

# Short Story: Dreams Can't Be Too Big

Level: A1-A2

"You're going to Blantyre Secondary School."

I cannot believe the news. I am finally going to my school of choice!

"You deserve it my son."

My mother is weeping but her tears are of joy. She is happy for me, and proud- I can see it from the way she keeps on straightening my collar.

"We have to buy new clothes for you."

"Don't bother yourself *Wamama*. I'm only going to Blantyre after all!"

"To the city you mean. I don't want my son to fail because he didn't have any decent clothes. You will have two new pairs of trousers and three shirts, not forgetting the uniform."

I open my mouth to protest but my father and mother will hear none of it. They are strong, my parents, they are. They work hard for me, for us, for everyone in the family. They really want us to succeed.

It was not easy to get the money for my school fees, but they managed. I see the strain in their weary eyes, on their hunched backs, in their tired legs. You will not hear them complaining though. Never. They say that complaints never feed anyone in this world. You have to wake up in the morning and do everything you can to live a dignified life. 'Dignity' is my father's favourite word. You can be poor but that does not mean the world has to see your misery.

This is why we are always dressed in clean and well-mended clothes. We also put on shoes all the time. Our hair is always combed. No, you will not see us walking in rags. We wake up early in the morning to sweep our yard and our house. We take great care of ourselves and our environment because we know that it is necessary. It is necessary to love ourselves and where we live. We can be poor but we do not have to look poor. This is how we triumph over our circumstances.

My parents say we have to keep on dreaming. If we wallow in our misery, we will never get out of this place. We have to look farther than the horizon, higher than the sky, deeper than the lake. Our possibilities are endless, they insist. We are going to make it.

I have big dreams. My dreams are so big that they sometimes keep me awake at night. I know that I will achieve them, of course, I will. It is no use to have dreams if you cannot do anything about them. My mother says what matters is the purpose. "Dream my children, dream," she often tells us. "You can be anything you want in this world, you can be anything. Don't be afraid, be strong. Be strong my children and work towards your dreams." I love my parents, I really do. I will make them very happy one day, I will really do.

What are my dreams? Not only do I want to be a surgeon, I also want to be one of the best surgeons in my country. I know I will make it, I will. I will work hard, every single day of my life, I will.

Why do I want to be a surgeon? I could be somebody else: a businessman, a lawyer, a judge, a politician, whatever. No, I want to be a doctor who heals people. I want to see people happy. I want to see people realising their dreams. I want to see sorrow become a thing of the past.

During those restless nights, I think of my future, of what I will become, of what I will do. I picture myself receiving my final degree. I just cannot wait. This is what enables me to get out of bed at sunrise. I have so much energy, I do not know what to do with it!

When I have finished helping my parents with their chores, I sit down under the shade of our precious mango tree and then I read. I read until I cannot read any more. I read everything I can get my hands on. Each time I finish a book, I know I am getting closer to my dream.

Being selected to Blantyre Secondary School is just the first step to my bright future. My parents will no longer suffer, I promise them, they never will.

## Reading Comprehension

### 1. GENERAL COMPREHENSION

- a. Give the title of the short story:.....  
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- b. Can you imagine another title for this short story?:.....  
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- c. Who is the narrator?:.....  
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- d. Who are the main characters? Describe them briefly:.....  
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- e. Where are these characters?:.....  
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- f. Name the places that are mentioned:.....  
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- g. Find two Adjectives to describe these places:.....  
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- h. What is the story about?:.....  
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- i. What is your opinion about this story?:.....  
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### 2. DETAILED COMPREHENSION

- a. **VOCABULARY:** What do the following words or expressions mean: i) Dream ii) To weep iii) Decent  
iv) To succeed v) To complain vi) Dignity vii) Well-mended viii) Purpose ix) Surgeon x) To heal
- b. **TRUE or FALSE:** Say if the following sentences are TRUE or FALSE. Justify your answer.
  - i. The boy is going to a school that he really likes :.....  
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  - ii. His parents are not happy with the news:.....  
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  - iii. The boy does not want to have new clothes:.....  
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- iv. The family is rich:.....  
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- v. The father hates the word 'dignity': .....  
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- vi. The parents and the boy are ambitious:.....  
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- vii. The boy wants to become a businessman:.....  
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- viii. The boy is lazy and pessimistic : .....  
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- x. The boy's dreams are impossible to achieve: .....  
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**WRITE FULL ANSWERS FOR THESE QUESTIONS**

- a. How do you feel after reading the story?:.....  
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- b. What do the following expressions mean? "***We have to look farther than the horizon, higher than the sky, deeper than the lake. Our possibilities are endless, they insist. We are going to make it***". :.....  
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- c. What is his father's strongest piece of advice? .....  
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- d. What is his mother's strongest piece of advice?:.....  
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.....
- e. How does the boy describe his dreams?:.....  
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- f. Give two reasons why he wants to become a surgeon? .....  
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- g. What concrete steps does the boy take to make his dreams come true? .....
- .....
- .....
- h. Do you think that the boy will succeed? .....
- .....
- .....

**3. WRITING:**

- I. Imagine what the boy will do once he arrives at Blantyre Secondary School. Write at least 100 to 150 words. Give as many details as possible.

**Suggestion:** You can start the short story with the following sentence: “Welcome to Blantyre Secondary School.”

- II. Imagine the boy on his first day as a surgeon. What will he think about his future job? Write at least 200 to 250 words. Give as many details as possible.

**Suggestion:** You can start the short story with the following sentence: “I’m finally a surgeon.”

**POINTS YOU HAVE TO PAY ATTENTION TO**

Correct subject	<b>Teacher’s Notes:</b>
Correct structure (paragraphs)	
Presentation (neatness, pictures, illustrations, etc)	
Punctuation (full stops, commas, question marks, etc)	
Grammar (correct tenses, syntax, etc)	
Vocabulary (simple, elaborate, varied, etc)	
Originality (interesting, unusual, etc)	

**NOTES**

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