An Africa Thunderstorm
- David Rubadiri

From the west
Clouds come hurrying with the wind
Turning sharply
Here and there
Like a plague of locusts
Whirling,
Tossing up things on its tail
Like a madman chasing nothing.

Pregnant clouds
Ride stately on its back,
Gathering to perch on hills
Like sinister dark wings;
The wind whistles by
And trees bend to let it pass.

In the village
Screams of delighted children,
Toss and turn
In the din of the whirling wind,
Women,
Babies clinging on their backs
Dart about
In and out
Madly;
The wind whistles by
Whilst trees bend to let it pass.

Clothes wave like tattered flags
Flying off
To expose dangling breasts
As jagged blinding flashes
Rumble, tremble and crack
Amidst the smell of fired smoke
And the pelting march of the storm.
DAVID RUBADIRI

Rubadiri attended King's College, Budo in Uganda from 1941-1950 then Makerere University in Kampala from 1952-1956, where he graduated from with a bachelor's degree in English literature and History. He later studied Literature at King’s College, Cambridge. At Malawi’s independence in 1964, Rubadiri was appointed Malawi’s first ambassador to the United States and the United Nations. When he presented his credentials to President Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House on 18 August 1964, he expressed the hope that his newly independent country would get more aid from the USA.

Rubadiri left the Malawian government in 1965 when he broke with President Hastings Banda. As an exile, he taught at Makerere University (1968–75), but he was again exiled during the Idi Amin years. Rubadiri subsequently taught at the University of Nairobi, Kenya (1976–84). Between 1975 and 1980 he was a member of the Executive Committee of the National Theater of Kenya. From 1984 to 1997 he taught at the University of Botswana (1984–97), where he was dean of the Language and Social Sciences Education Department. In 1997, after Banda's death, Rubadiri was reappointed Malawi’s ambassador to the United Nations, and he was named vice-chancellor of the University of Malawi in 2000. He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Strathclyde in 2005.

QUESTIONS:

1. Identify the two similes used in stanza 1.

2. Why are the clouds described as “pregnant” in stanza 2?

3. Comment on the use of the word “stately” in line 10.

4. Quote two consecutive words in stanza 2 that suggest that the thunderstorm might be dangerous.

5. Explain why this thunderstorm might not be as welcome to the villagers.

6. In line 24, alliteration is used. Write down the line and indicate the alliteration and also comment on its effectiveness.