

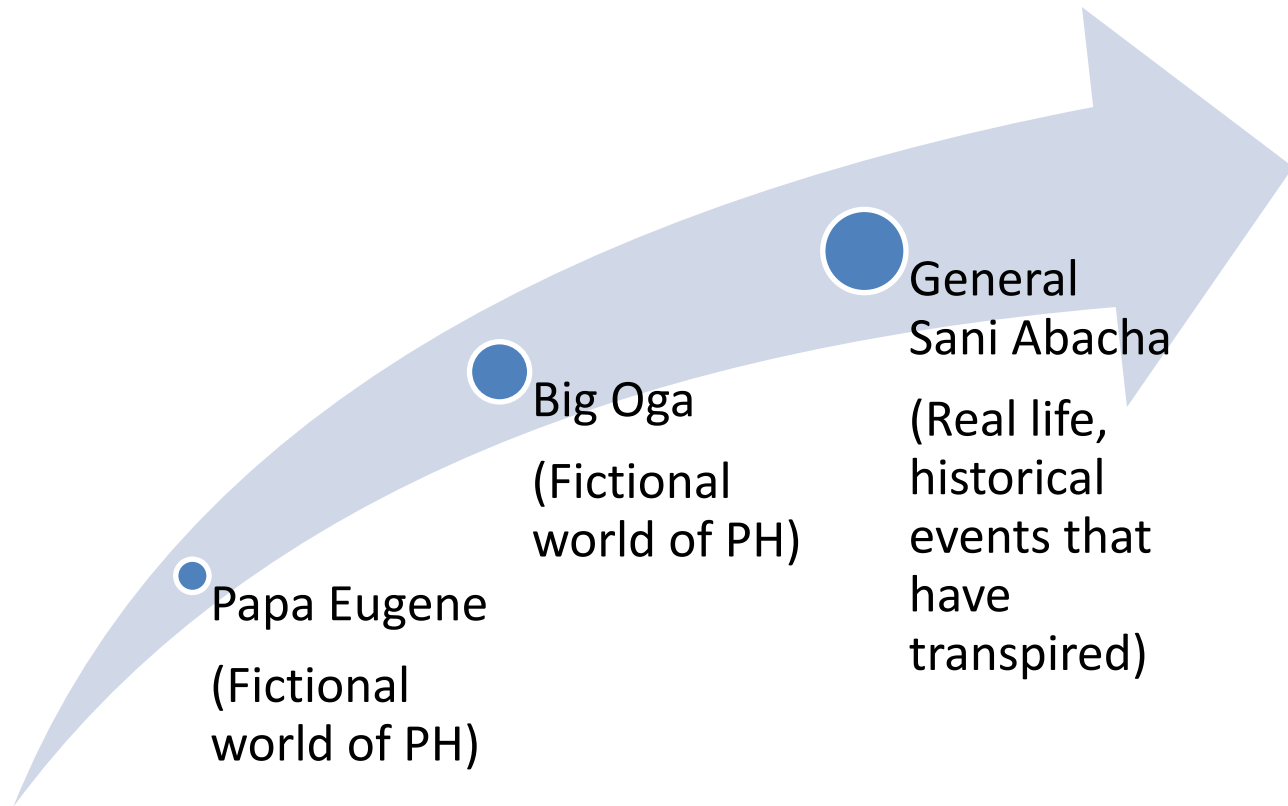
Understanding the Political Allusions and Context in Nigeria



Why is **context** important?

- Themes / Issues / Ideas
 - oppression,
 - violence,
 - control / manipulation,
 - abuse of power
- Author's Purpose
 - Consider how we, as readers, receive a political message via a personal story, and how we can more readily empathise with the plight of an individual rather than that of a whole country.

Micro vs. Macro Levels of Political Allusions





General Sani Abacha was the **military dictator** of Nigeria from 17 November 1993 to 8 June 1998, when he died suddenly of a heart attack.

Abacha assumed power himself through a **coup** in November 1993.

While continuing to assert his intention to bring **democratic civilian rule** to Nigeria, Abacha was criticised by prominent Nigerian democracy campaigners, human rights advocates, civil rights lawyers, and world-renowned authors.

These critics doubted his sincerity and commitment after 11 straight years of virtually uninterrupted **military rule** in Nigeria, all accompanied by promises made by other dictators for a return to democracy.



In 1995, Abacha announced a three-year program of transition to civilian rule. On March 1, 1995 there was an attempted coup by Lawan Gwadabe. Also suspected as part of this coup were Olusegun Obasanjo and Shehu Musa Yar'Adua (recent Nigerian Prime ministers). They were sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment for these attempts at overthrowing the Abacha.

Sani Abacha's seizure of power in 1993 was the beginning of a five-year reign that would time and time again draw international criticism. Human rights groups and international leaders, such as South Africa's Nelson Mandela, criticized the new government for its treatment of opponents.

The Abacha government was one of the most ruthless regimes in Nigeria's history. Dissidents were tortured. Political opponents jailed. The international community reacted in horror when Nobel Prize-winning author Ken Saro-Wiwa was publicly hanged in 1995 for suggesting oil exploration caused environmental damage. (<http://justiceinnigerianow.org/shell>)

Public opposition grew as fears mounted that Abacha would not step down as he had pledged to do when he took power. Protests turned more and more violent, but suddenly, on June 8, 1998, Abacha died of a heart attack at the age of 54.



Nigeria's Human Rights Record

Human Rights in Nigeria

- Police continued to violate a variety of human rights.
- Examples include: unlawful killings, torture and enforced, disappearances. Prisoners were kept in very brutal conditions.
 - Links to Purple Hibiscus: the brutal killing of Nwankiti Ogechi (pp.200-01)
- The government attempted to exploit journalists and human rights activists by harassing, bribing and threatening them.
 - Links to Purple Hibiscus: Papa Eugene's publication, attempted assassinations and death of Ade Coker

Cases

- **Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti:** A notable human rights activist, doctor, and chairman of Campaign for Democracy (CD), who was victimised by Nigerian military dictators. His family has also been affected by his protesting and have been illegally and inhumanly treated. He was imprisoned for 15 years but was released in June 1998.
- **Hafsaf Abiola:** Another more recent Nigerian human rights activist who promotes democracy in Nigeria. She is the one of the daughters of Moshood Abiola, who was the late President-elect imprisoned by the dictator of the time, Gen Sani Abacha. In 1996, Abiola's mother was murdered during a plea to release her husband.



ken saro-wiwa

Nwankiti Ogechi = Ken Saro-Wiwa

- *“Soldiers shot Nwankiti Ogechi in a bush in Minna. And then they poured acid on his body to melt his flesh off his bones, to kill him even he was already dead...[he was] referred to...as “a man of honour” (p. 200-201).*
- Ken Saro-Wiwa was a famous Nigerian author, television producer and president of the Movement for Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), which defended environmental and human rights for Ogoni people that live in Nigeria.
- Similar to Ogechi, Saro-Wiwa was a martyr protecting his people from the military government’s unjust treatment and human rights violations.
- On November 10, 1995 Saro-Wiwa was hanged for merely attempting to bring freedom his people and environmental protection.