

Why Couldn't I Have Been Named Ashley

by Imma Achilike

1 "Ashley!" exclaimed Mrs. Renfro, and simultaneously three heads whipped around at attention towards the perturbed teacher. At the same time, all three Ashleys proudly replied, "Yes, ma 'am?"

2 When I was a fourth grader, I remember sitting in class that day just before the bell rang for dismissal. I remember thinking of all the names in the world, how I could have possible been stuck with such an alien one. I thought about all the popular kids in the class. I figured that I wasn't popular because of my weird name. I put some things together in my mind and came up with a plausible equation: COOL NAME = POPULARITY. The dismissal bell rang. As I mechanically walked out to catch my ride, I thought to myself, "Why couldn't I have been named Ashley?"

3 I was born, on July 7th, 1986, at Parkland Hospital of Dallas, Texas. I was the first American-born Nigerian in both of my parents' families. I was my parents' first joy, and in their joy, they gave me the name that would haunt me for the rest of my life, Immaculeta Uzoma Achilike.

4 The first time I actually became aware of my name was on the first day of first grade. I went to school loaded with all my school supplies and excited to see all of my old kindergarten friends. I couldn't wait to see who my new teacher was. As I walked into the classroom, all my friends pushed up to me, cooing my name: "Imma, Imma I missed you so much." The teacher walked in with the attendance sheet. She told everyone to quiet down so she could call roll. Before she started, she said something I thought would have never applied to me. She said, "Before I call roll, I apologize if I mispronounce anyone's name." with a very apologetic look on her face. She looked down at the attendance sheet, paused for a minute, and then looked up with an extremely puzzled look on her face. I remember thinking that there was probably some weird name before mine; although, my name was always the first name to be called in kindergarten. Suddenly, my palms started sweating and then she began to hopelessly stutter my name, "Im-Immaculet Arch-liki, I mean, Achei..." Here, I interrupted. My ears burned with embarrassment and droplets of perspiration formed on my nose. "Did I say it right?" she said with the same apologetic look on her face. Before I responded, the laughs that the other kids in class had been holding back suddenly exploded, like a volatile vial of glycerin, into peals of laughter. One kid thought it was so funny his chubby face started turning red and I could see a tear gradually making its way down his face. I found myself wishing I could sink into the ground and never come back, I hated being the laughing stock.

5 I never really recovered from the shock of that day. From that day forward, the first day of school was always my most feared day. I didn't know what to do; all I could do was to tell my teachers, "I go by Imma."

6 I felt so alone when all the other girls in my class had sparkly, pink pencils with their names printed on them. You know, the ones they sell in the stores along with name-embossed sharpeners, rulers and pencil pouches. Every year I searched through and rummaged around that rack at the store, but I could never find a pencil with my name.

7 The summer of my seventh-grade year, my family and I took a vacation to our "home" in Nigeria, where my parents were born. My cousin and I were playing cards, talking girl talk, and relating our most embarrassing moments. Each tried to see whose story could top whose. I told one story of how I wet the bed at a sleepover, and she told me how she had farted in class during a test. That was a hoot. Then, I told her the story of how I was laughed at because of my weird name. I thought it was pretty funny, but she didn't laugh. She had the most serious look on her face, then she asked me, "Immaculeta Uzoma Achilike, do you know what your name means?" I shook my head at her and that's when she started laughing. I thought she was making fun of me, and as I started to leave she said: 'Immaculeta means 'purity', 'Uzoma means 'the good road' and...'. Having heard her words, I stopped walking away and turned around in amazement. "What does Achilike mean?" I asked. After a long pause she calmly said, "Archilike means 'to rule without force". I was astonished and pleased. I never knew what my name meant.

8 My name is Immaculeta Uzoma Achilike. I am the daughter of first-generation Nigerian immigrants. I am the daughter of hardworking and brave parents. My name means "to rule without force." My grandfather was a wealthy man of generous character. When I say my name in Nigeria, people know me as the granddaughter of a wealthy man of generous character. They know me by my name. There my name is not embossed on any pencil or vanity plate. It is etched in the minds of the people.

9 My name is Immaculeta Uzoma Archilike.

Use "Why Couldn't I Have Been Named Ashley?" to answer questions 7-12. Then fill in the answers on your answer document.

1B [denotative meaning]

7. In paragraph 1, the word *perturbed* means –

- A** inquisitive
- B** attentive
- C** disturbed
- D** fascinated

6A [drawing conclusions]

8. Based on how the narrator describes her childhood, the reader can conclude that she –

- F** was not comfortable with her name.
- G** was not happy with her cultural background.
- H** was excited about having a different name.
- J** was excited about seeing her friends again.

6A [analyzing elements of nonfiction]

9. In paragraphs 7-9, the author realizes the true meaning of her name which makes her feel --

- A** ashamed
- B** confused
- C** vigilant
- D** honored

6.FIG19B [inferencing]

10. What did Imma and her cousin have in common?

- F** They had the same dress.
- G** They started school together.
- H** They shared a common culture.
- J** Neither liked their name.

2.FIG 19B [make complex inferences related to theme]

11. Which sentence best reflects a primary theme of the selection?

- A** *When I say my name in Nigeria, people know me as the granddaughter of a wealthy man of generous character.*
- B** *I am the daughter of first-generation Nigerian immigrants.*
- C** *After a long pause she calmly said, "Archilike means 'to rule without force'".*
- D** *I never knew what my name meant.*

7.Fig19B [make complex inferences related to sensory language]

12. Read the following from paragraph 4.

Before I responded, the laughs that the other kids in class had been holding back suddenly exploded, like a volatile vial of glycerin, into peals of laughter.

The author uses a simile in this sentence in order to -

- F** create a comedy scene.
- G** emphasize the way her classmates were making fun of her situation.
- H** reveal that her classmate said a joke.
- J** convey the speaker's desire to participate in their happiness

PSJAISD

STAAR LITERATURE

Answer Key

Genre: Lit-Non Fiction

Text: “Why Couldn’t I Have Been Named Ashley”

Item #	SE	Answer
7	1.B	C
8	6.A	F
9	6.A	D
10	6.FIG 19B	H
11	2.FIG 19B	D
12	7.Fig19B	G