practices that colonial authorities discouraged or restricted. One of the most significant examples was the Aba Women's War of 1929, in which women across South-Eastern Nigeria organized widespread, largely non-violent protests against colonial taxation and the warrant chief system. Understanding the range of resistance strategies helps historians move beyond a simplified view that reduces resistance to violence alone.

Reflection Questions

1. What different forms of resistance does Mr. Bello describe, beyond armed conflict?



PART IV

The Road to Independence

Chapter 7

The Voices

The journal's tone changed again as Amina worked her way further through it and more record of a whole country beginning, slowly and then quickly, to imagine itself differently.

Newspaper clippings appeared more often, pasted carefully into the margins: nationalist papers, full of arguments Amina had heard echoes of before, somewhere, though she couldn't place exactly where Nigerians should govern Nigeria; that political participation shouldn't depend on where you'd been born; that decades of colonial administration had gone on long enough.

"This is what nationalism looked like in practice," Mr. Bello explained, spreading several of the photocopied clippings across his desk. "Not just an idea people held quietly. Newspapers, political meetings, organizations formed specifically to demand change. It took organization, not just frustration, to eventually produce independence."

Daniel, cross-referencing dates against a timeline he'd started keeping in the back of his notebook, went very still over one particular clipping.

"Amina. Look at this."

He turned the photocopy toward her. It was a short opinion piece, unsigned except for a single set of initials S.A. but it was the handwriting in the margin notes, added by whoever had clipped and saved the article, that made Amina's breath catch.

It was the same handwriting as the journal.

"He didn't just collect this," Amina said slowly, comparing the two side by side. "He wrote notes on it. Personal notes. Like he was really there like he remembers this, not just read about it afterward."

"S.A.," Daniel said. "Could be anyone."

"Could be," Amina agreed. "Or it could be whoever wrote the journal. She sat back, the pieces rearranging themselves in her mind. "We've been looking for the missing pages this whole time. Maybe we should have been looking for the person just as hard."

Mr. Bello, when they brought him the clipping, studied it for longer than either of them expected, something unreadable crossing his face before he finally spoke.

"There were many people documenting this period," he said carefully. "Teachers, journalists, ordinary citizens who understood that what they were living through mattered, and wanted a record of it to survive. It's entirely possible your journal's author was one of them."

"Do you know who he is?" Amina asked directly.

Mr. Bello held her gaze a moment. "I know that some questions are more useful to investigate yourself than to be handed the answer to. Keep going, Amina. You're closer than you think."

Chapter 8

October First

Reconstructing the first of October took Amina and Daniel nearly two full weeks, not because the sources were scarce, but because, for once, there were almost too many of them.

Photographs of the flag-raising ceremony. Newspaper front pages, jubilant with headlines. Recordings of speeches, transcribed in the school archive's older files. A handful of personal letters, donated to the collection years earlier by families who'd kept them since. Amina pinned a rough timeline to the wall of the archive room, adding sources to it one at a time, watching the first of October, 1960 take shape from a dozen different angles at once.

The public sources told one story: celebration, pride, a nation stepping fully into its own hands for the first time. The personal letters, when she read them carefully, told something slightly more complicated celebration too, but folded together with real uncertainty about what would come next.

"Both of those can be true at the same time," Amina said, half to herself, echoing something Mr. Bello had said weeks earlier about the tax letter and the newspaper. "People can be proud and worried in the same breath. It doesn't cancel out."

It was Daniel, working through the letters a second time, who found the reference, tucked into the middle of a longer paragraph, easy to miss if you weren't already looking for exactly this kind of thing.

"We celebrated the flag. But Samuel warned us not to confuse independence with the end of our work."

Amina read it three times before she trusted herself to speak.

"Samuel," she said. "That's not initials. That's a name."

Daniel was already flipping back through his own notes, cross-referencing. "S.A. Samuel something. It fits."

"We need his surname," Amina said, already moving toward the door. "If someone in this letter knew him well enough to quote him at Independence, someone at this school might know who he was, or at least who his family were. Mr. Bello has been dodging this question for weeks. I think it's time we stopped letting him."

They found their history teacher grading papers in his empty classroom, and Amina set the letter down on his desk without preamble, the quoted line facing him.

"Samuel," she said. "Not S.A. Samuel. Do you know who he was?"

Mr. Bello looked at the letter for a long moment, and then, finally, something in his expression eased, as though he'd been waiting for this exact question rather than avoiding it.

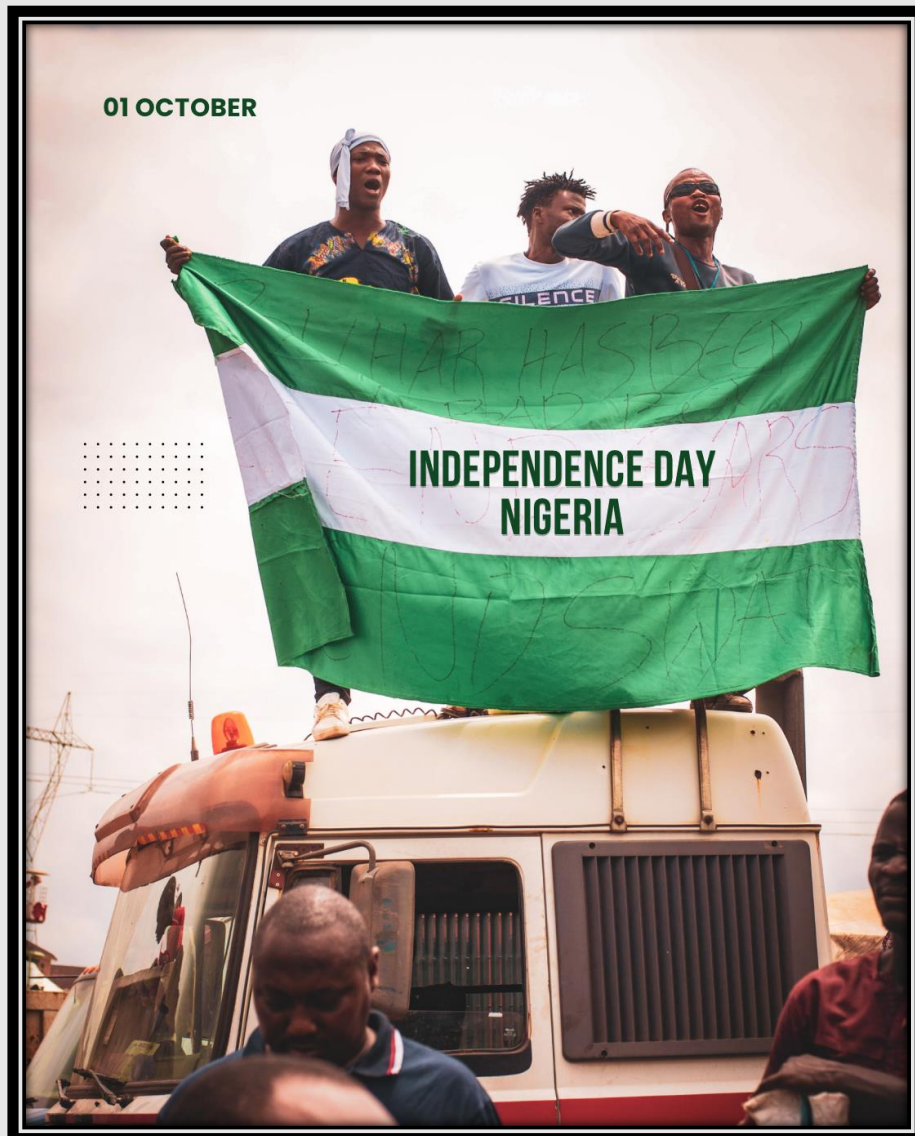
"Samuel Adewale," he said. "Yes, Amina. I know exactly who he was."

WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule on 1 October 1960, following years of constitutional negotiation. Public celebrations across the country were widely documented in photographs, newspapers, and official speeches, but personal letters and diaries from the period often reveal a more complex emotional picture, genuine pride and celebration, combined with real uncertainty about the challenges of building a stable, self-governing nation. Comparing public records with personal accounts gives historians a fuller understanding of how a single historic event was actually experienced.

Reflection Questions

1. Why does Amina say pride and worry can both be true "in the same breath"?
2. Why do you think Mr. Bello waited for Amina to ask directly before telling her Samuel's full name?



PART V

The Young Nation

Chapter 9

The First Vote

"I'll tell you what I know," Mr. Bello said, once the classroom door was closed and the three of them were seated properly, the journal open on the desk between them. "But some of this, I think, you're meant to discover yourselves. So I'll give you a place to look, not the whole answer."

The place he sent them to was a set of records Amina hadn't even known the school held, donated family papers, mostly, gathered from Hirra Academy families over many years, describing ordinary experiences of the country's early independence period rather than the speeches of politicians.

Among them was a short account, written by a woman voting for the very first time in her life, describing the noise and colour of a campaign season — party symbols painted onto walls, songs written for candidates, the strange, thrilling sensation of a choice that had never before been hers to make.

But the account didn't end in simple triumph. It described, too, a contested result in her own ward, accusations of missing votes, a count that took two tense days to settle, a country learning, in real time, that independence had handed it the right to vote without automatically guaranteeing that every vote would be counted fairly.

"This is exactly what the journal keeps circling back to," Amina said, comparing the account against an entry a few pages further on. "Not just what happened at the top, the politicians, the parties but what it actually felt like for someone experiencing it from below."

"That was the whole point of what Samuel was doing," Mr. Bello said quietly, watching them work. "He believed official accounts too often left out the people who weren't famous, voters, farmers, teachers, ordinary citizens whose experience of history was just as real as any politician's, but rarely made it into any record at all. He spent years collecting accounts like this one, some he found, some people brought to him once they understood what he was doing."

Daniel looked up from the account, something clicking into place. "So the journal isn't really about famous events at all. It's about ordinary people living through them."

"Yes," Mr. Bello said. "Which is also, I suspect, exactly why certain pages were removed."

Amina looked up sharply. "You know who removed them."

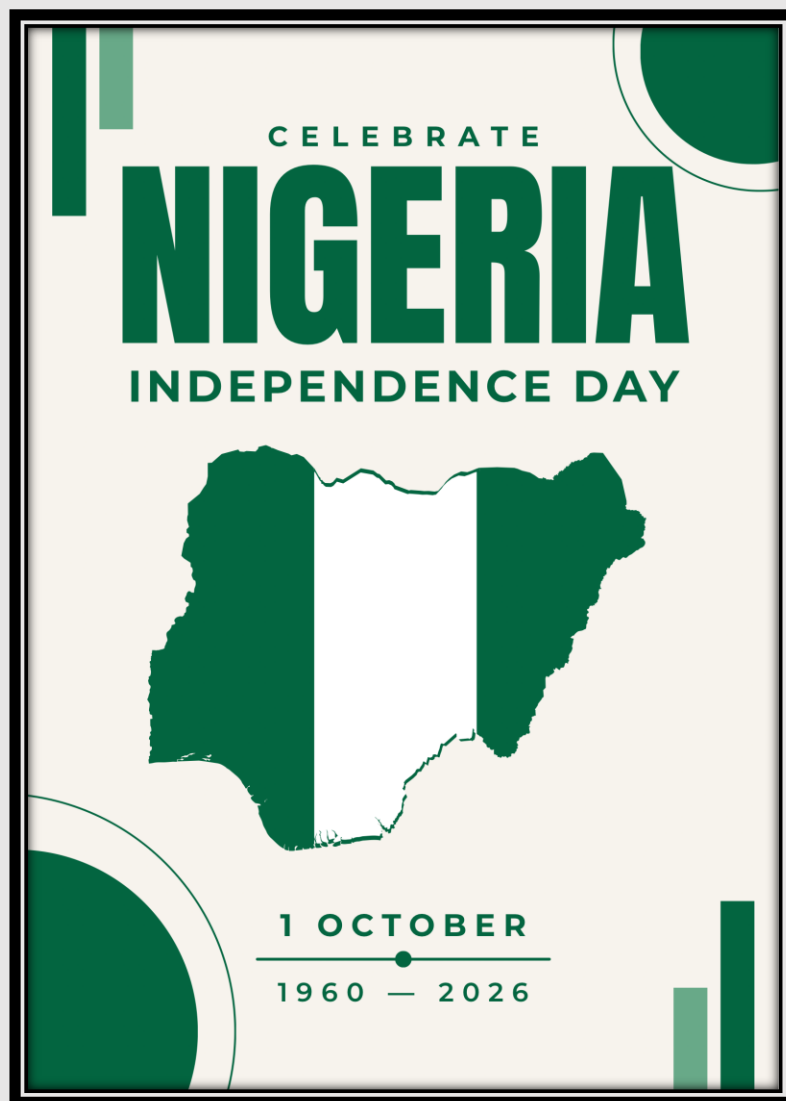
Mr. Bello didn't answer immediately but for the first time, his silence didn't feel like a door closing. It felt, Amina thought, like a door being held open, just slightly, waiting for her to push the rest of the way through herself.

WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

Nigeria's First Republic, following independence in 1960, introduced the country's first full experience of national self-government, including political parties, regional politics, and federalism. Early elections were often marked by genuine enthusiasm as well as real disputes over vote counting and fairness, particularly along regional and party lines, tensions that would later contribute to the political instability of the mid-1960s. Personal and family accounts, like the one Amina finds, provide historians with a view of these events "from below," complementing official political records.

Reflection Questions

1. Why did Samuel Adewale focus on collecting accounts from ordinary people rather than only politicians and famous figures?



Chapter 10

When the Story Changed

The entries grew shorter as Amina moved further into the journal, the handwriting occasionally hurried in a way it hadn't been before, as though the person writing them no longer had the luxury of careful, unhurried sentences.

Radio broadcasts, one entry noted, had begun cutting out without explanation. Another mentioned a school closing for what was described only as "a short period," with no date given for when it might reopen. A third, briefer than any entry before it, simply read: *People are speaking quietly now. Even at home.*

"This is the part where things start to go wrong," Daniel said, and for once there was no attempt at a joke anywhere in his voice.

Mr. Bello, walking them through it carefully, didn't shy away from what the entries were describing, but he didn't sensationalize it either. "Nigeria experienced a serious political crisis during this period, including a change of government by military force, the first of several such changes over the following decades. It's an important part of the country's history, and I won't pretend otherwise. But I also won't give you more detail than is useful for understanding it at your level. What matters most for your investigation is how ordinary people experienced the uncertainty, which is exactly what these entries are showing you."

Amina turned the pages slowly, aware for the first time of how much weight the journal had begun to carry. It no longer felt like following a mystery. It felt like sitting beside someone who had genuinely been afraid, once, and had chosen to write it down anyway.

It was in this section that the missing pages appeared most frequently, three separate gaps in the space of only a few surviving entries, more than anywhere else in the journal.

"Whoever removed these pages," Amina said slowly, "removed the most from exactly this period. Not the parts about kingdoms, or independence, or celebration. The parts about fear. About things going wrong."

"Maybe that's the part someone most wanted forgotten," Daniel said.

Amina didn't answer right away. She was thinking, instead, about something Mr. Bello had said weeks earlier, about the tax letter and the newspaper that both had been true, just true about different things. She wondered, for the first time, whether the person removing these pages hadn't been trying to erase something false at all.

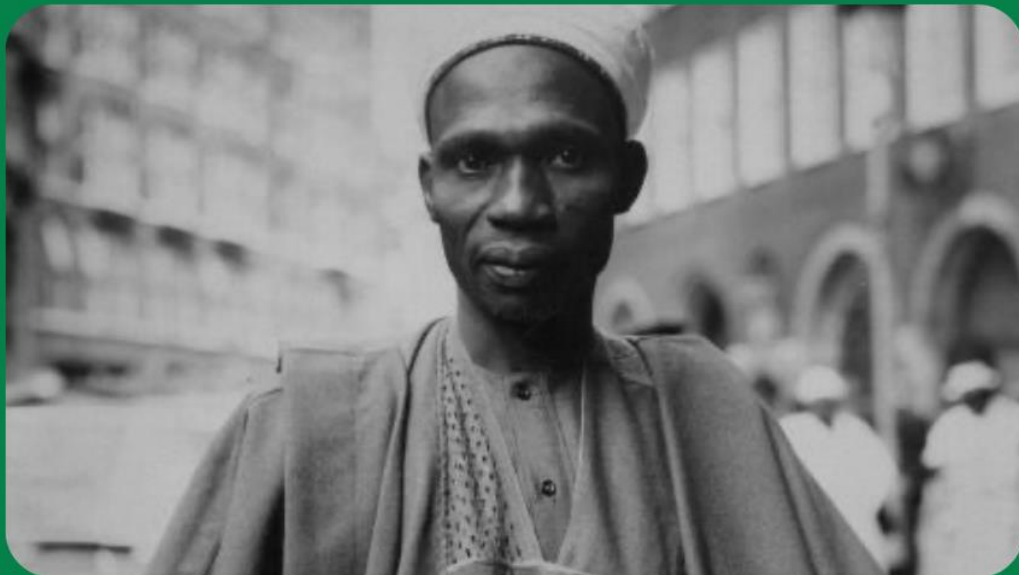
Whether, instead, they had been trying to erase something painfully true.

WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

Nigeria's First Republic ended in January 1966, when the civilian government was removed by a military coup, the first of several changes of government by military force over the following decades. This period was marked by rising regional and political tension, restrictions on communication, and significant uncertainty for ordinary citizens. This chapter reflects that experience through its impact on daily life rather than depicting events directly.

Reflection Questions

1. How does Mr. Bello balance being honest about a difficult period of history with keeping the material appropriate for JSS readers?
2. Amina begins to wonder if the missing pages were removed to hide something "painfully true" rather than something false. What do you think she means by this?



The coup resulted in the deaths of several prominent political leaders, including Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Northern Region Premier Ahmadu Bello.

Hirra Academy

Chapter 11

The Missing Pages

Mr. Bello led them, finally, not to another folder or filing cabinet, but to a locked drawer in the school's administrative office that Amina hadn't known existed, it turned out, permission to open, and had been waiting for exactly this moment to use that permission.

Inside, wrapped in cloth gone soft with age, were the missing pages.

All of them.

"Samuel Adewale taught here, many years ago," Mr. Bello said, laying the pages out carefully across the desk. "History, as it happens — my subject, long before it became mine. He spent decades of his life collecting accounts like the ones you've been finding, letters, photographs, newspaper clippings, oral histories from people willing to share them. He believed, fiercely, that ordinary people were too often missing from the official record of their own country's history."

"So why did he remove pages from his own journal?" Amina asked. "If he wanted people to remember, why hide the parts that mattered most?"

"He didn't remove them to erase them," Mr. Bello said. "He removed them to protect them and the people who trusted him with their stories. Some of what he collected came from family testimonies and private accounts that disagreed sharply with the simplified version of events that was more comfortable, at the time, for people in positions of authority. He was told, more than once, to destroy those accounts. He refused instead, he separated them from the rest of the journal, and hid them somewhere he believed a sufficiently curious student might, eventually, find them."

Amina looked down at the pages spread in front of her with handwriting, dates, names, accounts that disagreed with each other in places, agreed in others, and painted, all together, a picture far messier and far more human than any single textbook summary she'd ever memorized.

One page, near the bottom of the stack, was different from the rest. It wasn't a historical account at all. It was a letter, addressed to no one in particular or perhaps, Amina realized slowly, addressed to exactly the person now reading it.

"A country can forget its mistakes long before it forgets its victories."

Beneath it, a final line, in the same careful hand as everything else.

"Do not complete my journal with my answers. Complete it with what you have discovered."

Amina sat with that for a long time, the classroom quiet around her.

"He didn't want us to find his conclusions," she said finally. "He wanted us to do the work ourselves. The missing pages were never really the point, were they. They were just a way of

making sure someone would eventually have to investigate properly, instead of just accepting whatever version of the story was easiest."

Mr. Bello nodded slowly. "Now, Amina after everything, what do you think history actually is?"

She thought of the tax letter, newspaper, of the photograph that showed what the journal never mentioned, of her grandmother's memory of a village that predated any country, of a voter's account, sitting quietly in a forgotten folder, mattering just as much as any president's speech.

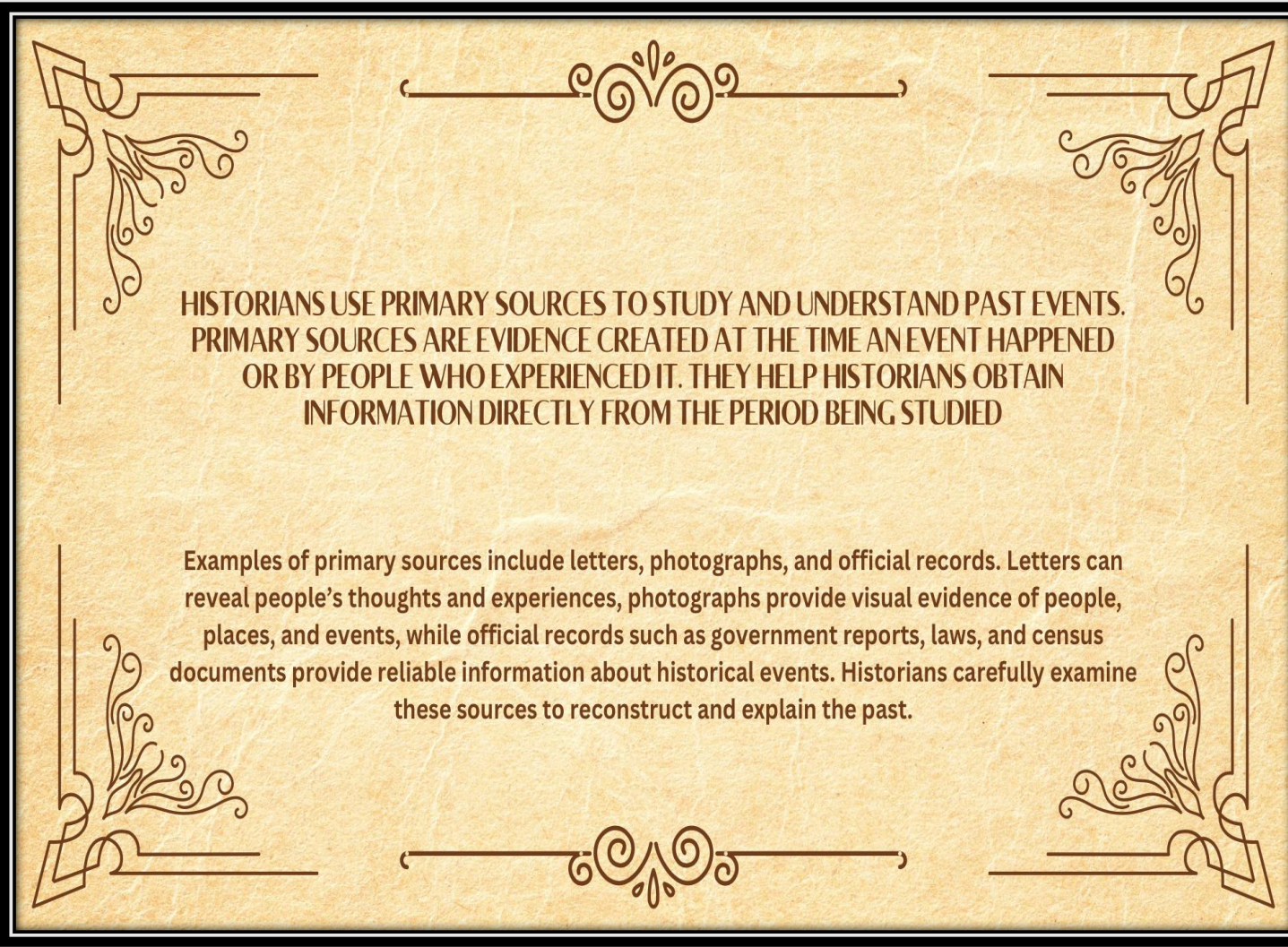
"It's not the past," she said slowly, working it out as she spoke. "Not exactly. It's what we choose to go looking for. And what we choose to carry forward once we've found it."

WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

Historians distinguish between primary sources (evidence created at the time of an event, letters, photographs, official records) and secondary sources (later accounts and interpretations, such as textbooks). Oral history, the recorded memories and testimonies of people who lived through events — is an especially valuable primary source, particularly for perspectives that were not well documented in official records at the time. Historical memory is not neutral: what gets recorded, preserved, or left out often reflects the priorities and power of whoever controls the record, which is why comparing multiple sources and perspectives matters so much.

Reflection Questions

1. Why did Samuel Adewale remove the pages himself, rather than let someone else destroy them?



HISTORIANS USE PRIMARY SOURCES TO STUDY AND UNDERSTAND PAST EVENTS. PRIMARY SOURCES ARE EVIDENCE CREATED AT THE TIME AN EVENT HAPPENED OR BY PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCED IT. THEY HELP HISTORIANS OBTAIN INFORMATION DIRECTLY FROM THE PERIOD BEING STUDIED

Examples of primary sources include letters, photographs, and official records. Letters can reveal people's thoughts and experiences, photographs provide visual evidence of people, places, and events, while official records such as government reports, laws, and census documents provide reliable information about historical events. Historians carefully examine these sources to reconstruct and explain the past.

Chapter 12

The Final Page

Amina's original assignment, *"choose one historical event, explain how we know it happened"* sat untouched in her notebook for so long that she genuinely considered, more than once, whether Mr. Bello had forgotten he'd ever set it.

He had not.

"It's due Monday," he reminded her gently, exactly one week before the deadline, with the specific patience of a teacher who already knew perfectly well what she was going to hand in.

Amina spent that final week doing something closer to assembling an entire archive than writing a single assignment. She laid out the journal itself, its missing pages now carefully restored to their original places. The photograph, with its faded community and its altered name. The old map, its vanished kingdoms and vanished borders. The tax letter and the newspaper article that had disagreed so completely about the very same policy. The nationalist clipping with Samuel's own handwriting in the margin. The voter's account of a contested First Republic election. Samuel's own final letter, asking not to be believed, but to be investigated.

She built a timeline, the way Daniel had taught her, stretching from pre-colonial kingdoms all the way to her own classroom, and pinned every piece of evidence to the moment it belonged to.

On Monday, she did not simply hand Mr. Bello a written assignment.

She presented the whole thing, spreading it across two full desks pushed together, walking her teacher and, at his quiet suggestion, the rest of JSS2 through everything she and Daniel had found, source by source, gap by gap, question by question.

"So the assignment was never really about one event," she said, near the end, surprising herself slightly with how sure of it she now felt. "It was about learning that every event is made of evidence, and evidence can be missing, or biased, or incomplete because nobody thought to write it down. History isn't a list somebody already finished. It's something we're still building, every time we go looking properly instead of just accepting the first answer we're given."

"History is not the past. It is the memory we choose to carry forward."

"I'm adding this to the journal," she told Mr. Bello. "Not to finish it. Samuel didn't want it finished. Just to keep it going."

Mr. Bello looked at the page for a long moment, and then at Amina, and Daniel beside her, and the whole assembled evidence of a mystery that had started, weeks earlier, with a girl who thought history was only names and dates that refused to stay in her head.

"Samuel would have liked that answer very much," he said quietly. "Better than any answer I could have given you myself."

Amina placed her page carefully into the journal, behind all the others, ahead of whatever pages someone else, someday, might still choose to add.

WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

This story is a work of fiction, but it reflects real principles of historical study: history is built from evidence, not simply inherited as a finished list of facts; different sources can each hold a piece of the truth; and the experiences of ordinary people are just as valuable to the historical record as the actions of famous leaders. Nigeria's actual history from its many pre-colonial societies, through colonial rule, nationalism, independence, the First Republic, and beyond has been reconstructed by historians using exactly the kinds of sources Amina investigates in this novel: letters, photographs, newspapers, maps, oral histories, and official records, each read carefully, and compared against the others.

Reflection Questions

1. How does Amina's understanding of history change from the beginning of the book to the end?
2. Why does Samuel want future readers to complete the journal with their own discoveries, rather than his conclusions?
3. If you had only one historical source to understand an important event, would you trust it completely? Why or why not?

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THE TIME TRAVELLERS JOURNAL



WHAT HAPPENED THEN? The Full Story

A closing look at the real history behind Amina's investigation.

Timeline

- **Pre-colonial era** — Hausa-Fulani emirates, Yoruba kingdoms, Igbo communities, Kanem-Borno, and many other societies govern themselves independently.
- **1800s–early 1900s** — British colonial administration expands across the region, introducing indirect rule and taxation.
- **1930s–1950s** — Nationalist movements grow, driven by newspapers, political associations, and demands for self-government.
- **1 October 1960** — Nigeria gains independence.
- **1960–1966** — The First Republic: political parties, elections, and the early challenges of federalism.
- **January 1966** — Military coup ends the First Republic, beginning decades of political instability.

Historical Sources

Primary sources — created at the time of the event (letters, photographs, official records, newspapers).

Secondary sources — later accounts and interpretations, such as textbooks.

Oral history — the recorded memories of people who lived through events, often preserving perspectives left out of official records.

Maps and archives — visual and organizational records that reveal how people understood their world, and what they prioritized recording.

Yugen Motion

THE TIME TRAVELLER'S JOURNAL

