

Paddy Richardson  
The guitar  
Easy questions to cut your teeth on!

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This is a story without words. It would be better if I could show you some photographs, only then you might say: "That's nice," or "Oh I like that one." But it would be better to say nothing. The heart that sings makes no more sound than the heart that sobs. A film, perhaps? -- but I cannot make films. Then let me show you the pictures, and you will see the story without my saying anything.

The guitar is leaning against the wall of a mud hut somewhere in the Kei. There's a flutter of coloured ribbon on the top and you can see the light shining on the strings. It's a cheap old guitar -- scarred and scratched by long usage -- long miles of rubbing against a threadbare jacket, long hours in the sun, and wind, and rain.

Tembe comes out of the darkness of the hut and stands blinking in the doorway. He looks about him and stretches himself in a yawn. Then he looks down at the guitar leaning against the wall and he picks it up. His hard, work-rough fingers brush the strings once, twice.

At once there is the sound of children's voices, and as Tembe sits down in the doorway eight or nine children come running and gather round him. They chatter and laugh and hop about until Tembe brushes the strings once with a strong downward sweep of his hand, and then they are quiet. They sit down in the dust, shuffling into comfort like ragged sparrows.

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1. The short story begins, "This is a story without words".
    - How then does the narrator attempt to unfold the tale? (4)
    - Why does the narrator not want to use the image of photographs? (4)
  2. How do you know that the guitar is well used and very old? (4)
  3. Why does Tembe stand "blinking" in the doorway? (2)
  4. What word tells you that Tembe is gentle and loving with his guitar? (2)
  5. Why does the guitar have coloured ribbons attached to his guitar? (4)
  6. When Tembe purchased his guitar, it had no strings.
    - Why could he not simply buy strings? (2)
    - What does Tembe use instead of strings? Why does this not work? (4)
    - When at last he does acquire strings, where do they originate? (4)

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