

## **Sweet Sixteen (16) Author Biography [Bolaji Abdullahi]**

**Bolaji Abdullahi** is a Nigerian journalist, politician and writer born in **1969**. He obtained a **B.Sc.** in **Mass Communication** from the **University of Lagos** and graduated with a **Second Class Upper Degree**. In **2001**.

He won the **British Council Chevening Scholarship** to further his studies in the **Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex**. There, he obtained his **Masters Degree** and graduated with a **distinction in 2002**.

In **1997**, Abdullahi joined **ThisDay Newspapers** as a reporter. In **1998**, he joined **Africa Leadership Forum**, a civil society organization in **Ota, Ogun State** as a **Publications Officer** and later a **Programme officer**. In **2000**, Abdullahi returned to **ThisDay Newspaper** and he became the **Deputy Editor in 2001**. In his first year as a journalist in **ThisDay Newspaper**, he won a nomination for the **Nigerian Media Merit Award for the Best Newspaper feature of the Year** and he also did great exploits in his weekly column, **Gains of Wit**.

Bolaji Abdullahi was appointed the **special Assistant, communications and strategy, to the Executive Governor of Kwara state in 2003** and was also the **Special Adviser, Policy and strategy to the Executive Governor of the same state in 2005**.

In **2007**, he became the **Honourable Commissioner of Kwara state Ministry of Education, Science and Technology**. He was also the **Minister of Youth Development in 2011** and later the **Minister of Sports under the Goodluck Jonathan Presidency**.

**On 1st December, 2016** he became the **National Publicity Secretary of the All Progressive Congress (APC)** but he resigned this post and defected from the party on **1st August 2018**.

Sweet Sixteen is his first novel.

## **Sweet Sixteen (16) Characterization Summary**

**1. ALIYA :** Aliya Bello is the only child of her parents. She is a smart girl who has A grades in almost all her school subjects. She is also a model student who will soon be appointed that head girl of her school.

Being a young adult, she has a lot of questions about life and is quick to ask her best friend answers to these questions. Her best friend is her dad as they are always together when she returns home from the boarding school.

She is an attentive girl who is reserved and observant. In some situations, she allows herself to be trampled upon due to her low self-esteem that builds up over the years due to her body size. In

some other cases, she is quick to react to negatively as she does when one of her classmates condemns her and other Muslims to hell because they are not Christians and they are murderers .

Aliya is not very social but she already thinks of rendering her services to the human race in the nearest future. This reflects in her choice of wanting to initially study medicine in order to help children who have asthma like her. Also, she wants to donate inhalers to the school clinic for asthmatic students who don't have inhalers.

**2. MR. BELLO:** Mr. Bello is Aliya's father. He is a learned man who values education and reading books. He is morally upright and he is a good father who performs his duties excellently well to his daughter. He is attentive, patient and consistent.

He gives his daughter the best thing a child can ever ask for - love, care, attention and a father-daughter relationship.

**3. MRS. BELLO:** Mrs. Bello is Aliya's mother. She is a nurse and a good mother too. She supports her husband's decisions and opinions though she may not agree with them. She is quick to anger and doesn't hide it when she is.

**4. BOBO:** Bobo is Tokunbo Alabi's nickname. He is the first guy to declare likeness for Aliya. However, his love can be regarded as an infatuation as it soon fades away. Aliya sees him with other girls he has probably proclaimed same love for and he eventually leaves for Ireland without saying a word to her about it.

## **1. Sweet Sixteen (16) Chapter One - "THE LETTER" Comprehensive and Concise Summary**

Aliya is a young girl of 16 years old who before reaching this age has always wanted to be an adult and referred to as one. She is an only child who has a father who is a nurse. She has a close relationship with her father, compared to her mother and she tells him everything. This helps her father to guide her smoothly in the affairs of her life. One of the things she tells him is her first encounter with a boy who claims he likes her.

The boy, Bobo, declares his likeness for her and also gives her a gift to show this feelings. Being the first time she is at the receiving end of such gestures she doesn't know what to feel and her dad is quick to put her through.

The readers can identify with Aliya in this instance as everyone has a first when it comes to relationship with the opposite sex. Aliya's father's advice to her is also applicable to young adults.

He advises that a recipient of a gift should not feel obliged to do anything because they feel indebted.

Also, gifts don't mean the giver really loves the other person and relationships shouldn't be based on material benefits.

On Aliya's birthdays since she is 12, she receives birthday cards from her father and on the occasion of her **16th birthday**, he gives her a birthday card, a digital camera and a **16-page letter** detailing her life journey, each page for each year.

## **2. Sweet Sixteen (16) Chapter Two - "THE DRIVE" Comprehensive and Concise Summary**

This chapter is a flashback as contained in the 16-page letter. Aliya is 12 years old and just returned home from the boarding house when she goes on a drive with her father.

During the drive, Aliya sees some girls hawking and she envies their freedom. She feels they are free to go around, meet people and have fun but her father cautions her, explaining that things don't always seem like how they look. Though Aliya is born into a comfortable home, she isn't allowed the freedom of going wherever she likes.

This situation explains the irony of life as no one has it all. Though, Aliya is born with a silver spoon, she is not afforded the luxury of going wherever she wants or meet other people randomly. She lives in a high fenced house and also goes to a boarding school.

On the other hand, the girls hawking on the streets may seem free and may be having fun, in Mr. Bello's words 'they would not mind trading places' with Aliya in air-conditioned car. Then, another disparity that exists between rich and poor children is the fact that rich children are naturally expected to do better in life because they have all the comfort in the world.

However, the zeal, willingness, determination and desire to become great which propels some poor children is usually enough to make them eventually great.

During this drive, Mr. Bello seizes the opportunity of the informal atmosphere to give his daughter sex education. A few days earlier, Aliya has seen her menstrual period for the first time and her father deems it fit she needs to learn about this important aspect of a woman's life.

He teaches that menstruation is the body's way of telling a girl that she is biological ready to be a mother, which means if she has unprotected sexual intercourse with a guy she could become pregnant.

It is obvious that this is the first time Mr. Bello is having a discussion about sex with his daughter but surprisingly she already knows so much about the subject. This is an indication that in the present age and century we live in, sex is no longer a hidden issue that is only discussed in hush tones, but it is everywhere. Aliya already learns about sex from the TV, friends, magazines, books and movies.

Aliya already has the basic knowledge of what sex is all about so her father gives her guides concerning sex and other things he refers to as fifth, which can corrupt the beautiful room which is her mind.

He advises her not to watch movies scenes that depict sex and also be watchful about the company she keeps.

### **3. Sweet Sixteen (16) Chapter Three - "WORK" Comprehensive and Concise Summary**

Aliya loves her father and will do anything to please him. She attempts severally to make his tea but she doesn't get it right until her mother puts her through. In this chapter she learns to make his tea perfectly and while he has his tea on a Saturday morning, she has a discussion with him concerning future ambition and other things.

Aliya informs her father she doesn't want to be a doctor anymore but a lawyer. In previous years, Aliya has wanted to be a pilot, then a musician, a songwriter and afterwards a fashion designer. Now she wants to be a lawyer. This depicts the indecision that comes with choosing a career at a young age. As a child grows, he must have has a lot of ambitions that probably changes every year but according to Mr. Bello, it doesn't matter what the choice of career is, what matters is having love and passion for what one does and only then can one be successful.

This leads to the discussion about parents choosing their children's career. This is not always a good idea as such child is only pursuing his parents' dream and not his dream. This in the end will only spell doom for both parties and lead to a waste of everyone's time if the child decides to follow his dreams afterwards. Mr. Bello is of the opinion that children are educated in order to be able to think for themselves and parents must learn to listen to them.

Afterwards Mr. Bello laments about the negative effects of technology on the young generation. Technology has most effects on reading habits as most young people prefer visiting the social media and surfing the internet than reading books. This has reduced their thinking capability, spelling and language skills.

#### **4. Sweet Sixteen (16) Chapter Four - "THE GANDHI TEST" Comprehensive and Concise Summary**

The Gandhi Test is gotten from the words of Mahatma Gandhi, an Indian who fights for the independence of his country from Great Britain.

The test is that *"you can tell that what you are doing is good or bad if you want other people to know about it or not"*. This statement explains how a person can make morally right decisions.

If a person is doing something and he wouldn't mind if other people know about it then what the person is doing is right but if such person doesn't want other people to know about what he is doing, then such action is most likely wrong.

However, this doesn't apply to some people who Mr. Bello refers to as animals. This kind of people do not have a sense of shame as they do anything, whether right or wrong, without minding what others would think about them.

Mr. Bello further explains to his daughter that before she makes decisions she should always be mindful that people are watching.

## **5. Sweet Sixteen (16) Chapter Five - "DATING" Comprehensive and Concise Summary**

Aliya, now 16 years old, considers herself old enough to be in a relationship with a guy. She broaches the issue with her dad.

Her father gives her a step by step explanation about what having a boyfriend entails. He explains that what most young people have towards the opposite sex is not love but infatuation which is often short-lived.

Also, matters of the heart is challenging even adults, thus young adults should tread softly when it comes to relationships because it may end up distracting them from their studies and also affect other areas of their lives. Aliya then reflects on the likeness she has for Bobo, how bad she feels when he leaves for Ireland and how horribly jealous she feels when she sees him with another girl.

This makes her understand all her father is talking about considering how a wrong relationship can derail a person's life.

Mr. Bello further counsels his child that it is best to wait for the right time before taking some steps in life. For most of the good things in life and luxuries, the price one is required to pay is the time one has to wait and in the end, it is always worth the wait. Aliya then tells her father about two students caught having sex in school who are caught by the school security.

They are suspended indefinitely from school and Aliya explains how she feels embarrassed for the girl.

## **6. Sweet Sixteen (16) Chapter Six - "STEREOTYPE" Comprehensive and Concise Summary**

Boko Haram, the terrorist sect has just bombed a local market and the Bello family watches this news on the TV. Everyone expresses displeasure for the evil act of these terrorists and condemns them.

During this, Aliya asks her dad if it is true that all Muslims will go to hell, because Muslims do not believe in Jesus and they like to kill people.

Mr. Bello calmly answers his daughter by explaining that it is wrong to judge or criticize other people's belief or faith because everyone is entitled to his or her faith. He also explains the beauty of the world because of the diversity in religion, people, religion, culture, tribe and colour. However, a set of ideas that people have about what someone or something is, especially an idea that is wrong, is known as stereotype.

Stereotype is a constant act in our society, as Aliya, herself, is also stereotypical not long after, in this chapter. It is wrong to have misconceptions or discriminating towards people, especially in instances where people are generally condemned for the misdeeds of few people.

Also, stereoscopic people are not usually bad persons but are victims of bad thinking and circumstances. Thus, they shouldn't be condemned because of their attitude but, rather corrected.

## **7. Sweet Sixteen (16) Chapter Seven - "BEAUTY" Comprehensive and Concise Summary**

After listening to a story about a man who nursed his torturer back to health instead of leaving him to die, Aliya wonders how she can ever forgive those who have wronged her.

She talks to her dad about how she has been feeling ugly and not have enough self-esteem concerning her shape and physique after one of her teachers and another student, Bunmi who continuously call her FAT and picks on her. This is known as body shaming, as they make negative comments about her weight or size.

Her father condemns this act but explains to her how to develop enough self esteem such that people's words don't hurt her and nobody can hurt her without permission.

He teaches her that what she feels about herself is more important than how other people make her feel and she should have confidence in how she looks.

Moreover, beauty is neither fat nor slim but however one looks is beautiful, one just has to be confident about it.

Beauty is also never enough but having a good character is best. Mr. Bello ends the conversation with a story which teaches that he has bestowed his intelligence and guidance to his daughter, and it is her responsibility to do the same for her children too.