

National Theatre Collection

Three Sisters – Learning Guide

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About

This learning guide supports Fuel and National Theatre's production of *Three Sisters*, directed by Nadia Fall, which opened on 3rd December 2019 at the National's Lyttelton Theatre in London.

Our packs are designed to support viewing the recording on the **National Theatre Collection**. This pack provides links to the UK school curriculum and other productions in the Collection. It also has a plot synopsis with timecodes to allow you to jump to specific sections of the play.

Here you'll also find all the information you need to enable you to study the production and write about it in detail. This includes notes about all of the key elements from performance style to design. You'll also find pointers for further research.

Background Information

Recording Date – 4th December, 2019

Location – Lyttelton Theatre, National Theatre

Age Recommendation – 12+

Cast

Abosedede	Ronke Adekoluejo
Igwe	Jonathan Ajayi
Eze	Jude Akuwudike
Dimgba	Tobi Bamtefa
Nmeri Ora	Peter Bankolé
Nma	Anni Domingo
Lolo	Sarah Niles
Ikemba	Ken Nwosu
Udo	Racheal Ofori
Onyinyechukwu	Sule Rimi
Nne Chukwu	Natalie Simpson
Oyiri Di Ya	Diana Yekinni
Abosedede / Nne Chukwu	Lola May
Igwe / Dimgba	Joseph Ogeleka
Eze / Onyinyechukwu	Offue Okegbe
Nmeri Ora / Ikemba	Jerome Ngonadi
Nma / Lolo	Chloe Okora
Udo / Oyiri Di Ya	Nasa Ohalete
Ensemble	Amarachi Attamah
Musician	Adédèjì Adetayo

Background Information

Recording Date – 4th December, 2019
Location – Lyttelton Theatre, National Theatre
Age Recommendation – 12+

Creative Team

DirectorNadia Fall
Writer Inua Ellams
Set and Costume DesignerKatrina Lindsay
Lighting DesignerPeter Mumford
Movement Director Jack Murphy
Sound DesignerDonato Wharton
ComposerFemi Temowo
Vocal Arrangements & Music Director Michael Henry
Additional CompositionsAmarachi Attamah
Fight DirectorsRachel Bown-Williams &
Ruth Cooper-Brown

Teaching Information

This production is particularly suitable for:

- **Drama and theatre** students who are studying the work of Anton Chekhov, particularly those with an interest in contemporary adaptations of his plays.
- **Drama and theatre** students studying Nadia Fall as a contemporary theatre practitioner.
- Anyone with an interest in the work of **Inua Ellams**.

In particular you might like to explore:

- Inua Ellams' decision to move the action of the play from Russia at the turn of the twentieth century to Nigeria in the late 1960s.
- The central performances of Sarah Niles (Lolo), Natalie Simpson (Nne Chukwu) and Racheal Ofori (Udo) as the three sisters, how their characters develop over the course of the play and how they compare to Chekhov's original three sisters.
- How Peter Mumford's lighting design helps to establish mood and atmosphere and aid storytelling in the production.

Production Notes

The following notes have been compiled to help guide you through the significant design and performance aspects as you watch the production, or to remind you of them after you have watched it. You may also want to make your own notes and form your own opinions on the effectiveness of these aspects as you explore the production.

Contextual Information

- Chekhov's *Three Sisters* premiered in Moscow in 1901. Inua Ellams has retained the same relationships and story arcs for the three sisters in his version, but transposed the action to Nigeria during its troubled period between 1967-70. This included two coups, and the attempted secession to create Biafra. As the play conveys, this was unsuccessful.
- To understand the Nigerian Civil War, you may wish to **watch this short BBC video** or **consult this webpage**.
- For some background on Biafra, you may wish to **consult this article from the Guardian**.

Key Design Elements: Set

- The set uses an end on configuration.
- The main location is the house in Owerri, Nigeria (part of land inhabited by the Igbos).
- The play begins on the verandah of the house, which has two sets of double doors, a dining table which is stage right, and a chair stage right. There are several steps down to stage level which provide additional seating and create a number of different levels.
- Grasses across the downstage area give a sense of location.

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- The action later moves inside the house, which is furnished to convey the comfort in which the children of a former brigade commander have lived. There is a piano stage right, an upstage study, with a desk, and the two central sets of double doors lead out to the veranda that we saw at the beginning of the play. Stage left houses a drinks cabinet, and the set is dressed with vases, standard lamps etc. Down stage is a sofa-bench and there are exits downstage right and upstage left, as well as out of the upstage double doors.
- A key set detail of the interior house set is the large Biafran flag which is prominently displayed on the back wall. You may wish to research the particular symbolism of the flag's colours, and why this might be an important item to display within the house.
- Act 2 takes place outside, with more grass and a curtain of thin strands. For much of the act, the curtain reaches floor level but is flown halfway out later in the act 2.
- Transitions are generally made during black outs or by focusing the audience's attention downstage (again through use of lighting and/or action) whilst changes are made upstage.

Production Notes



Key Design Elements: Costume

- **Oka Mbem (The Chant Poet)** wears traditional Nigerian wrapper skirt in golden hues, with a pink bodice and a hair wrap.
- **Lolo** wears a short-sleeved yellow fitted dress which has button detail on the waist and a round neckline. She wears grey court shoes. All of her costumes are conservative in terms of shape, fit and colour, denoting her job as a schoolteacher, and eventually headmistress of a school.
- **Udo** begins the performance wearing a light green, a-line dress that has a front pleat. She is barefoot, although she wears white sling-back sandals later on. The shape and movement of the dress emphasises that she is the youngest of the three sisters. Her two older sisters wear much more fitted dresses, which have longer hems. In the house scene she wears a linen dress with a yellow belt and the day before her wedding she wears a fitted white dress. She has been forced to grow up and mature during the period in which the play is set.
- **Nne Chuckwu's** first dress is a white, sleeveless fitted dress which has a patterned lace overlay. She wears white stiletto shoes. She accessorises with sunglasses and neutral coloured handbag. Nne Chuckwu changes her dresses several times in the play – she is always well dressed and well presented, with her dresses made from richly patterned or textured fabrics. At the end of the play, she wears a fitted white dress.

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- **Abosedede** makes her first entrance in a garish outfit of short skirt, mismatched blouse and waistcoat, with a brightly coloured hair wrap and sparkly heeled shoes: an ensemble which Lolo draws attention to. It is important that Abosedede's clothing is different from the other women: she is a Yoruba, rather than an Igbo like the others, and she also views herself as superior. As the war continues, and life is thrown into chaos it is interesting to note that whilst the dress of Udo, Lolo and Nne Chuckwu becomes more practical (sleeveless or strapped tops and wrappers, for example), Abosedede's clothes become increasingly ornate and impractical for the heavy work of making bandages and helping refugees that the others are undertaking. Note the shape and fit of her dress at the end of the play as she insists that Dimgba sign the lease on the Owerri house.
- **Igwe** wears a military uniform of beige trousers and shirt, with lace up army boots. He wears his beret in his epaulettes. We see him later in a khaki shirt and camouflage army combat trousers.
- **Eze** wears a grey suit at the beginning of the play, with a white shirt and brown tie, and brown sandals. Later his clothing becomes more traditional with a long white tunic over a patterned wrapper.
- **Ikemba** wears camouflage fatigues in the house scene and wears a military uniform (without his braided epaulettes) at the end of the play when all soldiers have had to surrender to Nigeria.
- **Dimgba** wears a white shirt and brown trousers. He is an academic, he prides himself on his mental/academic achievements rather than those in a military capacity and so looks very different to those wearing uniform. Although his shirts may change throughout the play, his style of clothing remains the same. He stands out amongst the men who are in military clothing.
- **Nmeri Ora** wears a light khaki military uniform when we first meet him at Udo's birthday party. After he retires from the military, he wears blue trousers and a white collared t-shirt style top, with brown sandals. The day before his wedding his costume changes to white trousers and a brown and red t shirt.
- **Oyridiya** initially wears modest clothes (an above the knee skirt, and a crochet-patterned blouse with a Peter Pan collar) but then is given a dress by Abosedede.
- **Nma** wears a sleeveless blouse and skirt wrapper. She is a servant and so her costume reflects her status in its simplicity and practicality.

Production Notes



Key Design Elements: Lighting

- An eerie blue light, on the frame of the house begins the performance: it gives a sense of foreboding and a sense that this is connected with the fate of the residents of the house.
- The opening scene takes place on the evening of Udo's birthday. The lights (from front and side) allow us to focus on the house and the space in front of it, and the colour and intensity of the lights slowly change as night falls.
- Flashes of light create the idea of a camera flash in Act 1 when Nma takes photographs of all the guests.
- Although a general wash is used using larger lanterns from above, there are also small light sources on the set, such as standard lamps and wall-mounted lamps.

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- The intense blue light and haze returns at the end of Act 1 when Nma enters and helps create the sense of nightfall in Act 2 as the women work outside.
- During the conflict scene, overhead spotlights are used, and strobe, as the physical action takes place.

Key Design Elements: Sound

- The Chant Poet sings live at various points in the production – a commentary on what is happening. For example, she sings after the radio announcement about Biafra.
- Recorded sound effects are used throughout the production, including insects, bird calls and the sound of birds leaving trees. The recorded sounds of plane engines and explosions are heard.
- A piano and a guitar are played live in Act 1 of the performance.
- Diagetic sound, such as the radio announcement, the sounds of a child crying, and sound effects including rain, thunder and lightning can be heard throughout the performance.
- Oriidiya sings an unaccompanied song which appears to echo slightly.
- Other songs referenced in the play (to help establish period) include Petula Clark's 'Downtown'.

Key Design Elements: Wigs, Hair and Make-up

- The women's hair reflects the time period of 1967-1970. Udo begins with a short, fringed and straight bob which accentuates her youth, but after the first scene that takes place on her birthday, she has short, natural hair.
- Early in the play Nne Chuckwu's hair is in a beehive style, as is Abosede's.
- Hair wraps are worn by Abosede and the Chant Poet.
- The men wear their hair short, particularly mirroring their military roles which require smart appearance.

Production Notes

Key Moments

You might like to consider these moments in particular when you are studying the production.

- The opening moments of the play in which the Chant Poet sings are helpful to consider how mood and atmosphere are created. (Start - 00:01:13)
- The exposition of the play, and particularly the relationships between the three sisters is also an opportunity to engage with the naturalistic style of the production. (00:01:13 - 00:07:00)
- Ikemba's description of the coup, and the way in which British politics is influencing citizens of Nigeria gives a helpful context to the predicament in which these characters find themselves. (00:15:15 - 00:22:37)
- A strong understanding of the reason for Nne Chuckwu's adultery can be gained from the scene where she explains her engagement. (00:51:58 – 01:02:00)
- An opportunity to see how far the relationship between the three sisters and their sister-in-law has deteriorated can be found in this extract: 01:38:40 – 01:43:37. This also allows viewers to see the strong contrast in costume by this point.
- Nne talks about her brother with Udo, and important information is revealed about Oyridia. (01:55:09 - 02:02:43)
- Nne admits her love for Ikembo to her sisters, and we see their relationship with their brother fracture further when he announces he has sold the house. (02:03:20 - 02:09:17)
- The final climax of the play, and the rapidly unfolding tragedy occurs in the extract from 02:35:10 - 02:45:50. This includes Lolo's final speech about happiness, Nne Chuckwu's farewell to Ikembo and the death of Nmeri.

Plot Synopsis

Act 1 – 30 May 1967, Owerri, Nigeria

Sisters Lolo, Udo and Nne Chukwu Onuzo reminisce about their father's death the year before, and how he made them leave Lagos, 'the city of dreams', to immerse themselves in their Igbo roots and escape 'colonial cultural erosion'. They discuss the two coups and the fact that Nigeria's army has been split along tribal lines, with Igbo soldiers on one side, Hausa and Yoruba on the other. They dream of going to Lagos, but Udo says Nne Chukwu would have to stay with her husband. Lolo wishes she had a husband to wait for at home.

(0:07:00) Nmeri Ora enters to them that Ikemba Okoro, the new brigade commander, is coming. Igwe enters, talking to Eze. It is Udo's birthday – she laments the fact that she has no purpose in life. Nmeri also says he had no purpose, but now the coups have happened, the Igbo people will build something 'magnificent in Africa'. Nne Chukwu recalls the birthday party they had for Udo two years ago, with half the brigade of soldiers – now there is hardly anyone to celebrate with.

(0:12:15) Nma enters, followed by Oyiridiya, who brings in the cake, before leaving again. Lolo tells Igwe that Oyiridiya is Nma's niece and one of the millions of Igbo refugees who walked there from the north – the Hausas killed her husband in front of her, and now she wants a gun to take revenge on the Hausa soldiers. Eze gifts Udo an expensive coffee grinder for her birthday, which they all marvel at.



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(0:15:09) Ikemba appears, and the sisters greet him. They ask him lots of questions about Lagos. Ikemba knew their parents, and they all discuss their memories of them. They then begin to discuss the prospect of war – Nmeri doesn't think there will be a war, 'We want to secede from Nigeria...but we aren't invading anywhere.' Lolo thinks there will be a war because the Igbos killed the Hausa leaders of Nigeria – Nmeri argues that the Hausas were corrupting Nigeria. Igwe says they are stockpiling weapons, Nmeri says 'this is not war, it is the prevention of war.' Igwe begins to taunt Nmeri, saying he is afraid.

(0:22:45) From inside the house, they hear the sound of Dimgba's trumpet. Dimgba is the brother of the three sisters, and they discuss how he likes a Yoruba girl, who they don't approve of. Dimgba is a scholar, and they discuss his knowledge of six languages. Ikemba makes an impassioned speech about education and future generations. Ikemba goes on to say that in the next life, he would do away with soldiering, and live in a house like theirs – he also wouldn't have got married, as his wife is sick.

(0:29:14) Onyinychukwu appears with balloons for Udo, and tells Nne Chukwu that they have to leave soon for the feast for school masters and their families – she does not want to go, but acquiesces. Lolo asks Onyinychukwu, who also teaches at the school, if he'd read the book about colonialism that she'd learnt to him, as 'everything in the book is what is happening to Nigeria now'. Onyinychukwu says it is 'heavy stuff' and that he hasn't yet got around to it.

(0:32:15) Nne Chukwu confides in Eze that she doesn't want to go to another 'frustratingly boring evening' at the head master's house, but she has to. The palm wine is brought out, and the group drink to their ancestors, and to Ikemba's future success.

(0:34:32) They all go inside to eat, and as Igwe walks past Udo, he reaches for her hand – but she snatches it away. Nmeri asks to speak to Udo, and says that they could have a beautiful future together, 'We could be perfect'. Udo replies, 'Nothing is perfect. Papa spent so much time trying to build us perfect lives, it didn't work.'

(0:35:27) Abosede arrives. Lolo points out that her clothes don't match, but Abosede says she thinks it looks professional. The rest of the group emerge, gathering for a picture. Eze starts to sing a song, and the others join in, before returning indoors.

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(0:38:40) Only Abosede and Dimgba are left – Abosede says she is leaving because everyone is laughing at her. Dimgba persuades her to stay, then proposes to Abosede, who jumps into his arms.

(0:41:18) At that moment, Lolo calls from inside the house – ‘It has happened!’ The group listen to the radio, where they are announcing the secession and founding of the Republic of Biafra. Abosede is concerned, but Nmeri says they are safe in Biafra. They all begin to sing, and the Nigerian flag is torn down. They all cheer.

Act 2 - 13 September 1968. Two years into the Biafran War. (0:44:00) Dimgba is working, and Abosede enters to turn on the lights – Dimgba reminds her that they are at war and shouldn’t be using the lights. Abosede doesn’t want to have the party that night, but Dimgba says that Tanzania, Gabon, Ivory Coast and Zambia recognised Biafra as a sovereign nation, so they need to celebrate. Abosede says that their baby, BOBO, is sick, and she doesn’t want people in the house disturbing him. Abosede then reveals that Nma is waiting outside with papers.

(0:48:33) Nma is unhappy, she says to Dimgba ‘Your Yoruba wife no let me enter, she talk say The Master Is Busy as if I no know you since you be small baby.’ Dimgba apologises and says he will speak to Abosede. He confides in Nma that he doesn’t like the fact that he’s a secretary to the chairman of the local council, who has to do menial translation tasks, when he should have been a professor at the University of Lagos.

(0:51:50) Nne Chukwu and Ikemba enter, discussing various elements of the war and recent innovations in weaponry. Nne Chukwu remembers her marriage, which was arranged when she was 12 – she says that Oyinyechukwu was a young school master, and she was almost excited, but now he sits all day debating sub clauses while ‘the real war rages outside.’ Ikemba admits that his daughter is sick and that he fights all day with his wife. They draw close, and Ikemba begins to say how beautiful Nne Chukwu’s eyes are, before they are interrupted by the entrance of Udo and Nmeri.

(0:57:30) Udo talks about her job at the telegraph office, and how she needs cheering up. They speak about their brother’s gambling, ‘Might as well lose everything so we have to sell this house and go to Lagos.’ Nne Chukwu replies, ‘Over my dead body.’ They talk about Abosede and how she is after their

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house. Lolo comes in, weary from the fighting in her classroom over who is Biafran, and who has ‘mixed blood’ – she argues with Nmeri, and leaves upset.

(1:02:00) They all talk about how hungry they are due to Gowon’s food blockade – ‘There are desperate people roasting rats and lizards out there.’ They all talk about the future, and how they imagine things changing in fifty years. They begin to play a game, while talking about happiness and religion.

(1:05:36) Eze asks Oyiridiya to sing for them, and she obliges, singing the Biafran national anthem. Everyone applauds once she finishes. Nmeri tells Oyiridiya that she shouldn’t be spending time drinking with mercenaries – she confesses that she is trying to save up to buy a gun to avenge her husband’s death.

(1:08:30) Nmeri tells Udo that he is going to retire from the army, because he’s not a good soldier, and he wants to do something with a constructive purpose. The two sit to play Ludo together, betting on their future. Nne Chukwu talks about missing Lagos, and Ikemba tells her that her longing is what motivates her. Ikemba receives a call from his wife, and has to leave suddenly.

(1:12:24) Igwe and Nmeri drink and talk together. Nmeri talks about how he wants to leave the army, and the fact that he wishes the Americans would intervene. Nmeri is worried that the Nigerians are better armed than them. Everyone begins

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to talk and laugh together about how Igwe wants to learn languages – he is hurt as they ridicule him and leaves.

(1:15:45) Eze begins to sing to warm up for the arrival of the army choir. Dimgba then reveals that the choir is not coming, because Abosedede says so – Abosedede and Nne Chukwu begin to argue, and Udo jumps between them as they are about to come to blows.

(1:19:45) Eze and Dimgba are left discussing marriage, which Dimgba says ‘is a journey of incremental disappointments anyway’. They hurry off to gamble together.

(1:20:55) Nma enters, saying the army choir has come. Udo tells her to send them away. Igwe returns, and tells Udo that she is ‘the diamond of Biafra’, and that he loves her. Udo doesn’t respond, and Igwe leaves.

(1:23:42) Abosedede enters and tells Udo that she has to share her room with Lolo so that Bobo can have the better room in the house. Oyiridiya enters, wearing Abosedede’s clothes – she is about to go to sing for the mercenaries. Oyiridiya says that Chief Benedict Uzoma is outside, and he wants to take Abosedede for a drive.

(1:25:27) Onyinyechukwu tries to persuade Lolo to teach, and says that she can redesign the syllabus if it troubles her. He then leaves, and Lolo goes to rest – she is worried that Dimgba keeps losing money. Abosedede leaves to go out with Benedict Uzoma. Oyiridiya enters with a wounded Biafran soldier, calling for help – he is a messenger from the front, and has told her that the Nigerians are coming. The soldier dies.

Interval



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Act 3 - 20 April 1969. Three years into the Biafran War. (1:33:45)

The women work in the makeshift infirmary inside the Onuzo compound. Lolo asks how it is inside, and Nma says that more and more soldiers and refugees keep coming. They discuss the fact that they have been under siege for six months, and nearby villages have been attacked by the Nigerians. Lolo marvels at how they were attacked in the market – ‘Still they came to kill us there! In a market? With children and mothers?’

(1:38:00) Lolo asks Oyiridiya to cut up some bandages and distribute them – Oyiridiya refuses, she’s just seen a man who reminds her of her husband and wants a gun. Lolo tries to talk her out of it, but she is intent on revenge. Abosedede enters, dressed immaculately, and starts criticising Nma for sitting down to take a rest. Lolo argues with Abosedede for her treatment of Nma – Abosedede calls Nma a ‘liability on this household’. When Lolo defends Nma, Abosedede says that it is her household, and it is only because of her ‘friendship with Benedict Uzoma’ that they have food.

(1:43:36) Onyinyechukwu enters, talking about the devastation in the market, before he and Lolo dive to the ground as they hear a plane approaching. In the chaos, Oyiridiya overpowers a wounded soldier and takes his gun, pursued by Igwe. Eze enters, drunk on palm wine, talking to Dimgba – both men worry that they have become disappointments to those around them.

(1:47:28) Dimgba leaves, and Ikemba, Udo and Nmeri enter, followed by Onyinyechukwu. Onyinyechukwu can’t believe that the British are arming Nigeria, and Nmeri explains that Britain is invested in oil in Biafra – it’s the only bargaining chip they have. They discuss the war – Eze says that none of them ‘see anything’, even the fact that Abosedede is having an affair with Benedict Uzoma.

(1:51:09) Nmeri and Ikemba argue about British involvement in the conflict – Ikemba says that colonialism ended, but Nmeri argues that the British made a ‘pressure cooker’ when they created Nigeria by forcing 250 ethnic groups and languages together. Ikemba believes they should have ‘progressed’ since the end of colonialism, but Nmeri argues that it wasn’t enough time to heal, especially considering the years of slavery before that. Ikemba recalls returning to his house after the bombing, and details the horrors he witnessed. Igwe enters and Udo tells him to leave. Igwe reports to Ikemba, and tells them all that Oyiridiya has run off into the bush with a gun. Igwe asks Udo why he is not allowed to be there – Ikemba takes him away.

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(1:56:18) Nmeri tells Udo that he wants to start a life with her. Nne Chukwu tells him to leave Udo alone, and he leaves. Onyinyechukwu talks to Nne Chukwu about how he still loves her, ‘As long as you keep a branch in your heart, you will always find a bird singing there... you are my branch, my bird and my birdsong.’ Although he is still happy, Nne Chukwu says she’s angry – they weren’t ready for war, and some Biafran soldiers carry wood shaped like guns into battle. Someone asked her to pay Dimgba’s debt, he is in financial trouble and is bringing shame on the family. Onyinyechukwu says the two of them have enough, but Nne Chukwu says it is not about them. She tells her husband to go home.

(1:59:22) Udo cries about what their brother has become, ‘He is so lost’. Lolo enters, and comforts Udo – the younger sister just wants to return to Lagos. Udo struggles working for the paper and seeing the sick children of Biafra printed in black and white. Lolo advises that her sister marry Nmeri, he loves her and he is a good man. Nne Chukwu then confesses her love for Ikemba to her sisters – Lolo cannot believe it, ‘What is wrong...with both of you? Nmeri and Onyinyechukwu would die for you and you are wasting time with distractions.’ Nne Chukwu tells Lolo that she doesn’t understand passion.

(2:06:03) Dimgba confronts his three sisters about their treatment of his wife, demanding that they respect Abosedede. He then reveals that he sold the house to Benedict Uzoma. The sisters are aghast – their father built the house with his own hands and is buried here. Dimgba says that he lost his money gambling, but that Benedict will sell it back to them once the war is over. Udo blames Abosedede, and Dimgba starts crying. He goes to his wife.

(2:12:57) Lolo also begins to cry, and asks Udo if the reason she isn’t married is because she doesn’t understand passion. Lolo resolves to continue to teach, and says she will come to visit Udo and Nmeri in Lagos if they get married, ‘You’ll have children and find purpose in that place of dreams’.

Act 4 - 25 January 1970, the fourth and final year of the Biafran war, ten days after Biafra’s surrender. (2:16:35)

Udo, Onyinyechukwu and Nmeri discuss the fact that the war is finally over, and that Biafra lost, ‘Everybody lost’, says Eze, ‘We are lucky to have survived.’ They talk about what happened to Oyiridiya – soldiers from both armies shot her down. Udo asks what will happen next, and Eze tells her that most Igbo soldiers will rejoin the Nigerian army, ‘just like that’.

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(2:20:31) Udo has packed everything as the next day she and Nmeri will be married and move to Lagos. Abosede is throwing a party for them, but Udo admits she doesn't know why she is bothering, and can't believe she has invited Benedict Uzoma. They discuss the quarrel between Nmeri and Igwe, which has come about because they both love Udo.

(2:22:46) Nne Chukwu speaks with Eze, who reveals that her mother loved him, but married their father. Eze talks about the traditional wrestling match that will take place between Igwe and Nmeri, which he has been asked to referee. Dimgba confesses to Eze that he loves Abosede, but often wonders why. Eze is leaving the next day, and so advises Dimgba to 'walk to the river...don't look back'. Eze and Igwe leave for the fight.

(2:29:15) Nma enters with papers for Dimgba from Benedict Uzoma, which Abosede has asked him to sign. Benedict is not going to sell the house to him, instead he is increasing the rent. Nmeri tells Udo he has to go – she tries to follow but he won't let her. Nmeri admits that he wishes Udo loved him, but she says she thinks he is a fine man, and is happy that they will be married. Abosede orders Dimgba to come and shake on their agreement with Benedict Uzoma, and he obeys.

(2:35:14) Lolo has given Nma a room of her own inside the school. Ikemba tells Nne Chukwu that he has to leave, she begs him to stay, cries and kisses him goodbye, and Onyinyechukwu sees them. Onyinyechukwu says that he won't hold this against his wife. He then tells Lolo that she will have to teach the new

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syllabus, now that Nigeria is establishing Unity Schools. Lolo refuses to teach lies.

(2:41:31) Igwe and Nmeri wrestle, and Nmeri wins. As he bends to pick up his shirt, Igwe shoots him. Eze enters covered in Nmeri's blood, and the sisters cling to each other, in tears, as they find out what has happened. Nne Chukwu says they will make a new home, just the three of them. Udo doesn't understand all of their suffering – Lolo says that when they die, they will understand.

The End

Find out more

Watch

Members of the company talking about the play.

[Three Sisters | About the play](#)

Actors Sarah Niles, Racheal Ofori and Natalie Simpson discussing the importance of sisterhood in the play.

[Three Sisters | Sisterhood in the play](#)

Writer Inua Ellams and Director Nadia Fall talking about the rehearsal process.

[The Theatre Rehearsal Process | Inua Ellams and Nadia Fall | Three Sisters](#)

Writer Inua Ellams and Director Nadia Fall discussing the decision to set the play in Nigeria.

[Three Sisters | Inua Ellams and Nadia Fall | Setting the Play in Nigeria](#)

Listen

[Writer Inua Ellams and Director Nadia Fall discussing the play](#)

Find out more

Explore

More materials relating to the production including the costume bible, poster, prompt scripts, programme, stage management reports and more are held at the National Theatre Archive, which is free to visit. Find out more here: <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/archive>

You can find out more information about Inua Ellams and his other plays by visiting the National Theatre Black Plays Archive online here: <https://www.blackplaysarchive.org.uk>

Suggestions for Further Activity

Read this review from *the Guardian*. Write your own review, or write a letter to this reviewer explaining your own thoughts on the production.

Consider the transposition of the original setting of the play. **Watch Inua Ellams and director Nadia Fall** discuss the choice to set the play in Nigeria. Discussion: Do you think that they are fully justified and successful in making this significant change?

Nadia Fall also directed a verbatim play called *Home* for the National Theatre, which is also available to watch on the **NT Collection**. Watch this show and/or visit the **NT Archive** to research. Are there any similarities you can find in terms of themes and characters, even though the style and genres of the two productions are very different?

Find out more

Suggestions for Further Research

Several productions of *Three Sisters* were mounted in London and the UK between 2018 - 2020. Research each one and make comparisons. How have new versions either stayed faithful to the original setting and characters, and why have transpositions in period and/or location been made? Research the origins of the play and consider whether these productions could achieve what Chekhov wanted to explore in his original version.

If you are interested in set and costume design, you may wish to research the work of Katrina Lindsay whose work you have seen in this production. Other productions for the National Theatre include *Dara* (which, like *Three Sisters*, was directed by Nadia Fall), *London Road* and *Small Island*. You can access *Dara* and *Small Island* via **NT Collection**, and the **NT Archive** can provide access to material regarding other productions that you may be interested in.

You may wish to pair your exploration of *Three Sisters* with *Barber Shop Chronicles* – Inua Ellams' play which also deals with identity and living in locations that have had troubled pasts. *Barber Shop Chronicles* is also available via **NT Collection**.

We hope that you have enjoyed watching and studying ***Three Sisters***. Don't forget that there are many more fantastic productions to explore as part of the **NT Collection**. We hope that watching this recorded production has made you feel inspired to see and make live theatre. **Why not find out what's happening at your local theatre and how you can get involved?**

This guide to support your viewing of the production was compiled by Teacher and Arts Education Consultant Susie Ferguson.

If you have any comments or feedback on our resources please contact us:
ntcollection@nationaltheatre.org.uk