

“I Want Others to Be Able to Read This”

Text type – Interview

Discussion Question: Discuss how different features are used in this interview to evoke interest in the writer's work.

- **Provenance:** Adapted from the Words Without Borders website – the title suggests their focus is to promote international literature from diverse cultures and languages.
- **Audience:** Primary audience - readers interested in international literature. Secondary audience - critics, academics and enthusiasts who seek to keep up with the latest literary trends in general and works from Africa in particular.
- **Title/Subheading:** Title assertively shows author's call for a wider audience. “be able to” suggests that her ambitions is to gain exposure, rather than purely commercial.
- **Photo:** The two ladies featured are dressed in seemingly African ethnic attire, one of them in headgear. These profile photos humanize the subjects of the interview.
- **Distinguishing features of the author:** The author is identified through her nationality (“Burkinabe novelist”), setting her apart as an international author, from a region whose literary traditions are not widely known. Reinforced by the accolades received (“winner of PEN/Heim translation grant,” “one of the Observer's fiction picks for 2022”).
- **Use of Engaging Questions:** Yarri Kamara's questions are thoughtfully crafted to explore various aspects of Ilboudo's work (“is [the weight of being an author who has broken through] a stimulus or potential blockage?”, “why did you fictionalize the country...?”, real-life influences).
- **Author's Insights/Integrity:** Ilboudo shares that writing makes her feel “totally free” and comparing the fate of a book to a “bottle thrown into the sea.” These metaphors and reflections show that she does not feel pressured to appeal to an international audience – implying that she maintains the authenticity of the work despite challenges.
- **Use of humour and satire:** The interview highlights how Ilboudo uses humorous and satirical elements, which critique Western attitudes toward Africa.
- **Educational aspect:** Ilboudo discusses the cultural connections between Africa and the Americas. These historical links add richness to the narrative.
- **Shift in structure:** The interview includes a role reversal where Ilboudo asks Kamara a question about her motivation for translating the novel. This breaks the traditional interview format and engages the reader by presenting translation as a key element in the creative process.
- **Translation Process:** The discussion about the translation process and Kamara's role in bringing the novel to an English-speaking audience highlights the collaborative effort and the challenges of making literature accessible across languages and cultures.