

**MODULE 5      SAMPLE TEXTUAL ANALYSES**

Unit 1	A Sample Stylistic Analysis of a Prose Passage
Unit 2	A Sample Stylistic Analysis of a Drama Passage
Unit 3	A Sample Stylistic Analysis of a Poem

**UNIT 1      A SAMPLE STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF A PROSE PASSAGE****CONTENTS**

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

From the preceding units, we have been discussing stylistics and the various approaches to its analysis. In this unit, we shall embark on a stylistic analysis of a prose passage with a view to further familiarising you with the practice of stylistics.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the levels of language description relevant to a stylistic analysis
- undertake a stylistic analysis of any prose passage of your choice.

**3.0 MAIN CONTENT****3.1 A Sample Stylistic Analysis of a Prose Passage**

Since this is a practical section, you should read the following question and the answer following it. This will serve as a guide to you in your future endeavour to analyse passages stylistically.

**Question: Carry out a stylistic analysis of the passage below:**

Wherever I went in my campaigning, Boniface sat with me in front and the other three at the back of the car. As our journeys became more and more hazardous I agreed to our carrying the minimum of weapons strictly for defence. We had live matchets, a few empty bottles and stones in the boot. Later we were compelled to add two doubled-barrel led guns. I only agreed to this most reluctantly after many acts of violence were staged against us, like the unprovoked attack by some hoodlums and thugs calling themselves Nanga's Youth Vanguard or Nangavanga, for short. New branches of this Nangavanga were springing up every day throughout the district. Their declared aim was 'to annihilate all enemies of progress' and 'to project true Nangaism.' The fellows we ran into carried placards, one of which read: NANGAISM FOREVER: SAMALU IS TREITOR. It was the first time I had seen myself on a placard and I felt oddly elated. It was also amusing, really, how the cowards slunk away from road -blocks they had put up when Boniface reached out and grabbed two of their leaders, brought their heads together like dumb-bells and left them to fall to either side of him. You should have seen them fall like cut banana trunks, it was then I acquired my first trophy- the placard with my name on it. But I lost my windscreen which they smashed with stones. It was funny but from then on I began to look out for unfriendly placards carrying my name and to feel somewhat disappointed if I didn't see them or saw too few.

Achebe, C. (1966:112. 113) *A man of the people* Ibadan: Heinemann.

### Analysis

The passage is a prose depicting a state of anarchy during a political transition. The plot presents the ordeal the narrator and his four supporters passed through in their political campaigns. Thus, we have a simple plot which cadence, lexical choice and thematic concern resonate (and revolve round) politics and violence. With this background in view, we may deduce why the language of the prose is harsh and the situation ominous. The passage makes use of the first person narrative technique.

At the graphological level, the passage contains 269 words and 27 lines. The use of odd numbers in this context is a pointer to the chaotic, odd situation presented in the text, as it is a common knowledge that political transitions in Africa are always marred by arson, thuggery and violence. The passage further contains one paragraph of fourteen lengthy sentences. This underscores the hypocrisy of African politicians who

speak lengthy words to deceive the masses. After assuming office, they perform less than expected.

The prose is replete with eight commas, six hyphens (with five hyphenated words), two colons, two quotes and fourteen periods. All these are prominently used because both the paragraph and the sentences are long. The semicolons indicate the points where new ideas (slogans) are presented.

At the phonological level, there is the preponderance of the sound /i/ as in line two of the prose. Sound /n/ also features prominently in the prose as in words like "New, Nanga, Nangavanga. Nangtrism. Funny, ran". All these words and their associates litter the whole passage such that they give it some rhythm.

The graphic arrangement of the prose is significant. The words: "Wherever" and "I" start it and two words "too" and "few" end it such that the first line is indented to the left and the last line to the right. Stylistically, it confirms the text as an excerpt extracted from a portion of a text. It also affirms that the political situation presented in question is a dichotomy between two camps and the conflict is unresolved in the context.

At the lexico-semantic level, there is an attempt (by the writer) to reveal that the passage has to do with politics and political activities as shown in the choice of such words as:

- Campaigning (line 2)
- Journey (acts of violence) (line 8)
- Vanguard (line 10)
- Project (line 13)
- Placard (lines 14, 16)

Furthermore, the political problems are carefully presented in words and expressions like:

- Campaigning - journeys became more and more hazardous (line 4)
- Weapons for defence (line 5)
- Five matchets
- Empty bottles
- Stones
- Two doubled- barreled guns
- Nangavanga (a parody of vagabonds)
- Enemies of progress



• Treitor (traitor) Bottles

The use of such words and expressions above presents the whole scenario as being chaotic and in a state of anomie. There is a kind of collocation in:

- campaigning and hazardous journey
- weapons and defence
- violence and nangavanga (parody of vagabonds)
- enemy and traitor (traitor)
- violence and annihilation.

Initially, the writer underplays his role in the violence by using the word "campaigning" for his own acts and "violence" for those of his opponents. Conversely, the opponents in turn use the phrase "enemies of progress" to refer to the narrator. To further justify his actions (roles), the writer refers to his campaign as a hazardous journey which requires "weapons for defence" (but not weapons for attack). Thus he uses the word "weapons" to present the instruments which include "matchets, empty bottles, stones and double-barrelled guns."

Apart from collocation, another stylistic device used by the author is foregrounding. This is prominent in the placard's inscription carried by the narrator's opponent which reads:

**NANGAISM FOREVER: SAMALU IS TREITOR.**

The statement contains a phrase and a clause. First, it presents the two political gladiators i.e. Nanga and Samalu. It also presents the subject matter, "nangaism". *Isim* in the context represents the political hegemony which the bearers want to perpetuate forever. The clause (Samalu is traitor) presupposes that Samalu was once with the former group of Nanga before he decamped and decided to challenge his mentor. It also repeats the narrator's identity as Samalu. The spelling of traitor as 'treitor' in the text is a foregrounding technique that the author employs to present the bearers (writers of the inscription) and referent as half-baked or not that literate.

At the syntactic level, the passage contains few simple sentences and a great deal of compound complex sentences such as:

"Wherever I went in my campaigning, Boniface sat with me in front and the other three at the back."  
(Compound-complex).

"Later we were compelled to add two double-barrelled guns."  
(Simple)

"It was funny but from then on I began to look out for unfriendly placards Carrying my name and to feel somewhat disappointed if I didn't see them or saw too few."

(Compound-complex).

At the level of discourse, certain cohesive ties are used to hold the text together lexically. These include:

reference: as in

It was then I acquired my first trophy- the placard with my name on it (sentence 12).

This is a case of cataphoric reference; i.e. forward reference "trophy" cataphorically refers to "the placard."

There are also instances of anaphoric reference as in:

- Boniface...grabbed two of their leaders... You should have seen them fall like cut banana truck (sentences 10 and 11)
- "them" is an anaphoric (backward) reference to the "two of their leaders."

### **Ellipsis**

This is a case of recoverable omissions, and substitution by zero.

Examples:

Boniface reached out and [Boniface] grabbed two of their leaders (line 19, sentence 10).

Boniface sat with me in front and the other three [sat] at the back of the car (sentence 2).

### **Conjunction**

This is preponderant in the whole text. Examples include:

- 'and' - lines 2, 3, 9, 13 and 17.
- 'but' - line 23.
- 'if' - line 26.
- 'when' - line 19.

The conjunctions are used to hold the text together: "and," "but" are used to balance ideas while "if," "when" indicate dependency relationship. In other words, the conjunction identified in the text performs cohesive functions.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

It should be noted that the analysis above is just a sample. Therefore, it should not be crammed. Rather, you are expected to try your hands on several prose passages, following the pattern that is presented to you here. Of course, you should also demonstrate some level of creativity in your stylistic analysis.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In summary, we may deduce that the author has presented the political imbroglio between two warring factions replicated in the text through different linguistic stylistic tools. Through the tone of the passage, it is clear that the speaker wants the audience to approve of his own actions and condemn those of his opponents.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Carry out a stylistic analysis of the passage below:

[Peter Walsh, a middle-aged man who has just returned to London after years in India, watches a summer evening begin in the London streets. The time is just after the First World War.]

Since it was a very hot night and the paper boys went by with placards proclaiming in huge red letters that there was a heat-wave, wicker chairs were placed on the hotel steps and there, sipping, smoking, detached gentlemen sat. Peter Walsh sat there. One might fancy that day, the London day, was just beginning. Like a woman who had slipped off her print dress and white apron to array herself in blue and pearls, the day changed, put off stuff, took gauze, changed to evening, and with the same sigh of exhilaration that a woman breathes, tumbling petticoats on the floor, it too shed dust, heat, colour; the traffic thinned; motor cars, tinkling, darting, succeeded the lumber of vans; and here and there among the thick foliage of the squares an intense light hung. I resign, the evening seemed to say, as it paled and faded above the battlements and prominences, moulded, pointed, of hotel, flat, and block of shops, I fade, she was beginning, I disappear, but London would have none of it, and rushed her bayonets into the sky, pinioned her, constrained her partnership in her revelry.

... The prolonged evening was. Inspiring... For as the young people went by with their dispatch-boxes, awfully glad to be free, proud too, dumbly, of stepping this famous pavement, joy of a kind, cheap, tinselly, if you like, but all the same rapture, flushed their faces. They dressed well too; pink stockings; pretty shoes. They would now have two hours