

ENL 001

ACCESS LITERATURE



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

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ENL 001:ACCESS LITERATURE

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ENL OOI- ACCESS LITERATURE

COURSE GUIDE

CONTENTS

Introduction

Course Aims

Course Objectives

Working Through This Course

Course Materials

Study Units

Set Textbooks

Assignment File

Presentation Schedule

Assessment

Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA's)

Final Examination And Grading

Course Marking Scheme

Course Overview

Summary

Introduction

ENL 001 is a twenty-six weeks four credit units access level course. It is suitable for all Law and English students as pre-entry requirement and for other students of the humanities who want to improve their proficiency in English through studying Literature. The course consists of twenty units which covers a general introduction to Literature and the three genres of literature. There are no compulsory prerequisites for the course. The material has been developed with local examples suitable for Nigerian students.

This course guide tells you briefly what the course is about, what course materials you will be using and how to work your way through these materials. It suggests some general guidelines for the amount of time you are likely to spend on each unit of the course. It also gives you some guidance on your tutor-marked assignments. You are advised to attend the tutorial classes to discuss your difficulties with your tutors.

Course Aims

The aims of this course are:

- to introduce you to literature as a subject and a method of expression
- to introduce you to the different genres of literature and their peculiar modes of expression
- to acquaint you with the resources for appreciating the language of literature
- to lead you through an appreciation of literary writing

Course Objectives

There are objectives to be achieved in each unit of the course. You should read them before studying each unit. It is expected that by the time you have finished studying this course you should be able to:

- explain the nature of literature
- know the purpose of literature
- know the means by which literature achieves its purpose
- know the genres of literature and their characteristics
- know the principles of appreciating literature
- discriminate and judge good and bad literature
- write good and literary passages

Working Through this Course

To complete this course, you are advised to read the study units, read recommended books and other materials provided by NOUN. Each unit contains self assessment exercises, and at points in the course you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of the course, there is a final examination. The course should take you about twenty-four weeks to complete. You will find all the components of the course listed below. You have to allocate your time to each unit in order to complete the course successfully and on time

Course Materials

The major components of the course are:

- 1 Course guide
- 2 Study units
- 3 Textbooks
- 4 Assignment File
- 5 Presentation schedule

Study Units

There are twenty- four study units in this course, as follows:

Module 1: General Introduction

Unit 1 : The Nature of Literature

Unit 2: The Language of Literature

Unit 3: Sound Devices in Literature

Unit 4: Classicism and Romanticism in Poetry

Unit 5: Conventional Poetic Forms

Module 2: Drama

Unit 1: Introduction to Drama; Types of Drama

Unit 2: Elements and Features of Drama

Unit 3: Aspects of Greek Drama

Unit 4: Aspects of Elizabethan Drama

Unit 5: Modern and Experimental Drama

Unit 6: Traditional and Modern African Drama

Unit 7: Feminist Drama

Unit 8 : African American Drama

Module 3: Prose

Unit 1: Prose Literature: concept and forms

Unit 2: Aspects of the Novel

Unit 3: African Prose Fiction

Unit 4: Textual Analysis; Text: Anthills of the Savannah

Unit 5: Prose and Other Genres of Literature

Module 4: Poetry

Unit 1: Introduction to Poetry

Unit 2: Traditional Oral Antecedents to Modern African Poetry

Unit 3: Traditional African Poetry

Unit 4: Influences of Traditional Oral Art on the Modern Poetry

Unit 5: Modern African Poetry

The Module 1 give a general introduction to literature, Module 2 deals with drama, Module 3 introduces you to prose literature while Module 4 introduces you to poetry. Each study unit consists of one week's work and includes specific objectives, directions for study, reading material and self assessment exercises. Together with tutor-marked assignments, these exercises will assist you in

achieving the stated learning objectives of the individual units and of the course.

Set Textbooks

Certain books are recommended in the course. You should purchase them yourself and read them where you are so directed before attempting the exercises.

Assessment

There are two aspects of the assessment of this course; the tutor marked assignments and a written examination. In doing these assignments, you are expected to apply information gathered during the course. The assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the presentation schedule and the *Assignment file*. The work that you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 40% of your total course mark.

Tutor Marked Assignment

There is a tutor marked assignment at the end of every unit . You are required to attempt all the assignments. You will be assessed on all of them but the best four performances will be used for assessment. Each of the four selected will come from the four areas covered in the course namely: the general introduction to literature covering Units 1 and 3; the introduction to drama covering units 4 to 11; the introduction to prose covering Units 11 to 14 and finally the introduction to poetry covering Units 15 to 21. The assignment carries 10%. each.

When you have completed each assignment, send it together with a (tutor-marked assignment) form, to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline. If for any reason you cannot complete your work on time, contact

your tutor before the assignment is due to discuss the possibility of an extension.

Extensions will not be granted after the due date unless under exceptional circumstances.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination for Access Literature ENL 001 will be of three hours duration and will carry 60% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the kinds of self assessment exercises and the tutor marked problems you have previously encountered. All areas of the course will be assessed. You should use the time between finishing the last unit and taking the examination to revise the entire course. You may find it useful to review your self assessment exercises and tutor marked assignments before the examination.

Course marking scheme

The following table lays out how the actual course marking is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments 1-4 (the best four of all the assignments submitted)	Four assignments, marked out of 10% Totaling 40%
Final examination	60% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Course Overview

Unit	Title of Work	Weeks Activity	Assessment (End of Unit)
	Course guide	1	
Module 1	The nature of literature	1	Assignment 1
1			
2	The language of literature	1	Assignment 2
3	Sound Devices in Literature	1	Assignment 3
4	Classicism and Romanticism	1	Assignment 4
5	Conventional Poetic Forms	1	Assignment 5
Module 2	Introduction to drama/Types		Assignment
Unit 1	Of drama	1	1
2	Elements and Features of Drama	1	Assignment 2
3	Aspects of Greek Drama	1	Assignment 3
4	Aspects of Elizabethan Drama	1	Assignment 4
5	Modern and Experimental Drama	1	Assignment 5
6	Traditional and Modern African Drama	1	Assignment 6
7	Feminist Drama	1	Assignment 7
8	African American Drama	1	Assignment 8
Module 3			
1	Prose Literature: concept and forms	1	Assignment 1
2	Aspects of the novel	1	Assignment 2
3	African Prose Fiction	1	Assignment 3
4	Textual Analysis: Text: Anthills of the Savannah	1	Assignment 4
5	Prose and Other Genres of Literature	1	5
Module 4			
Unit 1	Introduction to Poetry	1	Assignment 1
2	Traditional Oral Antecedents to Modern African Poetry	1	Assignment 2

3	Traditional African poetry	1	Assignment 3
4	Phases of Modern African Poetry and Influences of the Traditional Art on the Modern Form	1	Assignment 4
5	Poetry Appreciation: Demonstration: <i>Building the nation</i> by Henry Barlow	1	Assignment 5
	Revision	1	
	Examination	1	
	Total	25	

How to get the most from this course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecturer. The advantage is that you can read and work through the study materials at your pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. Just as a lecturer might give you in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate times

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the unit, you should go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

Self assessment exercises are interspersed throughout the units and answers are given at the end of the course. Working through these tests will help you to achieve the objectives of the unit and prepare you for the assignments and the examination.

You should do each self assessment exercise as you come to it in the study unit. There will be examples given in the study units. Work through these when you have come to them.

Tutors and Tutorials

There are 21 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date. They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone or e-mail if you need help. Contact your tutor if :

- you do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings
- you have difficulty with the self assessment exercises
- you have a question or a problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials prepare a question list before attending them. You will gain a lot from participating actively.

Summary

ENL 001 intends to improve your proficiency in English by introducing you to literature which is language in its best form and usage. Upon completing the course you should be equipped with the resources to speak and write English better than an ordinary user of the language. You should also be able to comprehend spoken and written English beyond the denotative level . You will be able to deal with such issues as

- the features of a literary passage
- figurative language
- aspects and forms of poetry, drama and prose
- appreciation of literature and more

We wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it both interesting and useful.

Module 1

Unit 1 : THE NATURE OF LITERATURE

Table Of Contents

This unit will introduce you to the subject – literature. You will learn what literature is; how it is different from the other subjects or

courses that you study; the methods used in literature which make it unique and the peculiar language of literature and the value of literature. The unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 The nature and methods of literature
- 4.0 The branches of literature
- 5.0 The value of literature
- 6.0 Summary
- 7.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- References

1.0 Introduction

Literature is so much part of our everyday lives that we take it for granted. The ordinary man hardly bothers to find out what the role of literature in the society is or what role it plays in his personal life. This attitude is perhaps responsible for the attempts to undermine the importance of literature particularly by the advocates of science and technology. Even parents try to discourage their children from studying literature. The government and private institutions have cut down on scholarships for the study of the humanities and literature while admission quotas in higher institutions have similarly been drastically reduced.

The logical outcome of this kind of attitude would be the removal of this apparently 'less useful' subject from the curriculum. But this is not the case. The curriculum planners recognize the usefulness of literature as a school subject as well as its value for the individual. It is for this reason that literature

is one of the core subjects in the secondary school curriculum and a required course in certain university programmes like law, mass communication, languages and linguistics.

It becomes pertinent to ask what, for instance, would happen to society if literature ceased to exist. Why, in the first place did the traditional societies develop literature to the extent that today the modern society is the rich inheritor of both oral and written forms of literature? What is it that literature does to society that makes some societies very proud of their literary achievements and so committed to the continued promotion of their national literatures? In other words what are the educational and social functions of literature?

2.0 Objectives

The purpose of this unit is to find answers to the above questions. By the time you finish reading through the unit, you should be able to explain

- (i) what literature is
- (ii) the methods used to communicate in literature
- (iii) how literature differs from other subjects
- (iv) the branches of literature
- (v) The value of literature

3.0 The Nature of Literature

Nobody has ever succeeded to define exactly and comprehensively what literature really is. One useful definition of literature is given in (Egudu1) which defines literature as ‘a mode or method of expression . It is not just a subject that expresses something; but rather it is the way, manner, or method in which something is said or written’ . This is what distinguishes Literature from other subjects like Economics, Biology or Religion which though they express something are not themselves methods of expression because they use methods which are distinguishable

from themselves as subjects. But in the case of Literature, the subject itself is the method.

What this means is that the study of literature is principally a study of a way of saying something whereas a study of a subject like Economics can be separated from the study of the method of Economics. For example, Economics is synonymous with its content but the method of studying it may be mathematical, descriptive or analytical. On the other hand, Literature is not synonymous with its content but rather with its method. The content/subject of literature may be an economic, a religious or a political issue yet it is not Economics, Religion or Political Science. Literature is the way or method of expressing this issue.

We may illustrate this with some examples. Consider the saying:

He who lives in a glass house should not throw stones

On the surface the sentence appears to be talking about a person who lives in a house made of glass. If he throws stones at others they will throw stones at him too and his house will be destroyed because the glass will be broken. What the sentence is really saying is that one who is not blameless should not be the one to start pointing fingers at others. Thus talking overtly about a glass house when implying guilt is a good example of the art of *suggesting* something rather than stating it directly which is one of the methods of literature. The art of creating a situation in which a man stays in a glass

house to throw stones and may possibly get stones thrown at him too is the art of *imagination* or *invention*. That means that the speaker imagines that people who are full of guilt are living in glass houses which cannot withstand attack.

Another example can be seen in the following description of the Nigerian city, Ibadan by J. P. Clark-Bekeredemo

Ibadan,
Running splash of rust

and gold- flung and scattered
among seven hills like broken
china in the sun .

To describe the city of Ibadan, the poet creates or invents two pictures. The first is a picture of a stream or river containing liquid that is made of rust and gold. The second picture is of a china vessel which is broken and scattered among seven hills when the sun is shining. These pictures have been created or invented for the purpose of saying something about the physical appearance of the city. How the poet tells us about the appearance of the city is by suggesting to us not by telling us directly that Ibadan is made up of new and old houses (rust and gold) and these houses are not arranged in any order but ‘ flung and scattered’ like pieces of broken china in the sun. Clark suggests this indirectly by comparing the appearance of the city to a running stream and the arrangement of the houses to pieces of broken plate scattered about. By so doing he has invented a situation which the reader is called upon to interpret using his imagination.

Yet another example is from the Christian bible. Many of us are familiar with the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). The master Jesus compared the attainment of the kingdom of heaven to ten virgins, five of whom were foolish and five of them

wise. They went out to see the bridegroom. The five wise virgins carried oil in their lamps while the five foolish ones did not carry extra oil. They waited for the bridegroom was long so the foolish virgins ran out of oil and went to get more. When they were away, the bridegroom arrived and those who were ready to meet him entered the hall and the door was locked. When the foolish virgins came back and knocked on the door they were refused entry. The master ended the story by saying, ‘ Be watchful for you know not the hour nor the time’. This is a piece of literature because it is a literary way of saying something . The master used the story of the

ten virgins to teach his disciples the need to be ready all the time for one does not know the time his creator will come to take him to heaven. It can also mean that the time one relaxes from doing a good thing is the time the reward for the good deed is given.

The parable is therefore an invented story which appears to talk about girls waiting for the bridegroom when in fact it is about the need for everyone to be ready all the time. As in the previous examples, there is invention and imagination involved. What is of interest to us and what makes the passages literature is not so much what they say but the method of saying it. This does not mean that what the passages say is not important. The content of a literary piece may be important but the study of the content alone is not good literature. What is literature is the method of saying it and we have seen that the method of literature is characterized by indirectly suggesting rather than stating the fact and calling on the reader or hearer to use his or her imagination to derive the facts from the invented situation (Read also the first chapter of *The Study of Poetry* by R. N. Egudu)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

- What do you understand literature to be?
- In what way is literature different from other subjects?
- What are the main methods used for communication in literature?

We have implied in our discussions above that all writing no matter how suitable it is to its purpose and how beautifully written is not literature. Although we started by saying that no one has succeeded in defining what literature is, we can at least note some differences between a passage that may be called literature and one that is not literature.

In the first place literature is always more *concrete and particularised* than scientific exposition. One can describe a woman in a way that makes her different from a child or man yet similar to any other woman. But if one were to describe a woman with particular characteristics that make her so different from any other woman that it is possible to recognize her on the road or in a crowd, the description would be said to be particularized or concrete. This particularity makes for vividness. Very few people can visualize an abstraction or a generalization; but if a writer gives us significant details about what he is describing, we can form a mental picture of it. Compare the following:

- (i) Farmer Oak smiles broadly
to Thomas Hardy's description of the way farmer Oak smiles
- (ii) When Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread until they were within an unimportant distance of his ears; his eyes were reduced to chinks with diverging wrinkles spreading across his countenance like the lines in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun

(Adapted from Thomas Hardy's: *Far from the Madding Crowd*. p`.1)
It is much easier to picture Farmer Oak and the way he smiles from the second description. In other words, the second example can be described as literature while the first one is a statement. Literature is also more *human and personal* in the way it handles its subjects than scientific or technical writing. It deals with feelings which are communicated in words or action.

Literature is also more *decorative*. The writer is concerned not only with the subject matter but also with the art of representing or recreating social realities within alien structures of imagination- poetry, drama, prose. The primary tool for achieving this is language with which the writer decorates what he is saying

using *figurative rather than everyday language* to invent and create situations which can be easily imagined.

Finally, the writer in literature is not concerned with facts as they really are in real life as the scientist is. What a novelist, poet or playwright does is to select life experiences that appeal to the heart and the imagination and present them in such a way that the reader or hearer is not only entertained but also imagines himself or herself in such circumstances and at least for a time approves or disapproves of what he sees or reads. Often one who reads a novel, poem or watches a play has something to learn. You will learn more about the functions of literature in the next unit.

4.0 Branches of Literature

Literature is an art. We have said earlier that it is not the content of a passage that makes the passage a piece of literature but rather the method of presenting the passage. If you look at a photograph of a person or scene, what you admire is the art of photography that produced the picture rather than the person or scene that is photographed. After all, the person or scene may be familiar. This is why we say that a certain photograph of the same person is more beautiful than another.

The essence of literature, therefore, lies in the method or art of saying something. It has certain peculiar features.

This art or method has branches called *genres* – prose/the novel/ short story, drama and poetry. Each of the branches shares the characteristics of literature as a method of expression but each has its peculiar way of suggestion. The novel or prose literature suggests by means of an invented story or series of stories, drama suggests by means of an invented action or series of actions while poetry suggests by means of invented images or pictures. This means that in prose literature a story (long or short) which carries a theme as the story of the ten virgins is told. In drama a

situation is created where people are presented as acting different roles (recall any play you have read or film you have watched). In poetry the poet invents images or mental pictures as in the poem 'Ibadan' referred to above. Each can also use the same material as the other. For instance a novel, play or poem can be written on the same subject. Also, there can be action in a novel though it is implied and both the novel and drama make use of images or invented pictures while a poem can tell a story. This stresses the fact that the three genres are branches of the same entity, their individual methods of communication notwithstanding

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 2

Identify the qualities that would make you classify a piece of writing as literature.

5.0 The Value of literature

The value of literature is summarized in the following passage:

And all of us who read works of literature will
find our knowledge of human affairs broadened
and deepened whether in the individual, the social,
the racial or the international sphere; we shall
understand the possibilities of human life; both for
good and evil; we shall understand time and place,
with all its pleasures and vexations and problems.
We shall understand the way onwards which are
open to us, and we shall perhaps be able to make
right rather than wrong choices (Moody 3)

The above passage appears to gloss over the *entertainment* value of literature. This is the primary function of literature whether in its traditional oral form where people sing at work or gather to tell stories on moonlight nights or in its written form where people read novels and watch plays and films. Literature provides a means of escape from the problems of our daily life by mentally taking us away from our real world and its problems to a different world, at

least for a short while. When you read a novel or watch a film you temporally forget about the problems of your real life and become absorbed in the imagined world of fiction or drama or poetry. From time to time you read or watch things that make you laugh or sometimes shed tears and you are thus entertained. At other times literature entertains us by creating beauty by the choice and use of words. The poet for instance chooses words not only for their meaning but also for their sounds and colour. We shall deal with the use of words in literature later. Besides pleasure, literature teaches morals and lessons which people derive from the experiences of the characters they watch and read about.

Literature has served as a subtle means of education right from the earliest times when folk tales were used to entertain and teach morals and social norms as well as explain why certain phenomena are the way they are. The story teller after telling an entertaining story would end with ‘... that is why people die’ or ‘...that is why it is not good to be jealous of others’. In modern literature the writer concentrates on telling the story but allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions which is often indirectly by the manner of telling the story and the experiences of the main character and other characters in the story. Anyone who has read Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* for instance would see that the writer does not directly condemn inflexibility of character and refusal to accept change as a part of human life but this is suggested in the behaviour and tragic end of the main character, Okonkwo. This is because his friend, Obierika, and other villagers end well because they accept the inevitable change brought by the white man and know when to stop resisting the changes

Literature preserves culture, and since language is its medium of expression, language is inextricably linked with culture. Today, we know how the language of Chaucer’s time and that of Shakespeare’s time looked like through the written literature of the

time. Literature also helps the development of language. Writers are often the most proficient users of language. They bend the language to express their thoughts. They create new words and figures of speech which help to enrich the language. The cultural values of the people are expressed in their language/ literature and literature helps to preserve these for the future generation. After reading *Things fall Apart* for instance, the reader knows so much about the Igbo society, their religion, customs, even the kinds of food they eat and their social life.

These are not all. Literature helps its readers to develop certain skills and capacities. These include the capacity to discriminate and make judgments and decisions. The ability to choose and decide on one course of action or the other is a task that we perform everyday of our lives, and every decision we take every day of our lives helps to determine our successes or failures in life.

How does literature help us to develop these capacities? When we read works of literature we soon find that we begin to enjoy some kinds of literary works more than others. This means that we are beginning to discriminate, to sort out in our minds what is important from the trivial; what is profound from the commonplace. This develops in us a capability to distinguish between what is important in our daily affairs which should occupy our attention more than what is trivial with the result that we benefit as individuals and are better able to contribute to the society in which we live (Udofot, 2-3).

The experience in appreciation and discrimination leads us to develop the ability to make sound judgments about the situations we face in our present life experiences and the future years. Delivering our opinions about a situation based on certain factors we have examined leads us to be able to contribute useful opinions to decisions taken in the establishment where we find ourselves in later years. For example, as an employer you have to

decide for instance the best out of a list of applicants; as a lawyer you have to decide which evidence is most likely to be the truth; as a publisher you have to choose among a list of manuscripts the ones that should be published; as a governor or minister you have to weigh various courses of action and suggestions offered by supporters, advisers and even opponents before deciding on a course of action. The list can go on and on. In the course of your life you have to decide which career to choose, which house to build or rent, which clothes to buy, which man or woman to marry and so on. The study of literature equips you for these crucial decisions in life and living.

This explains why literature is a compulsory foundation subject for the study of a course like Law. I also hasten to add that literature should be studied to some level (at least at the secondary school level) by every educated person if he/she is to be prepared to take the right decisions in life and be humane in his dealings with others. Indeed, for anybody who will have to work in an area where he manages or relates with human beings, he or she needs to benefit from the wealth of human affairs acquired through the study of literature.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE(SAE) 3

Give two ways by which literature entertains and two ways by which it educates

6.0 SUMMARY

You have learnt from this unit

- that literature is a method of expression which uses suggestion, indirection, invention and imagination;
- literature differs from other subjects because it is itself the method; other subjects are not identical with their content;

- literature is more human and personal in the way it communicates, it is also more concrete and decorative;
- the branches of literature are called genres ; these are poetry, drama , prose;
- each branch uses its own peculiar method but all share the general characteristics of literature;
- literature performs valuable functions in society; these are: entertainment, education, preservation of language and culture and development of the capacity to discriminate and make judgment.

7.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Discuss the nature of literature and its place in human society.

8.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

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Module 1

Unit 2 : THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE

Table of Contents

This unit introduces you to the language of literature. You learnt in Unit 1 that literature is a method of communication which uses suggestion and indirection rather than direct statement of facts. In this unit, you will see how language is used to suggest and create situations that the reader is supposed to use his/her imagination to understand and appreciate. The unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Direct Description
- 4.0 Figurative language
 - 4.1. Apostrophe
 - 4.2. Allusion.
 - 4.3. Euphemism
 - 4.4. Irony
- 4.5 Synecdoche and Metonymy
- 5.0 Poetic Imagery
- 6.0 Sound devices
- 7.0 Summary

Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)

References

1.0 Introduction

Generally, the reasons why people write can be divided into three main categories:

- (i) to give information
- (ii) to persuade
- (iii) to delight the imagination

When the motive is to delight or persuade, the writing takes on an emotional quality: the writer wants his readers to not only know the facts but also feel about them as he does. The poet (we are using that term to refer to the highest type of literary artist) induces his readers to feel as he does by manipulating words in two ways:

- (i) by direct, vivid and detailed description; and
- (ii) by using figurative language

2. 0 Objectives

The aim of this unit is to lead you through the various devices of language used by writers to make their writing literary. By the time you finish studying this unit, you will know the figures of speech, literary devices and poetic imagery often employed by poets, novelists and dramatists. You should start to use them yourself.

3.0 Direct Description

If anyone asked a Southern Nigerian farmer why he is making mounds to plant yams in his farm in March his ready answer will be because the year's first rain has come and the planting season has started. That is a fact and in the circumstances the farmer is interested in communicating just the fact. The poet wishes to communicate not just the fact but also how he feels and how he wants you to feel. He may write something like this

Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away.
For lo! the drought is past, the rains have come ;
The shrubs and flowers begin to appear on the earth
The time of planting is here,
the singing of the birds is heard again in our farms.
(Adapted from the *Song of Solomon*)

In the above passage, the emotion is communicated by the use of concrete details. Remember what we said earlier about literature being more concrete and particularized than non literary writing. Rather than talk about the planting season, the writer mentions particular aspects like the end of drought, the coming of the rains, the appearance of shrubs and flowers, and then planting...

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE(SAE) 1

What ideas are suggested to you by the following description ?

What descriptive details give you this idea?

Examine this passage as a piece of literature.

Certain things intrigue me about my friend, Eno. When she waters the flowers on her veranda in the morning, she touches them very tenderly, almost fondling them like a mother would touch her newborn baby. She misses them when she travels and mentions them many times in her conversation. The day I had lunch in her house, it had rained all day and the weather was quite cold. The water she gave me to wash my hands was so mildly warm that it was soothing. Her students say that she would not grade a script without reading it thoroughly and no student of hers scores one mark more than he or she deserves. In private, they refer to her as Madame Thatcher.

When, however the emotion felt by the writer and to be communicated to the reader is more profound or very intense, straightforward description, however vivid or detailed, is not enough. Figurative language is then used.

4.0 Figurative Language

This is a general term often used to refer to implied meanings of words or a series of usages which are extensions of

the ordinary everyday use of words which a writer adopts to present his subject. He does this in such a way that the reader or hearer not only sees it but also feels it the way he does. These devices may be roughly classified as follows:

4.1. Apostrophe

This figure of speech constitutes a form of address to an absentee object or person as if the writer were himself a participant in the scene or action he describes and the person addressed were also present.

It creates a sense of immediacy and makes the passage more dramatic as in the following lines :

(i) O wild wild West Wind/ Thou breath of autumn...
(from Shelley's Ode to the West Wind)

(ii) J.P. Clark's address to an Abiku child
Coming and going these several seasons,
Do stay on the baobab tree...

(iii) Henry IV's apostrophe to sleep
O Sleep, O gentle sleep,
Nature's soft nurse, how have I frightened thee
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down.

4. 2. Allusion

This communicates by bringing to mind a familiar story, a historical event, a scene from a text, a known cultural typology to make us see the parallel between it and the current situation. Some allusions are biblical, some are classical while others are literary and historical.

- He was the messiah for his family (biblical; reference to Jesus)
- He has the Spartan resilience to problems (classical reference to the Greek city of Sparta and its iron discipline).
- I hope my creditor will not ask for a pound of flesh (literary, reference to Shakespeare's Shylock's demand in *The Merchant of Venice*).
- Another Hitler is born to cause wars (historical reference to Adolf Hitler who caused a world war)

4.3 Euphemism

This figure tries to make blunt, unpleasant and vulgar expressions tolerable, pleasant and polite as for instance the following:

passed way	-	died
human droppings	-	faeces
under-privileged	-	poor
inexpensive	-	cheap
speech defect	-	stammering
financial constraints-		bankruptcy
gents/ladies	-	toilets

4.4. Irony

An ironic expression is one in which the current circumstances and the speaker's attitudes are opposed to the literal meaning of his speech. Simply, an irony states the opposite of what the speaker or writer means leaving something in the tone of the statement or in its relation to the known facts to suggest the real meaning. For example, Caesar's friend Mark Antony,

when speaking to the mob at Caesar's death, spoke against Brutus, yet he said

For Brutus is an honourable man,
so are they all honourable men.

Mr. 'A' speaking insolently to a short man M. 'B' says

Mr A: I love you because you are the tallest man I have ever seen.

Mr. B: Thanks for that hard strike on me, it tells me how great your love speaks for me.

When irony is used with an intention to scorn or mock, it becomes *sarcasm*. In *dramatic irony* a character in a play makes a statement in good faith, but to the audience and perhaps to some of the characters the words have a meaning or a significance of which the speaker is not aware. *Irony of situation* refers to situations where events are the opposite of what they should be. A classical example is the situation in Coleridge's poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* where the mariners were dying of thirst in the middle of the sea and the mariner said:

Water, water everywhere
And all the boards did shrink;
Water water everywhere
Nor any drop to drink .

This is similar to the situation in Nigeria where in the midst of plenty, people are dying of hunger.

4. 5 Synecdoche and Metonymy

These two figures of speech operate on the force of suggestion; one part of a complex experience is used to recall the whole experience. Synecdoche is the mention of a part for a whole as in

All *hands* must be on deck (persons).

He pricked his *stomach* (abdomen).

He cut off his *brain* (head).

At times the whole is used to refer to the part as in the statement “Nigeria’s defence was poor” when referring to Nigeria’s football team. Metonymy which means ‘name change’ is the use of an attributive or suggestive word for the thing meant as in the following example:

The ‘*sceptre*’ and the ‘*crown*’ are mine (kingship).

The ‘*pen*’ is mightier than the ‘*gun*’ (writer, soldier).

He does not like *Soyinka* (the works of Soyinka).

These devices are often used to emphasize the most significant or picturesque part of the whole.

4.6. Features of Rhetoric

These are figures which give emphasis by means of surprise. The main ones are: antithesis, epigram, paradox and oxymoron

4.6.1. Antithesis

This is the explicit coupling together of opposites as in ‘speech is silver but silence is golden’ and in ‘Two men I honour and no third’.

4.6.2. Epigram

An epigram is a short witty saying often with a sting in its tail. It is also often used for a short witty poem. It is defined as any ‘neat witty statement’ which is often memorable as the following passage in Shirley’s ‘Death the Leveller’:

Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade

These lines neatly summarize the argument of the whole poem which is that at death the rich and the poor become equal; thus death is the leveler.

In this figure of speech, a witty statement is made in a meditative tone to express deep wisdom e.g.

The world is a stage.

What is worth doing is worth doing well.

The world is a small village.

4.6.3.Paradox

This is a statement which sounds absurd, self-contradictory or senseless on the surface but which has a coherent meaning and wisdom underneath as in the following:

The child is the father of the man.

He kills sleep every night by night.

Make haste slowly

Cowards die many times before their death.

4.6.4 Oxymoron

Oxymoron, literally meaning ‘sharp dull’ is the combining of two contradictory terms in one expression and this exceptional coincidence is therefore arresting as in the following lines :

His honour rooted in dishonour stood

And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true

The italicized expressions exemplify the contradiction that characterizes oxymoron.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

1. Identify and explain the figure of speech in the following:

- painful laughter;
- The best way to learn a language is to speak it.
- All that glitters is not gold.

- He touched the hot kettle and experienced a disagreeable warmth.
- The journalist won support for his party by the *stroke of his pen* but his opponent scattered it with *the breath of his mouth*

2. Give an example of the following

- a biblical allusion
- an epigrammatic statement
- a metonymy
- an apostrophe
- an ironical statement

5.0 Poetic Imagery

The most important and often used means of achieving vividness and concreteness in the presentation of the subject and the transmission of emotion is through figures based on comparison and similarity. Poetic imagery has its source in the ability of the imagination to find resemblances in things that are not similar . The object may be to either

- describe something more accurately and concretely than direct description or
- convey emotion or thought through some experience which may be familiar to the reader and which will therefore suggest to the reader the emotion the poet wishes to convey.

Often the two purposes are combined. For example when the poet, Robert Burns says:

O, my Luv's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June .

He is describing not the colour of his lover's cheeks but appealing to our sense of beauty to appreciate his lover in terms of the freshness and fragrance as well as the beauty of the rose as he

knows it which he also wants the reader to share. To be effective, poetic comparison must be made to something familiar to both the poet and the reader and about which the writer and the reader are likely to have the same emotions.

Comparisons are often made to sense experience, to things we see, hear, taste, smell and touch and also to natural phenomena. They are also made to famous figures in history, literature, the classics or the bible. It must be noted that the comparison is made between things that have no resemblance in the ordinary everyday sense. For instance to say that a girl resembles her mother has no poetic imagery involved because it is normal for a child to resemble a parent. If for example the girl is compared to a flower in full bloom, this comparison will immediately spring surprise which will draw the readers attention to some quality that the writer is trying to call his attention to.

Poetic imagery takes various forms the most common of which are: simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism and by extension, hyperbole and allegory. According to Keith 'If we call the subject of the poem A and the thing to which it is compared B, then a *simile* says: "A is like B; a *metaphor* says A is B" (6)while the poet who uses *symbolism* writes of A in terms of B and never mentions A at all. *Personification* and *Allegory* are extensions of metaphor; when a poet uses personification, he writes of some abstract thing as if it were a living thing. An allegory is a metaphor extended over sometimes a whole book as in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's progress* where the character Faithful represents the quality of faith in the Christian soul, a quality incarnated and made to act like a human being. Some of these figures need some more explanation and/or illustration.

5.1. Simile

This is a direct comparison of essentially different objects, things or groups of things which are similar in a certain aspect, using the terms, 'like' and 'as' to strike the similarity. What is striking about a simile is the unusual or abnormal nature of the likeness established between the two items compared. In the following example: My brother is like a palm tree, what strikes the reader first is the unusual nature of the comparison between a human being and a tree. It is this unusual nature of the comparison which creates surprise and therefore pleasure. The reader then uses his imagination to find out the similarity between the man (my brother) and the palm tree. From the comparison, it is suggested that my brother is tall, slim, possibly with a fat head and a rough skin. Beyond the physical it can be said that he is very useful to the family because every part of the palm tree is useful; the fruit is used for making palm oil; the kernels too provide oil; the shells are used for making fire; the stem and even the leaves are useful. The writer is therefore able to communicate a lot about his brother's appearance and how he is regarded with just that image.

In Robert Burns poem already referred to above, the poet uses two similes to convey his love and admiration of his loved one:

O, my Luv's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June .
O my love is like the melody,
That's sweetly played in tune

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE SAE 3

Identify and explain the similes in the above passage.

5.2 Metaphor

This is the figure of speech which is most often used by poets to create images. A metaphor is an implied or indirect comparison

of one kind of thing, quality or action to another without the use of as or like. In the following passage from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (Act V, sc.5) life is compared directly to a number of things:

... Out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

First life is compared to a candle flame that burns only for sometime and goes off ; next to a walking shadow without substance; then to a poor player (an actor) who comes on stage for a short time , acts a part and leaves and finally to a tale told by an idiot which has no meaning. So the images give us an idea of how the writer sees life and how he wants his readers to also see it.

The following metaphorical expressions are examples drawn from newspapers and poems:

The torch of knowledge illuminates the darkness of ignorance.
International trade cements friendship between nations.
The clouds are ready to let loose its contents.
Government's budget will cushion the inflation.
Tolerant people swallow insults.
He is the Solomon of our time.

(Adapted from Ekpenyong and Udofot ,69)

5.3 Personification

In this figure of speech, inanimate and non-human objects, abstract ideas or concepts are represented as possessing human qualities, powers or feelings. Simply put it is talking about something that is not human as if it were a person. The picture or

images so created are always of a person, his actions or feelings.

Consider the following poem:

The weak scattered rays of yellow sun
Peeped through the hazy tissues
That blanketed them with transparent wax
And as the *wrinkled rays* closed the day
Smoky chimneys of New York *coughed*
Looking down in bended towers
And *vomited* sad tears of dark smoke
(Moore and Beier, 225)

The rays of the sun are said to peep like a person or animal; the rays are wrinkled like an old man or woman; the chimneys coughed as a sick person or animal; the chimneys look down as a person or animal would look; the chimneys vomited as a person or animal would and finally, tears are vomited as food or wine is vomited. Note that each of the above comparisons is a metaphor because it is an indirect comparison; thus every personification is a kind of metaphor though every metaphor is not a personification.

5.4 Symbolism

Symbolism is the art of using an object to stand for another object, institution or person. Although symbolist poetry is a modern development poets have used symbolism for centuries. The lily has been used as a symbol of purity, the rose of love, the sword of war, the cross of Christianity, the crescent moon of Islam . Writers can create their own symbols and at other times symbols are rooted in a people's culture. In the writings of Wole Soyinka, for instance, the road represents man's journey through life while the fresh palm frond in many Nigerian cultures symbolize different things. In some it signifies peace, in others it is a warning and still in some it is a way of declaring a dispute or giving an injunction. What objects are used as symbols in your community or religion?

5.5 Hyperbole

This is an overstatement or exaggeration of facts used for serious or comic effect. Hyperbole produces more effect than plain statements

especially in the expression of passionate feeling as for instance in the following:

When the girl received the bad news, she wept rivers of tears.

Thanks a million for your letter.

He has everything on earth.

Hyperbole is often contrasted with *Litotes or Understatement* which emphasizes a point by deliberately understating it. If one said of a man who is seven feet tall: 'he is not exactly a dwarf', one would be using an understatement.

Images, to be effective, must express feeling and the more exactly they express that feeling, the better. In order to do this, the images have to be freshly made up by the writer not stale and overused. Overused expressions and images are described as *hackneyed* and many journalistic writings and political slogans are full of hackneyed expressions which have lost all freshness and vitality. Political parties are often reported as *exploring all avenues* and *leaving no stone unturned* and *using every means at their disposal*. Journalists also often write about every problem being food for thought and combing *every nook and cranny* of the country for facts and so on. These figures of speech were certainly original at one time. Overused images are not a feature of good literary writing and you should comment about them in your appreciation of a piece of literature.

6.0 Summary

The following main points have been made in this unit:

- that writers often use direct description to present their subjects;
- where they want to communicate deep feeling, they use figurative language;
- Figurative language is an umbrella term which covers all the devices which are extensions of everyday usages and meanings with which writers communicate ideas and emotions to their readers.
- Various types of figurative usages with examples of each.

7.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Read any novel or poem of your choice and comment on the writers use of :

- (a) Direct description
- (b) Figures of speech
- (c) Sound devices.

8.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

Ekpenyong, Bassey and Udofot, Inyang. *A Comprehensive English Course for Schools and Colleges*. Uyo, Scholar's Press, 2001.

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Module 1

Unit 3: SOUND DEVICES IN LITERATURE

This unit is arranged as follows:

Table of contents

1 Introduction
2 Objectives
3 Sound devices
3.1 Onomatopoeia
3.2 Rhyme
3.3 Alliteration
3.4 Consonance and Assonance
3.5 Repetition
4.0 Summary
5.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
References

1. Introduction

Although sound can be loosely treated as figurative language they have certain peculiarities which make them largely different as a group in the functions they perform and as such we prefer to treat sound devices in a different unit.

2.0 Objectives

By the time you have worked through this unit you should be able to :

- know the sound devices commonly used in literature;
- recognize sound devices in poetry, drama and prose;
- know the functions of sound devices in literature.

3.0. Sound Devices

Sound in Literature refers to “ all the various sounds of vowels and consonants and clusters of consonants as they appear in poetry” (Egudu, 53). Sound is also often used to refer to the

conventional devices of *onomatopoeia*, *rhyme*, *alliteration*, *assonance*, *consonance* and *repetition*. All these are the elements that constitute sound in literature, especially in poetry. Sound devices do not only suggest the meaning of the words but also create a pleasant effect and sometimes emphasise the point. You need to understand the nature of each one of them and how it is used in literature.

3.1 Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia refers to a speech sound which imitates an actual real life sound and by so doing suggests the thing that makes the sound in real life. Such words as *buzzing* (of bees), *roaring* (of a lion), *groaning* (in pain), *murmuring* (way of talking) in a way suggest the sounds that have come to be associated with the real life sounds that these words describe. “In Nigerian English, the use of the words : *kia-kia* and *gwongworo* to describe a small bus and a lorry can be traced to the sounds made by these vehicles” (Udofot, 23). The italicized words are instances of onomatopoeic words. Can you guess the real life sound that each of the following onomatopoeic words imitate ?: splash, gbram, twittering, crunch, crash, gnash, barking, mewling and grunting.

3.2 Rhyme

Rhyme can be explained as the similarity of sounds of words in different lines or in the same line of a passage usually of poetry. Certain conditions have to be fulfilled before any two words can be said to rhyme:

- (i) the vowel sounds in the words must be the same e.g.
station and nation /eI/
- (ii) the consonant sounds following the vowels must also be the same e.g /Σ/ in *station and nation*;

- (iii) the consonants immediately before the vowels must be different e.g. /t/ and /n/ in station and nation;
- (iv) Finally the rhyming syllables must have an identical pattern of stress as in \cup station and \cup nation (cf Egudu, 54).

All the four conditions have to be present before we have a *perfect rhyme*. There are cases when they are not all present. When that happens, we have an *imperfect rhyme* as in *rice* and *price* where the same consonant sound /r/ precedes the vowel thus breaking Rule No (iii) which stipulates that the consonants immediately before the vowel sound should be identical.

Rhymes can also be classified according to their positions. The *head rhyme* occurs when two or more words begin with rhyming words; *internal rhyme* occurs when the rhyming words occur in the middle of the lines while the *end rhyme* (the most common type of rhyme) occurs when the rhyming words are the last words in the lines.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

Identify the rhyming words in the following passages:

(i) Twinkle, twinkle little star
How I wonder what you are
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky.

(ii) Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

(iii)...For she my mind hath so displayed
That I shall never find my home.

3.3 Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of two or more words in the same line of poetry or prose. A good example is found in the following line from Shakespeare's *The tempest*: "Full fathom five thy father lies" where four of the five words in the line begin with the sound /f/. Other examples can be seen in the following lines:

...for a rusty *funeral feast*
...He is the *courageous captain of compliments*
....*Peter Piper picked a piece of paper*

Note that alliteration is a matter of the ear not the eye. For example, there is no alliteration in the line: '...the city cars and taxis were not seen on the roads' because the sound of the letter 'c' in city is /s/ while the same letter in cars is pronounced /k/; but there is alliteration in the line: 'Her favourite subjects are *Physics* and *Fine Arts* ' because the words 'Physics' and 'Fine' begin with the same sound /f/ the differences in the letters that begin the words notwithstanding.

3.4 Consonance and Assonance

Consonance like alliteration involves the repetition of the same consonant sound in a line of poetry or prose but unlike alliteration, the consonant sounds are repeated in the middle or at the end of words; NOT at the beginning. . See if you can differentiate between alliteration and consonance in the following passage from Christina Rossetti's 'Summer':

...And the pendulum spider
Swings from side to side,
And blue-black beetles transact business,
and gnats fly in a host'

Do you notice that there is alliteration of /s/ in the second while there is consonance involving the same sound in the third and fourth lines? Also, the sound /b/ is repeated four times at the beginning of words in the third line. Put together, the combined effect of alliteration and consonance has given the poem a music which suggests the poet's feeling of joy about the season of summer.

Assonance involves the presence of identical vowel sounds in lines of poetry and prose. It is often contrasted with consonance which involves consonant sounds. In the line: "Full fathom five thy father lies". The vowel sound / aI/ occurs in three words- 'five, thy and five' while the sound /A:/occurs in two words- 'fathom' and 'father'. Can you identify instances of assonance in the following passage?

The snowflakes *sail* gently
Down from the misty *eye* of the *sky*
and fall *lightly lightly* on the
winter-weary elms.

(From The snow flakes sail gently down by Gabriel Okara)

The vowel sounds repeated in each line are italicized. Not also, taat assonance too is a matter of sound not letters. Do you notice that the sound / aI/ has three different spellings in the passage?

3.5 Repetition

This simply refers to the successive repetition of words, phrases and at times lines in poetry or prose. The effect is often pleasing to the ear and may be used for particular purposes by the writer. In the above passage from Gabriel Okara's 'The snow flakes sail gently down', the word 'lightly' is repeated.

SELF ASSESSMENT TEST (SAE) 2

What does the repetition of '..And she forgot' do to the following passage? What ideas does the repetition in this passage give you?

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,
And she forgot the blue above the trees,
And she forgot the dells where waters run,
And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze;

4. 0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt

- the names of the sound devices commonly used in literary passages
- how you can identify them
- their usages in poetry and prose.

5.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

- Read the following poem and
 - (i) identify the sound devices used
 - (ii) Comment on the use of the sound devices

The snowflakes sail gently
Down from the misty eye of the sky
and fall lightly lightly on the

winter-weary elms. And the branches,
winter-stripped and nude, slowly
with the weight of the weightless snow
bow like grief-stricken mourners
as white funeral cloth is slowly
unrolled over deathless earth
And deep sleep stealthily from the
heater rose and closed my eyes with
The touch of silk cotton on water falling
(From 'The snow flakes sail gently down' by Gabriel Okara)

6.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

- Egudu, Romanus. 1977. *The study of poetry*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press. (Chapter 5: Elements of Poetry: Sound).
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Module 1

Unit 4: CLASSICISM AND ROMANTICISM IN POETRY

Table of Contents

This unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Romantic and Classical
- 4.0 Stress and Metre
- 5.0 Rhythm
- 6.0 Summary
- 7.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 8.0 References

1.0 Introduction

This unit will introduce you to two tendencies which have formed the basis of poetry and literary appreciation over the years. It is important to know about them so as to appreciate conventional English poetic forms as these determine the forms of poetry and also provide the criteria for their evaluation.

2.0 Objectives

This unit is meant to

- prepare you for the next unit which will deal with conventional poetic forms;
- give you an exposition of the two literary movements namely classicism and romanticism;
- provide the criteria with which you can identify and appreciate classical and romantic poems
- introduce you to the description of stress and metre in poetry

- show you how to group stressed and unstressed syllables in to feet for the description of rhythm.

3.0 Romantic and Classical

These adjectives refer to the spirit in which poetry is written. In real life there is always a tension between the principle of freedom and that of control. You find this tension everywhere; in homes, schools and even in government. It is the tension between flexibility and regimentation. The same thing applies in literature where the principle of freedom and flexibility is referred to as Romanticism while that of order and regimentation is called Classicism. And just as in real life freedom and order may be mixed, so in literature romanticism and classicism may be mixed in almost any proportion.

The two words are not easy to define. Generally, in romantic poetry the poet allows his imagination to roam wherever it wills, uses whatever form of verse he likes, takes liberty to write about humble characters not only illustrious ones and draws inspiration not only from the objective consciousness but also from the subconscious. On the other hand, the classical spirit is said to be uppermost when poetry is polished and regular in form; when the subject is about man in society especially civilized man in cities and palaces and when the poet's treatment of his subject is governed by reason rather than emotion. There can be good and bad classical or romantic poetry. Bad classical poetry is sensible but it is dull, flat and uninspired. Similarly, bad romantic poetry is sentimental and often unrealistic.

You will understand the difference more clearly if you examine two famous poems one classical in spirit (Gray's *Elegy written in a country churchyard*) and the other romantic (Blake's *The tyger*). You cannot help noticing the finished perfection of The Elegy with regard to its form: everything is very beautifully said

that you feel that your thoughts on death have been expressed as a universal truth. Although there is emotion in the poem it is reasonable emotion expressed just in the right proportion. Also, although the poet is expressing his own feelings , everyone reading the poem shares in the feelings expressed. The poet is writing about village people buried in a churchyard but what he says applies to life in general. Also, there is nothing in the poem that does not make sense.

But Blake's poem is totally different. The first two lines of the poem cannot be said to conform to prose on common sense logic:

Tyger, tyger burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry ?

The tiger does not burn; the forests of the night (if there is anything like that) would be too dark for the tiger to be seen etc. But if you have ever seen a tiger in real life you will agree that if that creature were let loose in the forest, the above description aptly presents a picture of the tiger which the poet has presented in words that suggest through calling up the picture of the tiger in the mind's eye and you actually feel without being able to rationalize it that the poet has seen the tiger; what it looks like and what it stands for. Thus romantic poetry is able to communicate individual and private feelings unlike classical poetry.

In Gray's Elegy, every stage of the argument is given but Blake appeals to the imagination and takes his reader in a few short lines from the terror of man confronted with the beautiful but terrifying beast to the enigma of creation; that the same God created such a beautiful creature like the tiger could make the same beautiful animal so terrifying.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

Differentiate between classicism and romanticism .

4.0 Metre and Stress

Metre refers to the grouping of stressed and unstressed syllables. The way this grouping is done gives rise to one kind of rhythm or the other. "Stress is the prominence or emphasis given to certain syllables in words when they are uttered. The syllables that are given the prominence are said to be stressed" (Udofot and Eshiett,36). Due to the emphasis given to such syllables, they sound louder and longer to the hearer and involve more muscle energy at production. In connected speech the unstressed syllables are less audible and appear to be hurried over. When the stressed and unstressed syllables are grouped together they result in various rhythmic patterns. For an introductory course of this nature we shall limit ourselves to the four basic patterns of syllabic grouping. Our discussion of metre will be based on the presentation of the subject in Egudu's *The study of poetry* (36-38).

The first kind of metre is the one in which an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed one as in the \cup stars, a \cup bout (the stressed syllable is marked with a vertical line high up just before the syllable).The syllable *the* is unstressed while *stars* is stressed. This kind of metre is called *iambus* and is the dominant metre in the following lines:

And \cup she/ for \cup got/ the \cup stars /, the \cup moon/ and \cup sun

You will notice that every line of poetry has groups of stressed and unstressed syllables but the number of groups differ from line to line. Each group is called *a foot*. Each foot must contain one stressed syllable. The example above has five feet made up of iambus metre. The metre of the line can thus be described as *iambic pentameter*. It is the way the feet are arranged that determine the rhythm of in the line.

The second kind of metre is the one in which a foot consists of a stressed syllable followed by a stressed one as in the words *coming*, *teacher* and *father*. This kind of metre is *trochee*. The third kind of metre is based on the first and consists of feet which have two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed as in the phrase: in the *box*. It is called the *anapaest*. The last of the four basic metres is the *dactyl* which is made up of a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed ones as in *camera* and *passionate*. You will notice that the anapaest is an extension of the iambus while the dactyl is an extension of the trochee. The four basic metres can be summarized as follows:

- (i) Iambus – unstressed + stressed
- (ii) Trochee – stressed + unstressed
- (iii) Anapaest – 2 unstressed + 1 stressed
- (iv) Dactyl – 1 stressed + 2 unstressed

Note also that the first basic metre contrasts with the second while the third one contrasts with the fourth.

Apart from the four basic metres, there are others in English poetry which are not so common. These are the *spondee* made up of two stressed syllables and the *pyrrhic* which consists of two unstressed syllables. Like the basic metres, these rare metres also contrast with each other.

Having known some of the metres that help us establish the rhythm of a line of poetry, it is necessary that you know how to identify these metres in any poem that you read. In other words you should understand why one syllable is marked as stressed and the other as unstressed. Also, you should learn how to group the stressed and unstressed syllables into feet to establish the general pattern of rhythm in the poem. The process of identifying the stressed and unstressed syllables in lines of poetry and grouping them into rhythmic patterns is known as *scansion*.

The first requirement in the placement of stress of stress where they naturally belong is correct pronunciation of the words placing the stress where they should be. For instance the words 'salary' and 'madam' are pronounced with the stress on the first syllables(ˈsalary; ˈmadam) while the words 'success' and 'embarrass' are pronounced with the stress on the second syllables thus: sucˈcess and emˈbarrass. Secondly, it is necessary to enunciate properly; that is, break up the words into the correct number of syllables . For instance the word 'diary' has three syllables of which the first is stressed ˈdi-a-ry while the word 'humiliated' has five syllables of which the second is stressed hu-ˈmi-li-a-ted. If the word diary is pronounced as two syllables and humiliated as four, the scansion will be wrong.

In ordinary speech, we tend to stress some words more than others because they are more important to the meaning. In the sentence ; 'The visitors have arrived', it is normal to stress 'visitors' and 'arrived' instead of 'the' and 'have'. Also when a word has more than one syllable one of the syllables is stressed more than the others in English. If the word has up to four syllables one will be strongly stressed (primary stress) and another will receive a softer or secondary stress as in 'ˈeduˌcation' where the third syllable has the primary stress while the first syllable carries the secondary stress. Similarly in the word ˌmag-nan-ˈim-i-ty, the strong stress is on *im* while the secondary stress is on *mag*.

Finally, to group the stressed and unstressed syllables into feet after correctly marking them; first note the sequence of the unstressed and stressed syllables to see which sequence they follow (whether iambic, trochee, anapaestic, dactyl); next divide them into groups each of which must contain a stressed syllable. If you run into difficulty, there may be an irregular metre (spondee or pyrrhic) or extra an extra stressed or unstressed syllable at the end of the line and this must be pointed out.

An example will make this clearer. Let us together scan the first two lines in the following passage:

And ∪she/ for∪got/ the ∪stars /the ∪moon,/ the ∪sun'
And ∪she /for∪got /the ∪blue /a∪bove/ the ∪trees,
And she forgot the dells where waters run,
And she forgot the chilly autumn
She had no knowledge when the day was done
And the new morn she saw not: but in peace
Hung over her sweet Basil evermore
And moistened it with tears unto the core

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE SAE 2

Complete the scansion of the remaining lines.

You would have noticed that the dominant metre in the first four lines is the iambic pentameter. Note also that poets do not adhere strictly to a particular metrical pattern with every line precisely the same in rhythm. The poet can vary the metre at will for particular effect. The only way to discover the predominant metre is to read the lines naturally and then describe the metre according to the predominant pattern. You may as well learn that “the English language is basic iambic in movement; The majority of English poems are written in iambic metre). Also, in a long poem with a serious subject matter short lines are uncommon and undignifying hence the most popular metre in non -lyrical English verse is the iambic pentameter (Keith,5).

To recapitulate learn the following terms

- (i) A foot in a metre is a group of two or three syllables in a line one of which is stressed: an iambic foot consists of one iambus; a trochaic foot, of one trochee; an anapaestic foot, of one anapaest; a dactylic foot, of one dactyl.
- (ii) Metrical lines are named according to their number of feet, thus:
- (iii) A dimeter is a line consisting of two metrical feet;
- (iv) A trimetre, of four metrical feet;
- (v) A tetrameter, of four metrical feet
- (vi) A pentameter of five metrical feet
- (vii) A hexameter or Alexandrine of six metrical feet e.g.

With ∪kiss/es ∪four-----iambic
diameter

A ∪pleas/ant ∪noise /till ∪noon ----- iambic
trimetre

The ∪sun/ right ∪up/ a∪bove/ the ∪mast ---iambic
trametre

Great ∪wits /are ∪sure/ to ∪mad/ness ∪near/a∪llied
iambic pentameter

All ∪hail/ ye ∪gen/uine ∪kings/, Bri∪tann/ia's ∪iss/ue
∪hail

Iambic hexameter/ Alexandrine

- (viii) To scan a line of verse is to mark the stresses and the division into feet as is done in the above examples

(Adapted from Keith ,4)

5.0 Rhythm

Poetic rhythm is based on metre - the pattern in which stressed and unstressed syllables are combined in a line of poetry. Recall from the last section that in every line of poetry there are groups of stressed and unstressed syllables but the number of groups differ from line to line. Also, every group must have at least one stressed syllable and each group is called a foot. If we have four groups in a line, there are four feet and the way the four groups are placed in the line determine the rhythm in that line. Apart from the order in which the groups are placed, the nature of the groups are also important in determining the rhythm. If all the four groups are similar, the rhythm is regular but if they are different, the rhythm is irregular as in the following examples adapted from Egudu,35:

(i) And ∪she/ for∪got/ the ∪stars/ the ∪moon/ and
∪sun

(ii) As ∪tides/ ∪through ∪weeds /of the ∪sea

In the first line there are five iambic feet. The rhythm in that line is therefore regular. In the second line we have three feet but the arrangement of the stressed and unstressed syllables are different; the first foot is an iambus, the second is is a spondee while the third is an anapaest. The rhythm of the second line is therefore irregular.

The use of a regular or irregular rhythm does not necessarily make a poem good or bad, the poet only chooses to use one or the other depending on the idea or emotion that he wants to communicate. Generally, the regular rhythm uses one metre such as iambus or trochee and is often found in nursery rhymes, lullabies and dance music and usually suggests joy and lightheartedness. Sometimes monotonously regular rhythm suggests sorrow and melancholy. The first five lines of Keats poem Isabella quoted above have a regular iambic metre but the subject or mood is not pleasant. Alternatively irregular rhythm does not

necessarily suggest sorrow but rather a meditative or reflection. Thus a play of serious subject can combine regular and irregular meter where the mood requires it.

Poetry may also have a slow dragging rhythm or a fast rhythm whether regular or irregular. The slow one generally suggest sorrow, melancholy and sadness while the fast one suggests the emotion of joy and sometimes anger

6.0 Summary

- Poetry is classical in spirit when it conforms to a rigid pattern and rhyme scheme but romantic when it allows for freedom of expression of feelings.
- Classical poetry deals with man in civilized society while romantic poems can have subjects from humble stations in life as well as aspects of nature.
- The grouping of stressed and unstressed is referred to as metre.
- When stressed and unstressed syllables are grouped into feet, they become the unit of rhythm.
- The basic metres are: iambus, trochee, anapaest and dactyl while the rare metres are the spondee and the pyrrhic.
- Each metre has its own arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables

7.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Describe the rhythm of the following passages and the emotion they suggest:

(i) Twinkle, twinkle little star
How I wonder what you are
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky.

(ii) Break, break, break
On thy cold gray stones o sea
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me

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Module 1

Unit 5 : CONVENTIONAL POETIC FORMS

Table of Contents

In this unit you will learn about conventional types and forms of poetry. The unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Narrative Poetry
- 4.0 Dramatic Poetry
- 5.0 Lyric Poetry
 - 5.1 The Ballad
 - 5.2 The sonnet
 - 5.3 The Ode
- 6.0 Blank Verse and Free Verse
- 7.0 Summary

1.0 Introduction

Poetry may be classified into three main divisions: *narrative*, *dramatic* and *lyric*. This classification is made from the point of view of subject matter, form and style. Before commencing the study of this unit, you should get a copy of *The Poet's World* by James Reeves and read pp.xxv – xxxi thoroughly. Also study the following poems in connection with this unit: Gray: *Elegy*; Blake: *The tyger*; Shakespeare: *The Death of Kings*, *Music*, *Sweet airs*; *The death of Cleopatra*; Milton: *The building of pandemonium*; Wordsworth: *Skating*; Tennyson: *Ulysses*; Dryden: *Absalom and Achitophel*; Pope: all the poems in the anthology; Masfield: *The blowing of the horn*; Lindsay: *The Daniel Jazz*; Chaucer: *A garden in a dream*

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit you should be able to

- identify the main types of poetry
- give examples of each type
- discuss the characteristics of each type of poetry

3.0 Narrative Poetry

Narrative poetry includes *the epic* which is a poem with a lofty subject matter. It is usually concerned with the heroic deeds of a person or subjects that are of importance to the human race. A good example of an epic is Virgil's *Aeneid*, whose theme is not so much the adventures of the main character, Aeneas, as the founding of the city of Rome. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is another well known epic poem which deals with the fall of man. Narrative poetry also includes poems written about the poet's religious or philosophical beliefs such as Alexander Pope's "Essay On Man"; or even his literary theory as Pope's "Essay on Criticism". Satiric poems are also often written in epic forms except when they take the form of epigrams. Dryden's "Absalom and Architophel" is a well known example of a satiric poem that is narrative.

Satirical poetry is usually classical in form and spirit as it appeals mainly to the intellect. When, however, a narrative poem tells a story, it can be either classical or romantic depending on the type of story and the poet's treatment of it. What you should note at this point about a narrative poem is that it should be continuous and the poet's narrative technique should make this possible. The poet should also vary his style so that the poem can be read for sometime without the reader being bored.

4.0 Dramatic Poetry

Dramatic poetry is poetry used in plays. It is the same in technique with narrative poetry but the viewpoint is different. This is because it is the characters that talk about other characters in the play giving their opinions not those of the writer. Also since long descriptions are out of place in drama so as not to bore the audience, dramatic poetry has to be concise and easily understood. Moreover if we fail to understand a passage in a narrative poem at the first reading, because a character in a play cannot be asked to repeat what he she said if the audience fail to understand.

5.0 Lyric Poetry

Lyric poetry was originally poetry written and adapted for song with the accompaniment of the lyre, a kind of harp used by the Greeks to accompany singing and recitation. Today the word *lyric* refers to a short poem usually but not always written in regular stanzas which *expresses the poet's feelings* rather than describe events. It is for this reason that the lyric is usually a short poem just as a passionate feeling soon burns itself out.

The lyric has three main characteristics: *simplicity*, *sensuousness* and *passion*. Simplicity of a lyric does not in anyway suggest obviousness or simplicity of thought ; rather it refers to the simple way beauty and emotion are communicated in the most economical and simple way. Examine the following lines from Shakespeare's "Full fathom five " (See The poet's world: p. 65) :

Fear no more the frown of the great
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat,
To thee the reed is as the oak

Note that every word except one is made up of one syllable and in the last line (the finest line of the four) not one word has more than four letters and yet it expresses in the most memorable and concise way, the fact that death is the ultimate , the end to all

worldly cares. It is this ability to express thoughts and emotion using the simplest and most economical yet suggestive words that makes beautiful lyric poetry.

Sensuousness is achieved in lyric poetry through the music of the poem created through the sound devices in the poem and the suggestiveness of the imagery(figures of speech).The task of a lyric poet is to convey his feelings to his reader. He can make comparisons to objects that suggest his emotion (Recall: Robert Burns's "O my love is like a red red rose" See Module1: Unit 2, section 5.0) where the similes used by the poet suggest his love and the pleasure the love gives him. Sometimes, the rhythm; the movement of the lines suggest the emotion or the idea the poet wants to convey. Usually a lively rhythm conveys a feeling of joy while a slow rhythm conveys a feeling of solemnity or sadness . Note the effect of the rhythm of the following lines from Shelley's *Ode to the west Wind* (see The poet's world, p.182) on you when you read them?

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red
Pestilence stricken multitudes...

Notice that the piling up of the adjectives in the last line together with the use of commas and lines that run from one line to the other with no full stop (run-on-lines) suggest the movement of the wind, the 'hurrying and scurrying' of the leaves blown by the wind and the heightened emotion of the poet as he watches them (Keith, 2).

Repetitions of words, phrases can also create music that suggest the feeling the poet wants to create in the poem and also gives emphasis . Refer once again to Module 1 : Section 5

Parallel repetitions are also particularly effective. This is the repetition of parallel phrases or sentences particularly when combined with alliteration and onomatopoeia. In the following stanza of J. P. Clark's poem: *Casualties* , note the use of parallel repetitions to make the point by “ eliminating the readily acceptable cases of casualties ...As a sound device , the repetition is pleasing to the ear diverting attention from the unpleasant subject” (Udofot, 1988:4):

The casualties are not only those who are dead;
They are well out of it.
The casualties are not only those who are wounded
Though they await burial by instalment.
The casualties are not only those who have lost
Persons or property, hard as it is
To grope for a touch that some
May not know is not there.
The casualties are not only those led away by night;
The cell is a cruel place, sometimes a haven,
No where as absolute as the grave.
The casualties are not only those who started
A fire and now cannot put it out. Thousands
Are burning that had no say in the matter
The casualties are not only those who escaping
The shattered shell become prisoners in
A fortress of falling walls.

Passion in a lyric poem implies that the feeling conveyed in a lyric poem must be intense. If it is love , it should not only be mere admiration or liking. If it is hate, it should be intense hatred not

mere dislike or resentment. This is because if the poet's feeling is not intense enough, it will not move the readers. The most memorable poems are the ones that create the most lasting impressions on the reader. Poets create lasting emotions by the images or symbols they use to suggest the feeling. For instance a person who has just lost a loved one will be moved very intensely by any object which suggest death. Similarly for a child brought up in very peacefully loving environment by loving parents will easily understand and feel happy if any place he is going to is referred to as home. When adverts present hotels as home away from home they know the kind of feelings they want to arouse in the readers or listeners.

5.1 The Ballad

The ballad is usually classified as a lyric poem because the ballad is a song even though it tells a story like a narrative poem and reveals character like a drama but not through description but by showing it in action. The origin of the ballad can be traced down to public entertainment where people gathered to hear the ballad composed and sung by one singer and then modified as it passed from singer to singer until it became written.

Typical distinguishing features of a ballad are

- (v) the poem tells a story;
- (vi) the story is told simply and without explanation;
- (vii) the story must be a passionate one and the emotions of love, hatred, jealousy and the desire for revenge are let loose;
- (iv) many ballads are connected with superstition and the supernatural;
- (viii) the typical structure of a ballad is a four-lined stanza in which the first and third lines have eight syllables which may or may not rhyme while the

second and fourth lines have six syllables which usually rhyme.

The best known ballad is “ The rhyme of the ancient mariner” which you must read.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

What are the three main classes of poetry ?

Identify three main features of a ballad.

5.2 The Sonnet

This is a lyric of Italian origin. It has strict rules of with regards to its subject and structure . Egudu (47) defines a sonnet as a fourteen line poem with a definite rhyme scheme. Two main types of sonnets are often distinguished: the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet and the English or Shakespearian sonnet.

(viii) the rhyme scheme of the Italian or Petrarchan Sonnet divides the poem into two parts; the first eight lines and the last six called the octave and the sestet respectively. The octave is made up of two quatrains which rhymes abba, abba that is the first line rhymes with the fourth line while the second and third line rhyme. The sestet made up of two tercets; a group of six lines made up of two groups of three lines. The break in thought often occurs between the octave and the tercet and is known as the volta. A problem is usually presented in the octave and resolved in the sestet.

(ix) On the other hand, the English or Shakespearian sonnet is made up of three quatrains (three four lined stanzas rhyming abab) and a couplet. The full rhyme scheme of this type of sonnet is abab cdcd

efef gg. In this sonnet form , a thought is developed in the quatrains and resolved in the couplet.

- (x) There are slight variations however. English writers of the Petrarchan sonnet- Milton and Wordsworth ignore the pause between the octave and the sestet writing sonnets that flow from the first line to the last while Spenser and Doone wrote sonnets with a mixture of both Petrarchan and Shakespearian rhyme schemes.

5.3 The Ode

This is another type of lyric which is usually longer and more elaborate in structure than a ballad. An ode often takes the form of an address to a person , an institution or some other thing; concrete or abstract.

The Ode originated in Greece like most other verse forms and attained great heights in the hands of Pindar who wrote odes to celebrate the winners in the Olympic and other games. The odes were sung by a chorus thus the Pindaric Ode usually expresses public sentiments rather than the poet's private feelings. Odes of this kind are often divided into groups of three stanzas: the first stanza in each group is called the strophe and was sung by the chorus ; the second stanza in each group is the antistrophe which was sung while the chorus moved to the other side of the stage while the third stanza is the epode or the after song. The strophe, antistrophe and epode may be repeated as many times as the poet wishes varying the metre as the emotion increases or decreases in intensity

The Pindaric ode has seldom been imitated successfully in English. Most English poets have done better with what is called the irregular Pindaric Ode. In Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" there is no division into strophe,

antistrophe and epode rather the poet varies his metre at will to reflect the emotion he wants to convey. Similarly, Dryden's "Song for St. Cecilia's Day" is an irregular Pindaric Ode where the poet uses onomatopoeia and variation of the length of the lines and metre to convey the intended emotion.

Another kind of ode made popular by John Keats consists of a succession of regular stanzas all of the same pattern and the poet creates his kind of stanzas and rhyme scheme. Shelley's famous

"Ode to the West Wind" uses the Italian metre, the *terza rima* which creates an impression of speed and continuous movement. The lines rhyme alternately.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 2

What are the main types of lyric poetry discussed in this unit

In what ways are they similar and different?

6.0 Blank Verse and Free Verse

Blank verse is verse without rhyme. But it uses some regular metre and rhythm. For example Shakespeare's blank verse is made up of iambic pentameter lines which do not rhyme. Blank verse was introduced into English Literature by the Earl of Surrey in his translation of the second and fourth books of Virgil's Aeneid which he wrote as a prisoner in the Tower. This translation which was published posthumously in 1557 is a remarkable pioneer work but still contains some rhymed verse (Keith, 5).

One effect of rhyme is to emphasize the end of lines so that even if the idea continues into the next line, the reader observes a slight pause at the end of the line. Surrey's lines have been criticized for being "monotonously end stopped" (Keith, 5) with a pause at the end of most lines. Ideally, blank verse should contain both run-on-lines also known as enjambment and pauses in the middle of the

line(caesura) and the poet should strike a balance if blank verse is not to sound monotonous. Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare are known to have used blank verse in their dramatic poetry .

Free verse is poetry that does not follow any conventional metrical pattern. It lacks the continuity of the traditional verse forms or of prose; it is rather printed in lines that are irregular in length and that lack rhyme (Abrams, 64-65). This kind of poetry is said to be free in the sense that it does not follow any recurrent metrical pattern or rhyme scheme like the sonnet or any stanza structure like the ballad. An earlier quoted poem “ Ibadan” (See Module 1: Unit 1) is a good example of free verse.

You should note however that by not using regular rhyme and metre, the poet loses one very useful way of communicating emotion and creating music to please the ear. In free verse the poet resorts to other sound devices like alliteration, consonance, assonance, onomatopoeia and parallel repetitions to achieve this effect as can be seen in the following lines from T. S. Eliot’s “ The journey of the magi” (See p.260) of “The poet’s world”:

A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:

Sleeping in snatches
With the voices singing in our ears saying
That this was all folly.

7.0 Summary

The following points have been made in this unit:

- Poetry may be classified into three main types: narrative, dramatic and lyric.
- Narrative poetry includes the epic which is a poem written on a lofty subject matter, classical in spirit and quite often satiric in tone
- Dramatic poetry is poetry found in plays
- Lyric poetry are short poems written in regular stanzas and metres and is usually simple but sensuous and passionate.
- The main types of lyric poetry are: the ballad, the sonnet and the ode which are written in conventional forms and metres.
- Blank verse is unrhymed verse but with some regular metre and rhythm.
- Free verse is poetry that does not follow any conventional metrical pattern but printed in lines of irregular length with no rhyme.

8.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Read the following poem and answer the questions on it.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's Day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd:
And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
By chance or natures changing course untrimm'd.
But thy eternal summer shall never fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

- (i) What type of poem is this?
- (ii) Give the rhyme scheme of the poem?
- (iii) Would you say that the poem is written in the classical or romantic spirit? Give reasons for your answer
- (iv) What is the main idea (theme) of the poem and how does the poet suggest this idea to the reader

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Module 2

Unit 1 : INTRODUCTION TO DRAMA/TYPES OF DRAMA

Table of Contents

This unit will introduce you to drama and its major forms. You learnt in Unit 1 that literature has three branches or genres namely: poetry, drama and prose. In this unit, you will be introduced to drama first because it appears to be the most familiar aspect of literature. You watch plays, films and witness cultural dramas like traditional marriages very often. This is why we choose to start with drama , not poetry which is the oldest form of literature. The unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Types of drama
 - 3.1 Tragedy
 - 3.2. Comedy
 - 3.3 Tragicomedy
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- References

1.0 Introduction

Drama as a genre of literature is realized in performance which is why Robert Di Yanni describes it as “a staged art.”(867) As a literary form it is designed for the theatre because characters are assigned roles that are enacted on stage. These characters can be human, dead or spiritual beings like what Wole Soyinka does in *A Dance of the Forest* which was acted for Nigeria’s independent celebration. It is also possible for writers to make living things like insects characters in drama. This is what Tewfik

Al-Hakin has illustrated in *Fate of a Cockroach*. The writer of drama is called a playwright and good playwrights ensure that there is a relationship between the characters on stage (actors/actresses) and the audience in a performance situation. Drama is the adaptation, recreation and reflection of reality on stage. Have you ever watched *Super Story* on Nigerian Television Authority? That is drama. This unit will examine the different types of drama as well as dramatic features and elements

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit, you should be able to

1. identify the major types of drama which are tragedy, comedy and tragicomedy, and
2. know plays that fall into these categories

You are advised to use the following books to study this unit

For tragedy, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; comedy, Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, and tragi-comedy, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* are useful examples.

3.0 Types of Drama

The three major types of drama are tragedy, comedy and tragi-comedy even though we can derive other smaller forms from these, particularly comedy.

3.1 Tragedy

This is the representation of reality on stage which provokes human sympathy because of the catastrophe that befalls the main character. For a detailed description of tragedy as a form of dramatic art the Greek philosopher, Aristotle offers useful insights in his book, *Poetics*. According to him, tragedy is "the imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude ...

in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions”.

Aristotelian tragedy imitates “an action that is serious”; such an action as the death of the king or nobles in Sophocles’ *King Oedipus*, Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Desdemona in *Othello* or Odewale in Ola Rotimi’s *The gods are Not to Blame*. Tragedy is also found in the lives of ordinary people whose pursuit of certain ideals in life culminates in their destruction. In this category are plays like Soyinka’s *The Strong Breed*, J. P. Clark’s *The Song of a goat*, Zulu Sofola’s *Wedlock of the gods* to mention just a few. The uniting feature in the above mentioned plays is that their protagonists are destroyed either by forces beyond them or by circumstances which they ignored or by their commitment to a particular ideal. Read these plays also and apply the issues raised here to the texts.

3.2 Comedy

This is the dramatization or exploration of reality with a conscious attempt to provoke humour. The conflicts are resolved in a happy way. M. H. Abrams has identified five kinds of comedy namely: romantic comedy, satiric comedy, comedy of manners, farce and high comedy /low comedy (28-30).

a) Romantic Comedy

William Shakespeare is the major proponent of romantic comedy. It has been used to explore the lives of two people who devote themselves to the love of each other even in very difficult circumstances. Often, the affair centres around a beautiful lady who is surrounded by enemies, but who eventually unites with her lover as in *Twelfth Night* and *As You like it*.

b) Satiric Comedy

This form of comedy ridicules outrageous political policies and ideas as well as satirizing those who violates social

norms or socially accepted standards. In Greek literature, Aristophane's has used this form of comedy extensively; but in African literature, Wole-Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *A Play of Giants* are beautiful examples

c) Comedy of Manners

Comedy of manners explores the cosmetic and superficial lifestyle of gentlemen and ladies as members of the genteel tradition. They design

an artificial world for themselves but the façade does not mask the vices in the lives of its members. The basic features of this form are wit and sophisticated dialogue. Richard Sheridan's *School for Scandal* and Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* are two examples of comedy of manners.

(d) Farce

This form of comedy provokes the "audience to simple, hearty laughter 'belly laughs', in the parlance of theater," says M. H. Abrams how does the playwright achieve this? By infusing action into exaggerated characters in unrealistic situations. Farce was a component of the miracle plays in medieval drama but in English drama, it was restricted to a segment of a more complex comedy just as some scenes of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*.

d) High Comedy/Low Comedy

High comedy evokes "intellectual laughter" from the audience at the display of the artificiality and pretentiousness of human life in exalted language. But low comedy makes no appeal to the intellect; rather it provokes laughter through jokes and plain humour. Read Shakespeare's *Much Ado*

about Nothing carefully and identify which characters utilize high comedy and which employ low comedy.

3.3 Tragi-Comedy

This type of drama stands on double plot because it reveals a serious action which is capable of destroying the protagonist of a play but which by a sudden intervention or change of circumstance turns out to end in favour of the same character. By its nature, it combines aspects of tragedy and comedy in its plot-structure but built a balance which is plausible. The commonest example is Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* in which Antonio is almost constrained by bankruptcy to give "a pound of flesh" close to his heart to Shylock for a debt, but is rescued by the sudden news that his business has been restored.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- (1) What is drama
- (2) Name the three major types of drama
Identify three texts, one representing each types of drama.
- (3) Name the Greek scholar whose ideas have influenced the concept of tragedy?
- (4) How does this scholar define tragedy
- (5) Identify the distinguishing features between tragi-comedy and comedy

4.0 Summary

The main points made in this unit are:

- (i) Drama is a genre of literature which is performed on a stage.
- (ii) The writer of a drama is called a playwright.
- (iii) The major types of drama are tragedy, comedy and tragic-comedy
- (iv) A comedy can be subdivided into Romantic comedy, Satiric comedy, Comedy of manners, farce and high comedy.
- (v) A tragedy is basically different from a comedy in the sense that catastrophe often befalls the main character whereas the conflicts surrounding the main character in a comedy are often resolved in favour of the main character so that the play ends on a happy note.

5.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Read one tragedy, one comedy and one tragicomedy mentioned in this unit and write a short account of each of them.

6.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

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Module 2

Unit 2: ELEMENTS AND FEATURES OF DRAMA

Table of Contents

This unit exposes you to the fundamentals of drama. When you understand these terminologies, you should be able to interpret a drama text as well as identify the features of drama discussed here in any text. The unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Elements of drama
 - 3.1 Characters / Characterization
 - 3.2. Dialogue/ Action
 - 3.3 Conflict
 - 3.4 Spectacle
 - 3.5 Music/Dance
 - 3.6 Audience
- 4.0 Features of Drama
 - 4.1 Theme
 - 4.2 Plot
 - 4.3 Diction
 - 4.4 Prologue/ Epilogue
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References

1.0 Introduction

Drama utilizes certain elements because by its nature, it is the most complex of the three genres. According to Oscar Brockett's, introductory work on theatre, a production attracts many creators:

...the actor, the playwright, the director, the scene designer, the costumer, the light designer, the choreographer, musician. This complexity has led many to call the theatre a mixed art since it usually combines the written word of the literary artist, the visual, background of the architect and painter, the speech and movement of the actor, the music of the composer and the dance patterns of the choreographer(4)

Therefore, drama in performance is unmistakably very powerful because it gives life a “likeness which other arts cannot match”.

2.0 Objectives

In this unit you are exposed to:

1. the complex nature of drama as an art form,
2. the components of drama and
3. other features and terminologies that are associated with drama

3.0 Elements Of Drama

There are the basic features of drama as an art form which is realized on stage. They include characters/characterization, dialogue/action, conflict, spectacle, music/dance and audience.

3.1 Characters/Characterisation

Characters are the embodiments of action in a dramatic or narrative work. They are infused with qualities or ideas which the writers deploy to analyze the human condition. It is only through characters that plots are created because incidents are developed primarily through the interaction of the characters. This explains Edwin Wilson's remark that. "if we were to construct a grammar of the theatre, the subject would be people, the dramatic characters that represent human concerns"(153). But there are times when characters are animals or insects just as what George Orwell does in *Animal Farm* and Tewfik Al-Hakin in *Fate of a Cockroach*.

However, for the literary artist to successfully recreate, reenact and interpret the experiences of his characters, he uses characterization. This implies that he assigns roles to the characters by showing what motivates their actions. Another way the writers present their characters is by telling the readers about their actions. This is done by describing and evaluating "the motives and dispositional qualities of his characters" (Abrams 22). A writer's craft is revealed in his character presentation or characterization.

Good characters are dynamic and should react to the forces which threaten their survival; and so, credible characterization is a tribute to the writer's artistry just as an unrealistic portrait suggests creative immaturity. Edufa is the major character of Sutherland's *Edufa* but he is presented as a man who values money more than human life. To judge a character as true to life (realistic), the character must resemble someone in real life. Such a character should grow (change) in the course of the play otherwise the character is said to be a flat character. Charles Dicken's Miss

Havisham in the novel *Great Expectations* is an example of a flat character.

3.2 Dialogue/Action

Since the subject matter of drama is people or to put it as aptly as Edwin Wilson does, “drama is a person – centred genre”(149) ; the story is revealed through the interaction of characters which is called dialogue. However, dialogue is an external foundation of drama and so it does not constitute drama on its own. This is the point August Von Schlegel has made in his “Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature” where he states that if dialogue alone is drama, then “the Socratic dialogue would have become theatre pieces”(496). What makes dialogue dramatic is the presence of action. Action in drama is a product of the characters willingness to “play” and this is the only way a playwright or director can portray the human situation he chooses to dramatize.

3.3 Conflict

Conflict is the force of opposition which operates between the central character (protagonist) of drama or a narrative work and the person who directly works against the fulfillment of the former’s aspirations (antagonist). The movement of action in a dramatic work depends on conflict. According to John Howard Lawson, conflict in drama can be “persons against other persons, or individual against groups, or groups against other groups, or individuals or groups against social or natural forces ----(880)”. It is produced through the exertion of will on human action as people interact in creative space. There can be no drama without conflict. The highest point of conflict is called the *climax*. After this, there is always an attempt by the playwright to resolve some of the conflicts, and so, the lowest point of conflicts is known as *denouement*. If you look closely at J. P. Clark’s *The Song of A Goat*,

the movement of action revolves around Ebiere (the protagonist) who engages in a desperate search for children and Zifa (her husband antagonist of the work) who is impotent.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE)1

Read J.P.Clark's *Song of a Goat* again and identify the levels of conflict utilized by the playwright.

3.4 Spectacle

This refers to everything that you can see with your eyes in the production of a drama. Spectacle consists of lighting, costume and set in stage productions. If you can recall, every play is set in a particular locale; lighting depending on the type of production paints a vivid picture of the locale; costume makes for character delineation while scenery creates an appropriate background for a play. Spectacle can be physical, which is the commonest way that playwrights and directors use this element, and it can also be in imaginary space, especially when a character is soliloquizing (speaking to himself).

3.5 Music/Dance

The human body is the greatest tool the theatre practitioner has because every action needs a human personality to enact it. The "father of the dramatist", according to Gordon Craig, "was the dancer" (115). If you have witnessed a community festival, you may have seen the chief priest re-enacting the communal ethos through words, action, song and dance. He appeals to your eyes through the dexterous use of these features to paint vivid pictures of life as it is acceptable to his community. Thus, music and dance constitute the earliest forms of drama.

3.6 Audience

For as long as drama is the representation of life, the audience is an indispensable element of drama. In *The Essential Theatre*, Brockett identifies the audience as one of the three components of theatre after the script and the actor (9). Audience can be physical beings as in the case of the people you sat with in the last stage performance. Also, audience can be composed of spiritual beings only which is what happens when a priest in ritual drama enters the sacred grove to consult with the gods of the land on behalf of his people. Through dramatic monologue he invites spiritual participants into the drama of communal regeneration or expiation.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE(SAE) 2

Choose any of the drama texts mentioned in this unit and examine how the playwright uses each of these elements.

4.0 Features Of Drama

These are aspects and terminologies which are necessary for the understanding of drama only five of them are treated here and these are theme, plot, diction and prologue/epilogue

4.1 Theme

This is the central idea, impression or concept a writer explores in a literary work. It is not the topic or the title of a book because most often these relate more to the subject matter than to theme. Theme gives a writer's main message. Each time a writer writes he must give his work a focus around which other ideas or sub-themes are built. Wole Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero*

examines the theme of religious hypocrisy but materialism and human gullibility are sub-themes.

4.2 Plot

Most often, plot is described merely as the sequence of events in a work of art. It is something more than this. Chris Eba and Umo Oyo-Ita compare plot to “the master plan of a building which if properly executed brings out the aesthetic value of the complete structure.(143)” Plot is the sequential arrangement of events which pays attention to cause and effect. It is different from plain narration which primarily tells a story. Plot links events as the writer presents them by using characters to express the various kinds of conflicts which he/she sets out to portray.

4.3 Diction

This refers to the use which a writer makes of language in the presentation of his/her ideas. Language is the playwright’s major means of expression because dialogue depends primarily on this. Whether he/she is giving the audience a message, presenting a particular character, revealing his theme or developing tone or mood, he uses language. The skillful use of diction makes a good play just as poor diction mars a good work.

4.4 Prologue/ Epilogue

These refer to ways of beginning and ending a literary text, especially drama. The prologue is a statement in prose or verse form that may be presented as a dramatic monologue or a dialogue at the beginning of a play in order to give a compressed summary of the most important actions and conflicts in the work. But epilogue is more of a concluding remark directed at the audience at the end of a creative piece. Get a copy of Efua Sutherland’s *Edufa*

and study the Prologue in order to ascertain whether the playwright's message is clear from it.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 3

1. Note the features of drama in this unit
2. Attempt to identify these features in a drama text mentioned in this unit
3. Examine closely how the writer uses language to illuminate his /her message

5.0 SUMMARY

The main points made in this unit are:

- Elements of drama are the aspects of drama that need to be understood for the proper appreciation of a drama text.
- The elements of drama are: characters and characterization, dialogue/action, conflict, spectacle, music /dance, and the audience.
- Features of drama refers to aspects and terminologies which are necessary for the understanding of drama; they are: theme, plot, diction, epilogue and prologue.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is the relevance of character/characterization to drama?
2. Why must conflict be present in every drama?
3. What is the difference between plot and narration?
4. The features of drama are aspects of a play which you should understand in order to interpret a work correctly. Explain this assertion using a play of your choice.

7.0 References

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Unit 3: ASPECTS OF GREEK DRAMA

Table of Contents

This unit introduces you to Greek tragedy. Study this unit with a play which is a Greek tragedy, particularly Sophocle's *King Oedipus*. The unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Origin of Tragedy
 - 3.1 Definition of Tragedy
 - 3.2 The tragic hero
 - 3.2 Emotional Effect of Tragedy
 - 3.3 Plot
 - 3.4 Diction
- 5.0 The three Unities
- 6.0 Summary
- 3.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- References

1.0 Introduction

Drama is often traced to Ancient Greece in the religious rites of the people. But contemporary scholars have shown in their researches that drama is a product of traditional forms of worship which every society has evolved in its relationship with the forces which shape its existence. However, it is impossible to discuss drama without making reference to Ancient Greece because Aristotle had popularized Greek drama by using it as the basis for his theory on tragedy. He provided the basic ideas on how a tragedy should be. In this unit, the word tragedy is used to mean Greek drama.

2.0 Objectives

In this unit, you will

1. understand the origin of tragedy and
2. know certain aspects of Greek tragedy such as definition, emotional effect, plot, diction and the three unities.

3.0 Origin of tragedy

Tragedy originated from the choral songs in praise of the Greek god of fertility and vegetation called Dionysus. In the feast of Dionysus, it was regular practice for artists to perform in a contest. Their materials came from commonly known myths and legends which were utilized for public presentation. Three of these poets/tragedians whose works inform Aristotle's concept of tragedy are Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Tragedy began in the fourth century B. C and for twenty-three centuries, it has become impossible to ignore the questions that Aristotle raised about this form. His answers have been challenged but the questions are fundamental to the writing and explication of good drama. What did Aristotle say about tragedy?

3.1. Definition Of Tragedy

Aristotle's definition of tragedy is from the *Poetics* where he describes tragedy as:

--- the imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of certain magnitude in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornaments, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play, in the form of action, not of narrative through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.

Tragedy is a representation or an imitation of life. This comes from the Greek word "mimesis" and it means the

representation of objects with such realism that it idealizes and caricatures them. The action that is imitated must be serious or it must matter. It must be an action that is worth troubling about for it to be serious enough for the dignity of tragedy. This action concerns the “high” in society who constitute the subject of tragedy.

3.2 The Tragic Hero

The tragic hero is a man or woman of noble birth and disposition who has a fault (tragic flaw or ‘hubris’) which eventually destroys him/her. His/Her fall, however, is not a product of vice or depravity, but an error which the character is not conscious of till he/she is destroyed. The tragic hero must be good but not perfect for he must be neither an angel nor a devil. He / She must however receive the reward of his/her actions. This demands that he/she be compensated for good and retributed for evil. How far is this definition applicable to Oedipus in Sophocle’s *King Oedipus* or the hero in Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods are not to Blame*?

3.3 Emotional Effect Of Tragedy

The representation of serious action in the life of a prominent person in the society and his destruction because of “hubris” is to effect “catharsis” or the purgation of negative emotions in the audience. It is believed that after watching a tragedy, you should pity the hero since you have such “hubris” and fear for yourself because what has happened to the hero could happen to anybody. What follows is the purgation of the excess emotions in the audience, and so, tragedy is assumed to be a restorative agent. Catharsis, as F. L. Lucas explains means the reduction of human passion to “a healthy balanced proportion(39)”.

3.4 Plot

The plot of tragedy must be “complete, and of a certain magnitude”. Aristotle prescribes that the plot should be long enough for the catastrophe to happen but short enough to form a single artistic whole. This literally means that it should have a beginning that is preceded by nothing; a middle that flows from the beginning and an end that is followed by nothing. F. L. Lucas again puts this more succinctly when he says:

All that Aristotle is insisting upon is that a play should have good and obvious reasons for beginning where it begins, and for ending where it ends; and that its incidents should follow from one another by a clear chain of causation, without coincidence and without irrelevance.(93)

Read *King Oedipus* and try to identify the beginning, middle and the end of action in its plot structure.

3.5 Diction

Tragedy began from oratory and so its language is supposed to be adorned with ornaments, meaning that it should be presented in high poetry.

Aristotle cautions that “the language of tragedy must be clear and it must not be mean”. But if the poet uses obvious expressions, it will be mean so he advocates the use of strange words or difficult imagery for the diction of tragedy or verse drama.

4.0 The Three Unities

The three unities in tragedy consist of *unity of action* which demands that the action of tragedy must be free of irrelevant actions; the *unity of time* states that the duration of a play should be twenty-four hours, while the *unity of place* demands that action should concentrate on a particular location. These unities fitted the Greek stage because it had no curtain; the characters were restricted to one person and a chorus at the beginning.

Aeschylus introduced the second actor and prolonged the dialogue while Sophocles increased the number to three and added scene-painting to tragedy. The changing concept of tragedy from the classical to the modern age shows the reactions of scholars to Aristotle's description of tragedy in relation to the three unities. Have you read a play that agrees with or ignores the three unities?

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE(SAE)1

1. Give one word which can be used to refer to Greek drama
2. What is the Origin of Greek Drama?
3. Which emotions are relevant to Greek Drama?
4. The plot of Greek drama must have a beginning, middle and an end. True or False?
5. The modern theatre needs the three unities as much as the Greek theatre. True or False?

5.0 Summary

The following points have been made in this unit:

- Aristotle is an important theatre theorist from Greece
- Tragedy is the imitation of serious action
- The tragic hero is a person of noble birth or an aristocrat
- The tragic hero has a hubris
- The tragic hero is neither an angel nor a devil

- The tragic hero receives poetic justice; compensation for good and retribution for evil
- The plot of tragedy has a beginning, middle and an end
- Tragedy should be written in verse with the language embedded with imagery
- Greek tragedy has popularized the three unities.
- Aristotle's theory of tragedy has attracted much critical attention, but the question he raised not his answers are fundamental to dramatic theory.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (SAE)

Explain Aristotle's concept of

- the tragic hero;
- the plot of tragedy;
- the language of tragedy.

7.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

Dukore, Bernard. *Dramatic theory and criticism: Greeks to Grouchoski*. New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston 1974.

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Module 2

Unit 4: ASPECTS OF ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

Table of Contents

This unit gives information on the Elizabethan drama. As you read it, attempt a comparison with classical drama, noting points of affinity and divergence. Read each section carefully and apply the issues to any of Shakespeare's play that you have read.

The unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Shakespearian Theatre
 - 3.1 Shakespearian Drama
 - 3.2 Shakespearian Tragedy
 - 3.3 Shakespearian Tragic Hero
- 4.0 Plot
- 5.0 Diction
- 6.0 Summary
- 7.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- References

1.0 Introduction

The Elizabethan era refers to the period when Queen Elizabeth 1 reigned in England (1558 – 1603). It was a period when English literature flourished with writers like Sidney, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Bacon, Ben Johnson among many others producing works of literature. However, William Shakespeare is the most outstanding playwright of this period and he is most remembered for giving poetic drama a distinguished position among the creative arts. In this unit, Shakespeare's theatre is used to represent Elizabethan drama.

2.0 Objectives

After you have gone through the materials in this unit, you should:

1. have information about Shakespeare's theatre;
2. know Shakespeare's concept of tragedy;
3. recognize Shakespeare's tragic hero as a representative of the Elizabethan hero;
4. understand plot in Elizabethan drama and
5. identify the diction of Elizabethan drama.

3.0 Shakespeare's Theatre

According to D. C. Perkins, William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in April, 1564 and was educated in Stratford Grammar School. On April 27th 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, a woman who was eight years older than him and they had three children – Susanna, Hamnet and Judith. He moved to London in 1594 where he joined the Lord Chamberlain's company of actors. Though little is known about his early life, it is believed that he wrote most of his plays during his sojourn with this company.

Shakespeare's plays were not written to be read; they were meant to be acted. He was a travelling actor, a member of a group of vagabonds who perform in inns for the entertainment of customers. Since London had become a trading centre, merchants from other countries gathered there for business; some of these merchants built theatres and hired actors to perform for them. Shakespeare was among the successful actors who owned their own theatres – he bought the "Globe" and Blackfriars" as personal theatres.

At the entrance to these theatres, "gatherers" collected money from people who came to watch plays. These plays were advertised through leaflets and the sound of trumpets was used to invite people to the theatres: The blowing of three trumpet sounds signaled the opening of a script. During the production, vendors

were allowed to sell oranges, nuts and sweet meat to the audience. Most of the actors were young men and tall boys with high pitched voice who were trained from their early years to act female roles because women were not allowed on the stage (3-4). Look closely at the character Lady Macbeth in the film version of the play *Macbeth*, does the person's features fit the above description.

3.1 Shakespeare's Drama

Shakespeare has written many dramatic works or many plays are credited to him; such that some scholars believe that he could not have written all these plays: The controversy of authorship, notwithstanding, the corpus of his plays are in a collection titled *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. His tragedies include *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*.

3.2 Shakespearian Tragedy

Just as the classical writers produced great tragedies, the Elizabethan writers also wrote tragic dramas. For Shakespeare, his tragic plays share some features with classical tragedies though there are differences. The subject of tragedy remains the presentation of serious action but this action accommodates comedy as a realistically valuable art form; such that laughter, which is not acceptable in classical tragedy, is used as comic relief in Shakespearian tragedy. This is why the Porter's scene in *Macbeth* precedes the revelation of the murder of King Duncan.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

1. Who is William Shakespeare?
2. Why is the Elizabethan Tragedy described as Shakespearian Tragedy

3.3 Shakespearian Tragic Hero

This hero is a man of nobility but unlike the classical hero who must be a good man, the hero of Elizabethan tragedy can be a villain, a simpleton or a fool. This is what Shakespeare achieves through Iago in *Othello*; a hero who was so overtaken by jealousy that he murdered his wife, Desdemona, before he proves her innocence. Therefore tragedy is not acted solely for the sake of purging excess emotions but also for the purpose of pleasure.

You watch tragedy because you love it; and so you do not expect to be instructed by it, although you can learn from the experience of the hero.

4.0 Plot

Shakespearian tragedy has a less perfect and closely-knit plot because of its emphasis on a variety of dramatic episodes. This is why it ignores the unities of time and place but retains the unity of action. Shakespeare's tragedy does not squeeze actions into twenty-four hours; rather action runs into days and moves from place to place. But the plot-structure of Shakespeare's plays is divided into five acts; a situation which accommodates his understanding of magnitude as well as leaving time for the growth of his characters. The duration of action in *Macbeth* can be used to illustrate this.

5.0 Diction

The language of Shakespeare's drama is poetic. His diction is elevated especially when presenting noble characters but when he is portraying a commoner like the Cobbler in *Julius Caesar* or the Porter in *Macbeth*; he uses prose, suggesting that the latter is the language of the low in society.

SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- William Shakespeare is the most important playwright of the Elizabeth era;
- His theory of tragedy shares some similarities as well as differences with Aristotle's;
- Shakespeare's tragic hero can be a villain as well as a good character;
- The plot of his plays is episodic;
- Diction is representative of the social status of his characters;
- Though Shakespearian Tragedy evokes sorrowful emotions, it does not aspire primarily to instruct the audience
- If it does, it achieves this through pleasure because the audience like to watch it.

TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Compare Shakespearian tragedy with Greek Tragedy

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Module 2

Unit 5: MODERN AND EXPERIMENTAL DRAMA

Table of Contents

This unit gives an overview of modern drama. It shows how modern drama differs from conventional drama. It also provides you with a new concept of drama known as the experimental drama.

You may meet some new words so study this unit with a handbook of literature. You are introduced to a theatre icon by name Jerzy Grotowski and his “Poor Theatre” Read a modern drama text of your choice and see whether the issues raised in this unit are applicable.

The unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 The revolt against convention
 - 3.1 Themes
 - 3.2 Diction
 - 3.3 Structure and Technique
- 4.0 Grotowski’s Theatre
- 5.0 The Poor Theatre
- 6.0 Grotowski’s Experiment and Modern African Drama
- 7.0 Summary
- 8.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

References

1.0 Introduction

The term *modern* is a deviation from conventional modes of existence. In literature, M. H. Abrams associates it with works “written since the beginning of World War I in 1914.” Why is the World War 1 used as the starting point of modernism? It marks the dichotomy between the god-centred universe of the classical

and the Elizabethan age and the man-centred world of the modern era. The argument then was if God was functional to man's existence, why was there so much inhumanity in the world? What followed was a revolt against all forms of convention and a liberation of the creative impulse to experiment with new forms. The dramatists of this era include: Bernard Shaw, Sean O'Casey, Eugene O'Neil, Tennessee Williams and Samuel Beckett. If modern drama is a deviation from convention, then experimental drama is a rejection of convention or traditional modes of theatre. Experimental drama is associated with the works of theatre theorists such as Peter Brook, Antonio Artard, Jerzy Grotowski and Bertolt Brecht. You will discover there that the theatre of Jerzy Grotowski is used to illustrate the trends in the experimental theatre. Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* is used to show the impact of Grotowski's theory on African Drama. Get a copy of this text for your personal reading.

2.0 Objectives

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

- know that modern drama exists;
- distinguish between modern drama and conventional drama;
- identify features of modern drama;
- study modern drama as a deviation from convention ;
- know about the experimental drama;
- recognise Jerzy Grotowski as the most representative of the experimental theatre practitioners ;
- have a feel of the "Poor Theatre" of Jerzy Grotowski and
- apply experimental modes of theatre to Modern African Drama.

3.0 The Revolt Against Convention

In drama, this revolt shows in the deviation from classical notions about play writing. Arthur Miller in an essay titled “Tragedy of the Common Man” withdraws tragedy from the lives of illustrious figures when he asserts that “the common man is as apt a subject of tragedy as Kings.”

Tragedy does not depend on the status of an individual but on the passion with which man confronts the force that oppresses him or man’s battle to overcome the forces of depravity. If a common man dies in the process of doing this, it qualifies as serious drama. Apply this to the death of Oguoma in Zulu Sofola’s *Wedlock of the gods* and the multiple deaths in J. P. Clark’s *Song of a Goat*. These are tragic in the modern sense.

3.1 Themes

The central ideas of modern drama are commonplace. They flow out of the realities of life and the fragmentation of the human self occasioned by the search for new ideals. Everything, therefore, becomes the subject of drama and everybody is accepted as a worthy character of literature. This explains why the lives of social outcasts like lepers deserve attention in dramatic works such as in J. P. Clark’s *Hopes of the Living Dead*.

3.2 Diction

The diction of modern drama is a departure from classical and Elizabethan modes of language. This means that diction is not embellished with sophisticated imagery; rather language is infused with simplicity. But, there is a sophistication which should accompany the ordinariness of common speech for it to qualify as good diction. This is where painstaking artistry becomes

necessary. Read Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Sofola's *Wedlock of the gods* in order to examine this phenomenon.

3.3 Structure/Technique

The mode of presenting modern drama pays little or no allegiance to the conventional form. In some instances, modern playwrights dramatise their revolt against commonly accepted values in their work. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* mocks man's passivity and his hope for transcendental redemption, suggesting that hope amounts to personal irresponsibility to self and the society. Similarly, Tewfik Al-Hakim's *Fate of a Cockroach* shows man's existential search for freedom and his insistence on personal responsibility for his action no matter the odds against him as shown in the struggle of the cockroach in the bath. In these two instances, little attention is paid to the development of plot when compared to the drama texts in Units 5 and 6. This is because modern drama is a deviation from conventional forms of drama.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

State the differences between modern drama and classical drama or Elizabethan drama.

4.0 Grotowski's Theatre

Jerzy Grotowski is a Polish theatre director-theorist and the most innovative theatre practitioner in the 1960s. Peter Brook writing in the "Preface" to Grotowski's book *Towards A Poor Theatre* remarks that "no one else since Stanislavski, has investigated the nature of acting, its phenomenon, its meaning, the nature and science of its mental – physical emotional process as deeply and completely as Grotowski"(11). Prior to him,

Stanislavski had established the traditional approach to acting in which the actor's role was designed for him by the playwright and the director.

But Grotowski rejects this traditional mode of acting by stripping the theatre of all conventional properties – lighting, spectacle, costume/make-up and the stage as a fixed space for acting. According to Effiong Johnson, he “makes the actor the source of the theatrical event without any, overwhelming dependence on the playwright” (107). For Grotowski, only two things are fundamental to the theatre experience – the actor and the audience. This audience is not inside a playhouse but anywhere the script dictates. The set of *Kordian* paints a picture of a psychiatric hospital with the audience sitting among hospital beds and patients; the theatre space of *Dr Faustus* can pass for a banquet with the audience as guests while the playing area of *The Constant Prince* is enclosed with a fence and the audience sit around it as if they are expecting a wrestling championship.

5.0 The Poor Theatre

The legacy of Grotowski to experimental acting is his “Poor Theatre. This unique creation grows out of “The Theatre of Thirteen Rows” which he established in Opole when he attended a directing course in Cracow Theatre School between 1956 – 59. Effiong Johnson's work on Grotowski shows that the years at Opole laid the foundation for the Poor Theatre. The theatre of Grotowski is “devoted to the research into the domain of the theatrical art of the actor in particular” (Grotowski, 9) . This is because Grotowski reduces every concept in performance into rigorous tests and so his laboratory becomes a workshop where concepts are designed into forms that are appropriate for his theatre experiments.

As E. Bentley puts it, Grotowski's "madness emanates from his insistence that the actor is the indispensable element of theatricality; and so, the actor is the primary medium of creativity in Grotowski's experimental theatre"(1). For Grotowski, the Poor Theatre is a theatre that is "both 'total' and yet without obvious spectacle, without effect, and virtually without settings, properties or technological devices. But a theatre in which the actor is everything"(Johnson,111). The implication is that this theatre is stripped of its riches, leaving behind the actor who is trained through physical exercise to transcend the limitations of the body. It is on the idea of the actor and the audience as the basic tool of theatricality that the concept of the Poor Theatre stands. How is this different from the conventional theatre?

6.0 Grotowski' Experiment and Modern African Drama

Many African playwrights have adopted Grotowski's concept of theatre as an experiment. In this section, we shall identify aspects of experimental drama in Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*. Most of the actions in the play are set in a photographic studio while others are presented through flashbacks. The actions move forward and backward without any attempt by the playwright to develop an elaborate plot. This is why the text is denied essential aspects of conventional concept of drama except the actors who struggle to give meaning to their lives in the racist South Africa of the Apartheid regime. These characters are restricted by the context of their experiences so their actions are fluid in nature; consequently, the play succeeds as an experiment in Grotowski's aesthetics.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 2

1. Who is Jerzy Grotowski?

2. Why Is his theatre unique? Give two words that you can use to describe his work.

7.0 SUMMARY

The points made in this unit are:

- Modern drama is a deviation from conventional forms of drama;
- It isolates God from the affairs of man;
- The playwrights of this era are self-conscious and individualistic;
- Modern drama explores common themes of daily existence;
- Modern drama emphasizes man's struggle to retain dignity in his society.
- The structure of this kind of drama is experimental.
- Jerzy Grotowski is an experimental theatre practitioner;
- Jerzy Grotowski established the Poor Theatre;
- The Poor Theatre is a rejection of the conventional methods of acting .
- It sees the actor and audience as the basic tools of theatricality;
- Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is an example of experimental drama in Africa.
- Fugard's work has mirrored Grotowski in its unique setting, skeletal props; scanty characters and fluid action and characterization.

8.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Discuss the features of experimental drama as exemplified in Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*

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Table of Contents

This unit reveals that African traditional society had drama before the encounter with Western Civilization. Reflect on the festivals in your locality to ascertain whether they have aspects of drama. Does the above convince you about the existence of drama in Africa before the colonial era? This unit also provides information on modern African drama. Study the material carefully. Answer the questions in this unit for it will help your understanding of this discussion. Relate this study to written drama from Africa, particularly the ones that you have read.

The unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Origin of Traditional Drama
 - 3.1 Ritual as Drama
- 4.0 Influences on Modern African Drama
- 5.0 Drama in East and West Africa
- 6.0 Drama in South and North Africa
- 7.0 Summary
- 8.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- References

1.0 Introduction

There is a tendency to trace drama to Ancient Greece, may be because Greek drama has occupied intellectual attention for many centuries. But the fact is that drama exists in every society which has close affinity with nature. The traditional African society was predominantly religious. It was a universe where man had an intense relationship with the gods. Traditional African drama reflects the ways the African people related with their universe

before the emergence of Western civilization. Therefore, it shows man's attempt to understand his world in order to relate meaningfully with it.

Traditional African drama began as *Orature* which is why the West alleged that Africa had no literature before its encounter with formal education especially since it had no written tradition. Modern African drama developed from Africa's encounter with the West and the exposure to formal education. Prior to this, written drama was a part of the Colonialists' mode of entertainment, but such dramas had nothing to do with the African experience. However, the growth of literacy among Africans gradually produced a set of university graduates who started writing realistic drama for the African people.

2. Objectives

This unit exposes you to:

- traditional African drama; its origin and practice;
- ritual as the earliest form of drama in Africa ;
- the dramatic components of ritual;
- The origin of modern African drama;
- Influences of modern African Drama and
- The growth and development of modern African drama.

3.0 Origin Of Traditional Drama

The African world view reflects a vibrant relationship between man and the gods. According to Leopold Sedar Senghor, this world is "a fundamentally mobile, yet unique reality that seeks synthesis" because life flows through the world of the living, dead to the unborn. In order to maintain cosmic unity in this cyclic universe, the African lives in constant communion with the ancestors and the smaller gods who are intermediaries to the supreme being. This communion is through ritual sacrifices

which are parts of purification rites, ritual performances, masquerade dances and ceremonies. Traditional African drama developed from these numerous ceremonies in the African society.

3.1 Ritual As Drama

There is drama in most of the ritual displays in African societies. Ola Rotimi has identified some of these ritual displays which imitate action to include the mock-duel scene preceding the Edi Festival of Ile-Ife”, aspects of “the Egungun ‘apidan’ display” among the Igbo, the “I – Njoku Elephant ceremony of the Bakwerri peoples of the Cameroon Republic and the “Ekpe ritual dance of the Efik”(78). What other things make these ritual displays drama apart from the fact that each of them has imitation as a basic feature?

In Ekpe ritual dance for instance, the masked actors are characters. They are dressed in well designed costumes; not just black as Rotimi says. The colour depends on the context of performance and the occasion for there are times the Ekpe masquerade is clad in white with scanty display of red. Depending on the occasion, the masquerade performs before spectators on invitation or displays for the entertainment of on-lookers as it moves on the streets. Such performances are complete with songs by members of the cult, dance, mimed action among many others. The presence of dramatic elements like actor, costume, song, dance, audience and action in ritual displays justifies why African drama is traced to rites and festivals in the traditional society.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

1. What was the form of African Traditional drama at its earliest stage?
2. What are the main features of the African World View?
3. Identify the elements of drama in ritual.

4.0 Influences On Modern African Drama

Modern African or literacy drama has been influenced by many factors and we shall discuss some of them here. Written drama in African is directly linked with the emergence of the African elites who felt challenged to recreate the African situation as a valid replacement for the *Eurocentric* portrait which had hitherto filled the African stage. Their first influence, therefore, was the Western tradition which produced them. They read European dramas and adapted some for the African stage. Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to Blame* is an example.

Another source of influence to Modern African drama is traditional drama in its *orature*. This explains why there are elements of orature such as song, folktale, witchcraft, rites, belief systems among many others in African written drama.

5.0 Drama In West And East Africa

The growth and development of drama in Africa is most prominent in West and East Africa. What accounts for this is the nature of colonial oppression and the consequence(s) of this on the minds of the oppressed. In West Africa, the system of indirect rule allowed the educated elites to fight for the independence of their people; and so' drama has flourished in West Africa through the works of playwrights like Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, J. P. Clark, Zulu Sofola, Efua Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo, Femi Osofisan, Kole Omotosho and many others.

In East Africa, the devastating effects of imperialism which is shown in the dispossession of the masses and the appropriation of their land as a settler colony made drama a part of the independence struggles. The Mau Mau war is presented as drama by Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Miere Mugo in *The Trials of Dedan Kimathi*. The foremost dramatist in East Africa is Ngugi. His other

plays include: *The Black Hermit*, *I shall marry when I want* and *This Time Tomorrow*.

6.0 Drama In South And North Africa

The development of drama in South and North Africa is similar to West and East Africa. Again the difference is in history, but not completely the history of colonialism. Apartheid policy in South Africa stifled creativity and so most writers went on *self-expatriation*(self exile). The writer who stays in South Africa has a challenge to design how to operate a consciousness-raising genre like drama in a place of confinement and yet retain public acceptability. For Athol Fugard the avenue for retaining the creative impulse in this society is through the experimental theatre which shows drama as deprived as the people for which it is acted.

In North Africa, drama is largely based on the tradition of the people so it is written in Arabic. Islam retains its impact on the people because of its condemnation of *representational* arts and since any form of representation is regarded as a violation of Islamic law, drama developed late among the other art forms. It was not till North Africa came in contact with Europe that a need arose to re-examine traditional Islamic laws. Thus, the only North African dramatist whose work has been translated from Arabic into English is an Egyptian named Tewfik Al-Hakim, the writer of *Fate of a Cockroach and Other Plays*.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 2

1. Define Modern African drama
2. In what ways has modern Africa drama been influenced by history?

7.0 SUMMARY

The following points have been made in this unit:

- Drama is not an imported art form to Africa.
- It grows out of the Africans' attempt to understand their world.
- Traditional African drama developed from ritual.
- Ritual is prevalent in every society.
- The Ekpe masquerade dance is good drama; it is complete with dramatic elements.
- Modern African drama began with Africa's contact with the West.
- University graduates are the first set of modern African playwrights.
- Modern African drama has been influenced by Western forms of drama.
- Aspects of Orature are basic components of modern African drama.
- West Africa has the largest number of playwrights in Africa.
- East African drama is a weapon for collective struggle.
- South African drama is impoverished by the oppressive nature of life during the apartheid regime.
- North African drama in English is associated with the work of Tewfik Al-Hakim.

8.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

What is the root of traditional African Drama?

Identify a ritual display in your town and examine the dramatic elements in it

9.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

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Module 2

Unit 7: FEMINIST DRAMA

Table of Contents

This unit shows the tendency in men to restrict women to their biological roles in male authored plays. As you read this unit, ponder on whether biological role is the only destiny for women. Find out what women's recreation of women's role in literature does to women's status in the society. The unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Women in men – authored texts
- 4.0 Feminism in Drama
- 4.0 Influences on Modern African Drama
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- References

1.0 Introduction

The first actor on Greek stage, Thepsis was a man. Even when the plot of Greek plays was extended to accommodate the second and third actors, it was a violation of decorum to bring women on stage. This means that the role of Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was created for a woman but it was acted by a young man who was trained for such a role. The tendency to remove women from the stage is part of the patriarchal ideology which seeks to place women on the periphery of existence. Feminist drama confronts the status quo by critiquing women's roles in male authored texts as well as recreating the female story as constructed by men.

2. Objectives

This unit will expose you to the following:

- men's suppression of women in the society which is shown in literature.
- the portrayal of women in male written texts
- the recreation of women's role by women writers.

3.0 Women In Male Authored Texts

Seen primarily as wives and mothers, women function as servers of men's pleasure. Single women are seen as either prostitutes or courtesans while assertive women are described as masculine and therefore unattractive. They are sanctioned by society and condemned by men if they do not fit into their biological roles. This explains Mrs. Alvings devotion to a depraved husband in Henrik Ibsen's *Ghost*; or Linder's total respect for Willy Lowman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*; Mother Courage's sacrificial life which earns her destitution in Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage* and Shen-Te's kindness which is expressed through prostitution in Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*.

This is why the Eve motif or the image of woman as the serpent has been celebrated in literature from the classical to the modern stage. And so, women are presented as "daughters of eve" by most male writers. Some examples include the nameless and voiceless Bride in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*; *Seyi in Kongi's Harvest* and Nneka, the prostitute, in Effiong Johnson's *Son of the land* and Emem in Egharevba's *Shadows of Yesterday*. In recent times, the Home Videos has extended the derogation of women to the electronic media in its emphasis on female criminality as market strategy.

4.0 Feminism In Drama

Feminism according to Judith Bardwick, is “an implicit rejection of the lifestyle created by strongly coercive norms that define and restrict what women are and can do”(5).

In order to correct the negative presentation of women by men, women writers have given an autonomous value to women's experience. Since the act of speaking is also an assertion of authority, women playwrights have given women voice, thereby recreating their story for the stage. Zulu Sofola has introduced women into the Nigerian stage because as Folabo Ajayi says she is “a woman writing about women”(24). In *Wedlock of the gods*, she questions the choice of spouses; shows polygamy as a conflict situated for women in *King Emene*; frowns at marriage as a social obligation in *Memories in the Moonlight*; portrays the negative impact of colonialism on women in *The Sweet Trap*; ridicules the moral bankruptcy of the elites in *Songs of a Maiden* and celebrates the power of courageous women in *Queen Omu-Ako of Aligbo*

Some other women playwrights in Africa who have explored the lives of women for the stage are Efua Sutherland and Ama Ata Aidoo of Ghana and Tess Onwueme of Nigeria. Incidentally, Sofola who has put the strongest women on the Nigerian stage does not see herself as a feminist because of the controversies surrounding that word. You should pause at this point and read one play written by at least two of the female playwrights mentioned in this unit noting how they portray female characters. The suggested plays are; *Wedlock of the Gods* by Zulu Sofola and *Anowa* by Ama Ata Aidoo. You should also find time to read at least one play by Efua Sutherland and one by Tess Onwueme to have a full picture of feminism as portrayed by these different writers.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

1. What is Feminist drama ?
2. In what light have women been presented by male writers?
3. What has been the reaction of women writers to male portrayal of women in drama?

5.0 Summary

The main points made in this unit are:

- The male voice was for centuries the only voice in literature.
- Men suppressed women's voice by insisting that women's roles are only as wives and mothers.
- Men present women negatively in men authored plays.
- Women choose to speak for themselves using drama
- Zulu Sofola has successfully deposited powerful women on the Nigerian stage.
- Sofola rejects feminism as a Western ideology but believes in female assertion in tradition.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Discuss Feminism as portrayed in any two plays written by women which you have read.

7.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

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Module 2

Unit 8: AFRICAN AMERICAN DRAMA

Table of Contents

This unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Growth and Development of African American Drama
- 4.0 African American Drama from the 1950's
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- References

1. Introduction

The African American people are the descendants of African slaves who were forcefully uprooted from Africa and planted four centuries ago in the New World. After the Emancipation Proclamation which affirmed that all men had *inalienable* rights in America despite race, creed and sex, racism was institutionalized in the United States. This meant that human worth was categorized according to skin pigmentation so the Anglo-Saxon whites claimed moral and physical superiority over other groups, most of which were immigrants. But the lowest group on the social hierarchy were blacks who were first known as Negroes, then Afro-Americans and finally as African Americans, suggesting that they are now as much Africans as they are Americans.

2. Objectives

In this unit, you have a survey of African American drama in order to:

- examine its growth and development;
- identify African American playwrights and
- see how their works reveal the African American situation.

3.0 Growth And Development Of African American Drama

African American drama is essentially an art form developed in the United States to reflect the black experience through drama. Unlike poetry and prose, it came late because the persistence of racial bigotry did not consider the realities of African American life a worthy subject for the stage till the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, drama about black life was presented by whites and they projected stereotypes of African American life. Beginning as minstrel shows, early African American drama reflected the racial prejudices which informed the black experience in America and they were directed by whites.

4. 0 AFRICAN AMERICAN DRAMA FROM THE 1950's...

The first realistic drama by an African American on the African American life is Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959). This was also the first drama by an African American to appear on Broadway – American's symbol of power, fame and class. Other plays of Hansberry include: *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (1965), *To Be Gifted, Young and Black* (1971) and *Les Blanc* (1972). The last two plays were published by her white husband Robert Nemiroff whom she married in 1953 but divorced in 1964.

The period following Hansberry's death in 1965 saw the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s. This was when Adrienne Kennedy wrote *The Funny House of a Negro*. But the greatest playwright of this period was Everet LeRoi Jones (1934) who is also known as Amiri Baraka. He is a Marxist-Leninist scholar, an essayist, a militant poet and a committed writer. Some of his plays are *Dutchman* (1964), *Slave* (1964), *Toilet* (1964), *Slaveship* (1966), *The Baptism* (1966), *Madheart* (1967) and *A Recent killing* (1973).

He is a revolutionary dramatist whose works fight the exploitation of the black masses in “white” America.

Since theatre is commercialized in the United States contemporary African American drama has not attained the status that poetry and prose did in the early 1920s and the 1980s, respectively. However, African American drama has continued to feature on the American stage in Broadway and off-Broadway. The re-appearance of Ntozake Shange’s *For Colored Girls who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, a choreopoem written in 1978 on Broadway in 1999 shows that African American drama is still relevant to the American life though its growth and development are affected by racism.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

- 1.What happened to African American drama before it was written down?
2. Who are the foremost African American dramatists?
3. Why has the commercialization of theatre in the United States affected African American drama ?
- 4.Read Hansberry’s ‘A Raisin in the Sun’ and any other African American play mentioned in this unit and note the features of African American Drama.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following points have been made in this unit:

- African Americans descend from black slaves in the United States who were brought to America four centuries ago.
- The black people in the United States have been limited by racial prejudice.
- Black Drama developed much later than poetry and drama in America
- Early drama on the African American life was directed by whites and they reflected stereotypes of blackness.

- The first realistic African American drama to appear on Broadway is Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin the Sun*.
- LeRoi Jones has used drama as a tool for revolutionary action among the African American people in the United States.
- The re-appearance of Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls...* on Broadway shows that African American drama is still relevant to the American stage despite the persistence of racism.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Discuss the nature of early African American plays using your knowledge of one play mentioned in this unit.

7.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

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Module 3

Unit 1: PROSE LITERATURE: CONCEPT AND FORMS

Table of Contents

This unit introduces you to another genre of literature - prose. In the last eight units you were dealing with drama. To remind yourself of what prose literature is, go back to Unit 1, Section 4.0 and read about the genres of literature before reading this unit. This unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Evolution from Early to Modern Times
- 4.0 Types of Prose Literature
 - 4.1 Fiction
 - 4.2 Non Fiction
- 5.0 Form in Prose Literature
- 6.0 Other Sub-Types of Prose
- 7.0 Summary
- 4.0 Tutor marked assignment
- References

1.1 Introduction

Prose literature can be functionally defined as literature written in the normal way that we speak. In other words, prose literature is written in normal day-to-day manner of speech, or written in normal long-hand that we use in writing the essay. Of course, unlike poetry, prose literature does not need economy of words that much, neither is it compressed so as to among other things, hide its meaning: No. The author expresses his thoughts just as naturally as they occur to him. It is interesting to note that the essays we wrote in secondary schools were a first step towards prose writing, and we equally adopt the four types of essay writing into prose. writing, namely: narration, description, argumentation and exposition. But the major difference between the ordinary

essay and prose literature is that the latter makes use of the imagination. It creates imaginative scenes and situations based on life in the society and presents this to the reader. Therefore, for both the writer and the reader of prose literature, this enterprise becomes “a visit to another country”, the country of the imagination which one enters without need for visas and passports while one sits in one’s parlour, bedroom or study.

Prose literature, like all other genres of literature, presents to us images of life as it is lived by man. It presents to us a record of man in his attempt at making relationship - whether good or bad.

2.0 Objectives

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- differentiate prose literature from other genres
- trace the evolution of prose forms from early to modern forms
- identify various types of prose literature and some of their features.

3.0 Evolution From Early To Modern Times

Prose literature has had a long history of evolution. In almost all cultures, including Western culture, prose literature started in the form of tales – folk-tales told by great narrators to a listening audience. These tales included myths and legends, as well as fables, anecdotes and make-believe. These were orally narrated and passed down from generation to generation until the invention of writing. With the advent of writing, some of the most famous of the tales or stories were now set down in writing. But this itself was a laborious process, that took years to copy and reproduce in large quantities to meet public demand.

But during the renaissance when printing was invented by John Gutenberg, prose literature like all other forms of writing

received a boost and flourished. Various writers could now put down their experiences and imaginations in writing for others to read. From this point, prose literature developed immensely into various forms.

4.0 Types Of Prose Literature

There are various forms or types of prose literature. A few of such forms shall be listed here with their distinguishing characteristics. The first matter is that prose literature is divided into two main types, namely:

- a. Fiction and
- b. Non-fiction

4.1 FICTION

This involves all imaginative works and includes:

The Novel

This is a full-length imaginative prose that is extended in narration, and assembles many characters and a wide range of human experiences. It has an elaborate plot and a complex characterization; for example, Festus Iyayi's *Heroes*

The Novelette

This one is a shorter form of the novel with a less complicated plot and characterization. For example, Cyprian Ekwensi's: *The Drummer Boy*.

The Short Story

This is a work of fiction which centres on one or more major characters. It has an artificial pattern of plot, thoughts and actions of characters. Its narration of events is usually simple and the story itself is full of suspense, surprise and expectation. A good example is, Chinua Achebe's *Girls At War*.

Fable

This is a story which teaches a moral lesson but has its setting and characterization in the animal world. Examples are stories of the tortoise in African oral literature.

4.2 Non-Fiction

1. **Biography:** This is non-fictional prose. It is a full account of a person's life and personality written by another person, recreated in tune with the writer's motif. Biography in literature is not the life story of a person read at church, at a funeral or memorial service. It is a literary art in its own merit, which has become very popular. An example of this is *Nzeogwu* by Olusegun Obasanjo, and *Emeka* by Frederick Forsythe.
2. **Autobiography:** This is a biography of a person written by himself. It is normally a large compilation of accounts of one-self taken from one's private diary or records. Recent publications of autobiographies in Nigeria include Awolowo's *My March Through Prison*, and Ojukwu's *Because I am Involved*.
3. **Semi-Autobiography:** This is equally an autobiography in which the writer disguises the real names of the personalities involved by substituting imaginary or fictitious ones, so as to make the writing look more like fiction. An example of this is Camara Laye's *The African Child*.

5.0 Form Of Prose Literature

Form in simple terms, has to do with the way a literary text or experience is presented to us. The over-all shape of the literary work as perceived by the reader is what we mean by form. Prose literature can be presented in various forms. A few examples are as follows:

1. **The Epistolary:** This is the presentation of the prose work in the form of a letter or exchange of letters like the epistles in the

Christian bible. In this style the demand is that the writer be a good letter writer who is equally highly imaginative. An example of this form is Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*.

2. **The Fabular:** This style as has already been explained, presents human experiences through the animal world. Human activities are carried out through animal characters and situations. An example is Orwell's *Animal Farm*.
3. **The Caricature:** This is a literary work that is out to make fun of a person by exaggerating his prominent features while still maintaining some likeness to the original.
4. **The Allegory:** This is a literary narrative in which the characters and general background represent abstract concepts and moral qualities. In the allegory, there is usually a surface-level meaning, and many deeper level meanings or interpretations that can be derived through symbolic representations. An example of this is John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.
5. **The Diary:** This is a literary narrative written as a record of notes and impressions of the main character about events and situations around him, recorded in a diary. In other words, we access the world of the novel, its characters and situations through the sense impressions of the character maintaining the diary. We see and hear things through his/her eyes and ears. This is a method by which the writer distances himself from the actions of the story. A good example, of this literary piece is Mongo Beti's *The Poor Christ of Bomba*.

6.0 Other Sub-Types Of Prose Fiction

There are other sub-types of prose writing. These include:

- a) The Adventure story
- b) The Thriller/detective
- c) The Romance and
- d) The Bildungsroman

a) The Adventure: This type usually concentrates on the adventures of young people and their excitement and escapades in a bid to understand

themselves and exercise momentary freedom from adult control. An example is Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and Kola Onadipe's *The Adventures of Souza*

(b) The Thriller/Detective: This type concentrates on fast paced action and suspense. Usually there is a crime and attempts by the law to unravel the perpetrators. This usually results in a trail of suspense and mystery. This category includes the works of Hadley Chase and Edgar Allan Poe.

(c) The Romance: This type appeals to young people. Its actions have to do with the sensuous, sensational and amorous activities of young people. Examples of such novels are the works of Denise Robins.

(d) The Bildungsroman: This is a novel that traces the growth and development of a hero from childhood through education to young adulthood. Many novels fall into this category, for example, Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Potter's Wheel*, Camara Laye's *The African Child* and Charles Dicken's *Great Expectations*.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE1

- 4.1 What are the two main types of Prose literature?
- 4.2 In what way is a biography different from an autobiography?

4.3 Which forms of prose literature are mentioned in this unit

7.0 Summary

The following are the main points raised in this unit:

- Prose literature started as folktales which were later written down after the invention of printing.
- Prose literature is divided into two broad categories - fiction and non-fiction
- Fiction can further be sub divided into: the novel, the novelette, the short story and the fable while non-fiction can be further subdivided into biography, autobiography and semi- autobiography
- Prose literature can take any of the following forms: epistolary if the novel is written as a letter; fabular if the characters are animals; caricature if the novel goes out of its way to create fun and laughter; allegory if the characters and general background symbolize abstract ideas and the novel has levels of meaning and diary if the novel is a record of events recorded in the writer's diary.
- Other sub-types of prose fiction include the adventure story, the detective story, the romance and the bildungsroman.

8.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Read any two novels of your choice and write a brief summary of the story.

Also classify the novel in terms of its form and type.

9.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

Ekpenyong, Bassey; Friday Okon and Daniel Udo (1999) *Literature In English*. Uyo: Abbnny Educ. Publishers.

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Unit 2: ASPECTS OF THE NOVEL

Table of Contents

Now that you already know the place of the novel within the larger family of literature as well as the smaller family of prose literature, this unit will concentrate on the aspects of the novel that you need to know in order to be able to appreciate prose literature. Note that the novel is often used to mean prose literature. This unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Aspects of the Novel
 - 3.1 Title
 - 3.2 The Author
 - 3.3 Theme
 - 3.4 Character
 - 3.5 Point of view
 - 3.6 Story and plot
 - 3.7 Setting
 - 3.8 Language
 - 3.9 Narrative Technique
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- References

1. Introduction

The aspects of a novel are convenient categories that are used for the purpose of appreciating the novel. It is important to note that these aspects are not exclusive to the novel. They are shared by other sub genres of prose fiction as well as other genres of

literature like drama and poetry though in varying degrees. It is also necessary to note that the novel is not detachable into these parts rather that the novel is an indivisible whole which can be analyzed and evaluated using the different aspects as yardsticks.

2. Objective

In this unit you will learn the various yardsticks for prose appreciation known as aspects of the novel.

3.0 Aspects of the Novel

3.1 The Title

What attracts a reader to a text is the title. The title is the text sentence. It gives the reader an insight into the subject matter or the most important issues raised in the text. Much care, time and thought are taken in choosing a text title and therefore in appreciating a text, the title deserves adequate attention. Consider such titles as: *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Anthills of the Savannah*, *The Old Man and the Sea*. After reading through the above novels, you will discover that the titles summarize the content either as clear statements or in symbolic forms.

3.2 The Author

Titles are backed up by authors. The author of a prose work is called a novelist and the way he looks at or treats the subject he is writing about is described as his view point. This is often influenced by his personal experiences, ideology or personal convictions. Before studying any prose work, it is important to know something about the author as this will lead to a clearer understanding of his text.

3.3 The Theme

A theme is the central idea of a text. It is what the writer intends to put across to his readers, or the experience - enriching lesson the reader draws from a text after a careful study. Themes are not often clearly stated. They are deduced from the way the characters are made to function (in action and in speech and what is said about them) - in fact, in the way characters present themselves and interact with the society in which they find themselves.

Themes often touch on various aspects of human life: virtues and vices, social values etc. The cardinal objective of textual themes is to affect the attitude of the reading public and influence positive changes on issues raised. They often touch on social issues, political issues, nature, aesthetics culture, religion, love, hatred wars etc. Analysis of prose literature may reveal several themes (main and sub themes) in the story. The reader may even discover certain sub-themes which may not have been the intention of the writer. The writer's power and control over his work is just that of creating the story. After the work has been published he has no more control. The duty to explore the text and discover and analyze thoughts is that of the critic. Thus thematic analysis rests on the reader. It is the major theme of the novel that decides the nature of the other aspects in the novel like setting, characterization, the narrative techniques and the language.

Although it has been stated that the reader discovers the themes/sub themes in the novel, caution should be exercised so as not to delve into far fetched and unbuttressed themes. Themes identified should be significant reference points in the novel and should develop along with the story.

3.4 Characterisation

Characters are fictional persons the writer creates to enable him tell his story - they are mere instruments used in representing persons as they function in the normal society and used in representing the writers thoughts or imagination.

Characterization then is the writer's creativity in moulding human types required for his narration and imbuing them with functions characteristic of the class they represent. For example, the story may require kings, chiefs, servants, soldiers, priests, the weak, the strong, the honest etc. The writer creates and dresses them not only in the attires characteristic of their class but also in language and behaviour. For example: Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Ezeulu in *Arrow of God*, Piggy and Jack in *Lord of the Flies*, His Excellency in *Anthills of the Savannah*. Each character is a distinct personality and cannot be mistaken for the others.

3.4.1. Categories Of Characters

(i) Major Character: Major characters are regarded as *round* characters. They develop along in age and maturity with the story. They also dominate events in the story. This includes the hero/heroine, (protagonist), the vilian (Antagonist) and other important characters that line up on either sides and are carried along the story to the end. They are complex in nature and change in their responses to situations and demonstrate high levels of independence. Sometimes their behaviour is unpredictable.

The major characters are often drawn from the ruling class, the decision making class, the revolutionary and sometimes the down trodden, who try to break the social barrier or class myth as in love stories or revolutionary stories.

(iii) Minor Character

This class of characters play the role of fillers in the story. They just help in the development of the plot but they themselves have nothing serious at stake in the story. Their roles are intermittent and they may disappear unnoticed in the course of the story without seriously distorting it. Unlike the major characters, minor characters, do not develop along with the story and are simple in nature, depending on the major characters to whom they play subsidiary roles.

3.5 Point of View

The angle from which a story is told is the point of view. Even though a writer is the creator of the story, he often uses a narrator. Except in auto- biographical novels like Camara Laye's *The African Child*, the narrator and the writer are usually never the same. The narrator may be the main character in the story or just a participant in which case the story is told from the first person's point of view using the first person pronoun, "I". Sometimes a narrator may not be involved or may just decide to tell the story as an outsider from the third person's point of view using the pronouns " he, she , they"

It is important to identify the narrator in the story so as to evaluate his relationship with the story and the reliability of the information. Sometimes the writer may purposely use an unreliable narrator to let us see his bias as is the case with Odili in Achebe's *A Man of the People*. In George Faulkner's *The Sound And The Fury*, the narrator is an idiot who has no idea of time. The choice is also deliberate.

Most novels are narrated in the third person point of view. This makes the story objective and reliable because the narrator is

not a character in the story. First person narrators are often involved and their stories are usually subjective. Whatever the point of view, it is important to assess the narrator's level of objectivity so as to correctly interpret the story.

3.6 The Plot

The plot is the story line in the novel: the arrangement of events or episodes in the order of their occurrence. In other words it is the stringing together of various segments of the story to result in a logical narration from the beginning to the end. Sometimes the plot of a novel may follow the pattern of that of drama but not very strictly. This is the beginning (Exposition) where the reader is made to familiar with important characters and ideas in the text, the middle (climax) where the story gets to its peak or the highest point of conflict/narration and the end (resolution) where intricacies in the story are resolved and conclusions drawn. Tragic stories follow this pattern. Events in a novel are often grouped into chapters in such a way that the story kicks off in the first chapter, attains a climax somewhere in the middle and tapers to an end in the last chapter.

3.7 Setting

The setting suggests the location of the work (story). This is the environment and time (where and when) the events take place. It sets boundary to the movements. The setting is often described under three aspects, namely: the geographical, the cultural and the time.

- (i) **Geographical Setting:** This refers to the area on land covered by movement of events between two or more

communities. Geographical setting describes the natural environment, season, vegetation, physical features etc. These considered will predispose the cultural setting.

- (ii) **Cultural Setting:** This describes the cultural identity or specialties of the people in the area (geographical location). It includes race, language, mode of dressing, food, traditional institutions, beliefs, customs and occupations- characteristic of the cultural environment; which gives the novel its overriding homogeneity. Sometimes a work of art can operate within two or more cultures in which case conflict may arise-especially in the area of traditional observances and beliefs. Since most writers live or have lived within the culture they portray in their works (temporally or permanently), this gives the work credibility and authenticity.

- (iii) **Time Setting:** Time setting refers to the specific period the events portrayed in the story actually take place. The writer may be relating past or historical experiences which are no longer tenable in the present society. For example, novels on colonization, slave trade, war experiences, adventures undertaken and completed, are all historical narrations. Other writings could be dealing with events or experiences in contemporary society. For example: Political Instability, generation conflict, tradition versus modernism, religious hypocrisy etc. – these are considered within the time frame of the contemporary society. Events towards the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century are considered recent for now. Some very visionary writers preempt events and locate their works in the future. These are

highly imaginative writing and very often the literary predictions come to pass. For example *1984* by George Orwell and *First Men on the Moon* by Jules Verne are novels which were set in the far future at the time they were written. Novels set in the future are often scientific in nature.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

Which are the seven major aspects of the novel so far discussed in this unit?

How is the theme related to the other aspects of the novel?

3.8 Language

The language of prose literature is close to the language of daily speech. This is because the writer has his reading public in mind and would want them not only to enjoy the story but also to understand and follow the trend. An involved language would make these difficult. Behind the simplicity of language the writer presents themes and meanings both *denotatively* and connotatively. The reader has to read between the lines very often to elicit these meanings.

Prose literature makes use of figures of speech and other literary devices such as: Simile, Metaphor, Hyperbole, Allusion, symbols etc. to create beauty of expression and concretize what would have been otherwise abstract.

Prose writers sometimes reach out to employ poetic devices in their work to achieve sound effect. This style is referred to as poetic prose (common in short stories). Language appreciation in prose writing depends on the reader's level of language competence.

3.9 Narrative Technique

The commonest narrative devices/techniques often used in the novel are: flashback, suspense, foreshadowing, irony, symbolism and myth. In novels which begin in the middle or at the end, the technique used is the flashback. Foreshadowing and suspense are often used to keep the readers' interest. This is when certain facts or the effect of certain actions are judiciously kept back by the writer to be presented towards the end. Recent African novels use myths and legend. Soyinka's works for instance cannot be fully understood until the myths and legends have been identified. Novels that use myths and legends and symbols are often richer in meaning when they have been analyzed.

4.0 Summary

The major points that have been made in this unit are:

- the novel is often used to refer to prose literature even though it is only a type of prose literature, the others being the novella and the short story.
- Aspects of the novel are the criteria for assessment and appreciation of a novel.
- The novel has seven major aspects of which theme is the most important since the other aspects are there to facilitate its expression

5.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Read any of the novels mentioned in this section and comment on any five aspects of the novel that you consider the most important.

6.0 REFERENCES

Abrams, M.H. *A glossary of Literary Terms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.

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Module 3

Unit 3: AFRICAN PROSE FICTION

Table of Contents

This unit concentrates on African prose fiction. You need to know about African prose so as to appreciate the African novel.

This unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Phases of African Prose Fiction
 - 3.1 Pre-Independence or Colonial Phase
 - 3.2 The Negritude Phase
 - 3.3 Post-Independence Disillusionment
 - 3.4 The Marxist Phase
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- References

1.0 Introduction

African prose writers have often expressed concerns or themes that had something to do with the prevailing mood or temper of their times. From a historical perspective, we can call these periods phases. There have been many phases in African prose writing. These phases are examined below:

2.0 Objectives

In this unit you will learn about

- the themes of African prose fiction and the forces that influence them.
- the phases of African prose literature.

3.0 Phases of African Prose Literature

3.1 Pre-independence or Colonial Phase 1900 – 1960

This coincides with the period when the white man came and colonized Africa. With colonial rule came discriminatory and oppressive policies aimed at the blacks or Africans. Some of these policies include indirect rule in Anglophone Africa and Assimilation in Francophone Africa. Most of these policies were smokescreens for the greater exploitation of Africa's natural resources. Also, the colonialists believed in the inferiority of the Blackman and the superiority of the white man. With these, Africans who were educated wrote works which were a protest against colonialism, exploitation, hypocrisy, and most importantly the clash of cultures and values. Therefore this first phase is known as the "culture phase". Some of the prose works written at this period include: **Tutuola's** *The Palmwine Drunkard*, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* among others.

3.2 The Negritude Phase (1940's – 60)

This period was the Francophone African equivalent of the colonial phase. Due to racial discrimination by the French, Africans came together to form the Negritude movement. This was a literary and philosophical movement meant to glorify and rehabilitate the African ways of life, and the "African Personality". This movement began in the 1940s with writers like Leopold Sedar Senghor, Leon Damas and Aimé Césaire as leaders. Their rejection of white culture and criticism of colonialism supported the armed colonial struggle going on in Africa at the time. Some Francophone prose writers who wrote at the time include Mongo Beti (Cameroon): *The Poor Christ of Bomba* and *Mission to Kala*. Others

include Camara Laye (Guinea): *The African Child*, *The Radiance of the King* and *A Dream of Africa*.

3.1 Post-Independence Disillusionment – 1960 – 70s

This period coincided with the era immediately following independence. With the attainment of independence, the new black ruling elite became overlords who sought to behave like the out-gone white

colonialist. They continued the oppression of their fellow blacks while amassing all the gains of the independence struggle for themselves and their families. During this political era, politicians engaged in corruption and bribery, nepotism, anarchy, political turbulence and chaos, which in some African nations, led to civil war and disintegration. This was a betrayal of the hopes and dreams of the masses who fought for independence, by the ruling elite.

The writers of this period wrote novels that can be considered satirical. The masses as well as writers were disillusioned (i.e. they lost faith in the democratic process. They expressed this disillusionment through satire). By adopting *satire* as a technique, these writers were indirectly ridiculing the leaders of African nations. Some examples of novels written within this period include Chinua Achebe's ***A Man of the People***, Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, my Brother*, among many others.

3.4 The Marxist Phase 1970 – 90

This phase was a continuation of the disillusionment with the rule of the black man over his fellow black men. But unlike the second phase, this younger generation of writers were not only content to criticize, but suggested an alternative means of societal

salvation through the adoption of the Marxist/Socialist ideas. This is why in some cases it appears as if some of the novels written during this period are *propagandist* in style. Example of novels within this phase include Festus Iyayi's *Violence* (1973) and *Heroes* (1990), Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *Devil on the Cross* (1980). It is important to note that these phases are also evident in other genres of literature from Africa. For instance the drama and poetry from the African continent also share these themes and phases to a varying degree.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

1. What were the predominant concerns of the four eras of African prose fiction?
2. Read one novel belonging to each of the phases and note how the characteristics of the phase are shown in the novel.

4.0 Summary

The following points have been made in this unit:

- African writers have often written about themes that have to do with the prevailing mood of the time
- The novels written during the pre-independence era protest against colonialism, exploitation, and the clash of the European culture with the African culture as their major themes
- The Negritude phase occurred in the African countries colonized by the French and writers of this phase denounce the imposition of the white culture and government on the African
- The novels of the post independence era criticize the oppression by the African leaders who took over from the white colonialists. These novels are satirical in tone.

- The novels of the Marxist phase do not only criticize but also go on to suggest solutions. For this reason they are propagandist in style.

5.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Using one novel from each phase discuss the themes that are treated in each novel .

6.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

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Module 3

Unit 4: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

TEXT: *ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH*

AUTHOR: CHINUA ACHEBE

Table of Contents

This unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2. 0 Objectives
- 3.0 Textual Analysis
 - 3.1 Setting
 - 3.2 Plot
 - 3.3 Characterization
 - 3.4 Theme
 - 3.5 Language
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- References

1. Introduction

This unit demonstrates how a novel can be analysed. Note that only the general guideline is given. The final appreciation of a work of literature is an individual thing because apart from the general principles of appreciation, the reader brings his own personality and experience to bear on the novel or play or poem he reads. Therefore apart from the general message Reader A may see what Reader B does not see.

2.0 Objectives

In this unit you are supposed to

- observe the step by step application of the aspects of the novel on a particular novel
- do a textual analysis of a novel of your choice

3.0 Textual Analysis

3.1 Setting:

(i). **Geographical Setting:** The novel is set in Nigeria; the reader is taken on a ride through the nation, from the southern part of the country to the north. He experiences changes as he reads along - changes in vegetation, the topography of the land and its cultural settings – names and structures.

(ii). **Time:** Written in 1987, the novel records the turn of political events in the country in recent times, almost three decades after independence, The political scene is characterised by substandard and conceited presidents, hand picked privileged functionaries, dictator–military presidents, political unrest, terrorism and insecurity.

(iii). **Culturally** the heterogeneous set up of the society is portrayed in the existence of tribal sentiments – each tribe struggling to climb to significance and to undo the others in the race for the national cake; the majority tribes ganging up against the marginalized minority. The plural culture is seen in names like Okong, Oriko, Ikem Elewa, Braimoh, Aina, Ossai and other nomenclatures. Each represents an interest group. What is shared in common as a nation is the unstable political culture which could be generalized to other West African self-governing nations.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

1. Read the text “ Anthills of the Savannah” and do the following:
 - (i) Find a relationship between the title and the setting.
 - (ii) Make a list of aspects of culture found in the novel.

3.2 The Plot:

An unpopular and overwhelmingly despotic head of government – “His Excellency” attempts to perpetuate his stay at the presidency. He uses his cabinet ministers as robots and controls the affairs of the nation as his private enterprise. This raises disenchantment among the political office holders as well as among the common people and various tribes. Suppression and intimidation gives way to subversive movements among the ruled against the rulers – even among some of those in his cabinet.

The military president, His Excellency, resorts to brutality in nibbling politically motivated insurgence in the bud. A section of the country that did not support and vote for His Excellency’s continued stay in power is penalized – starved of government projects and assistance, and members of his government from that section are victimized.

Feeling insecure on the throne, His Excellency now rules with secret police and armed soldiers thus turning the country into a police state where suspects are tortured and eliminated. Endangered personalities and some functionaries take to their heels to save their lives. The nation is in chaos, human rights are abused, blood is shed and the intellectuals are hunted. Ikem Osodi is eliminated by assassins and Christopher Oriko is hunted down and eliminated. On his way under camouflage and escort to leave the country through the north, a coup d’etat is announced and His Excellency is overthrown and killed.

There is general jubilation by the people who feel the yoke of government lifted from their shoulders. The day of joy itself is not without casualties. Chris Oriko is one of them. He does not live to see the freedom he had fought for. He is shot by a jubilant drunk policeman whom he had prevented from raping a girl in public.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 2

After going through this plot summary, read the text proper and note the following (make your own notes).

- (i) The names of those in His Excellency's cabinet, and the post they occupied.
- (ii) The problem between His Excellency and his Minister for Information.
- (iii) The problem between Abazon people and His Excellency. How are the people affected.
- (iv) What steps Abazon people take to make peace with the government and the consequence.
- (v) The victims of His Excellency's, security agents brutality.

3.3 Characterisation

The writer picks his characters from various sections of the society – all who are affected and should have a hand in selecting the type of government and those who should rule them.

- (a) His Excellency: A typical African ruler who comes to the throne by hook or crook and will want to remain there for life. Not of first class intelligence but really conceited. Some times bizarre and caricatured in his functions. His style of governance undefined, highhanded, weighing more on tyranny than on benevolence.

- (b) The Cabinet Ministers: A blend of civilians (handpicked) and soldiers weakened by favours and privileges underserved. Civilian functionaries are cowed by military presence to pocket their intelligence and work in a manner of esprit de corps in the military democracy, based on forced respect and obedience – unquestionable.
- (c) Thus, the good and pathetic case of the Amazons could not be defended before the aggrieved Excellency.
- (d) Security Agents: The police and the army appear as instruments of brutality in the present despotism and tyranny. They unleash terror and brutality to quell oppositions and cow the populace to submission. They break, with impunity, laws they are expected to enforce and destroy lives and property they are meant to protect.
- (e) Journalists (The Media): Largely instrument of government's false propaganda. They feed the nation with wrong information of Ikem Osodi's death.

The likes of Christ Oriko stand for the truth and therefore risk government's wrath. They operate underground.

Other characters created in the novel include: Students, Elders, Drivers, Female characters etc. Through these, popular feelings about the government in power are made known.

The purpose is to include a cross section of the populace to validate the assessment of the government.

3.4 Theme: The Novel is a political satire. It is satirizing the political system in African nations. The following theme can be drawn from the text:

(i) Misuse Of Power/Authority: His Excellency runs the Government as if it were a private concern, ordering his ministers about, imprisoning some and dismissing others and wanting them to obey without complain and without delay. He turns the nation

into a military cantonment. He fumes over Chris Oriko's apparent stubbornness.

But me no buts, Mr. Oriko. The matter is closed, I said how many times for God's sake am I expected to repeat it. Why do you find it difficult to swallow my ruling on anything? (1)

and the Information Minister is cowed to submission: "I am sorry, your Excellency. But I have no difficulty swallowing and digesting your rulings"(1).

He also misuses his position and time hunting and tracking down his opponents.

(ii) Ambition: The president is greedy and power-hungry. He wants to hold on to power for life; trying to impose himself as life president on the Abazon people who vote against this have themselves to blame. They will never taste the good things of his government. It is his cling to power that turns him into a tyrant.

(iii) Violence: Innocent citizens are tortured, maimed and killed for the selfish interest of His Excellency. Even women suffer humiliation and disgrace. The police officer that subsequently kills Chris Oriko attempts to rape a traveller in broad daylight. Beatrice's room is ransacked by security agents. Protesting people from Abazon are murdered in cold blood by armed police officers. Campuses are raided and students wounded, arrested and detained. This organized violence creates fear and insecurity.

(iv) Corruption: His Excellency forms his government on man-know-man basis so that they could serve and protect his selfish

interest. Road wardens (the army and the police) extort money from travellers at the numerous checkpoints littered along the numerous highways. They “had dropped their pretence of looking inside the bus from the forward door. Now they take their money openly from operators with seeming good humour on both sides”. This is a common experience even today which perhaps may continue until doom’s day.

(v) Psychology Of The Oppressed

When people are oppressed by forces stronger than they can contend with they react in various ways:

- b) They may protest openly and get themselves destroyed.
- c) They may become complacent.
- d) They become silently rebellious and operate subversively.
- e) They surrender to the oppressors and allow themselves to be used as instruments of oppression.

All these happen in the novel under appreciation. Can you identify the instances? This is seen among the intimidated and deprived groups in government, the elites and the ordinary citizens and students – the success of the coup d’état is as a result of the expression of the psychology of the oppressed otherwise described as rebellious sentiments. Other themes associated with this Novel are; Disillusionment, hatred and love.

3.5 Language

The language reflects the Nigerian society and the status of the users. The educated speak admirably good English each stretching it to suit his own profession – the administrator, the journalist, the lawyer, doctor and the academics. The illiterate and the semi-literate operate at the level of ‘broken’ or Pidgin English.

Each class understands the other in his own source language and communication flows freely. Examine this:

- 'Can I help you?'
- 'We just come salute you'
- 'Me? Who are you? I don't seem to remember you'
- 'We be taxi-driver'
- 'I see'.

Using this medium - Elewa, the sales girl and a girl friend to Ikem Osodi is able to hold her own against the educated society into which beauty and love have initiated her. The ordinary citizen finds Pidgin enough to discuss politics and current affairs.

"No be you tell white man make
he commot? ...
Ehe, white man done go now,
and now hand over to President.
Now that one done loss for inside
bush.
Wetin we go do again"(213)

Other characteristics of language in the novel are apt descriptions and proverbs and when the need arises, borrowed native language expressions e.g. koboko, Ise, etc. The effect is to get everybody involved and create real situations.

4.0 Summary

In this unit, you have been shown

- a step by step application of the aspects of the novel in the appreciation of Chinua Achebe's *Anthill of the Savannah*.
- The novel has been analysed with regards to setting, plot, characterization, themes and language
- It has been shown that the above aspects of the novel : setting, plot, characterization, and language reflect the Nigerian society and also the themes of the novel.

5.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT 4

1. State the significance of the use of the following characters in the novel.
 - (a) Students
 - (b) Elders from Abazon
 - (c) Taxi drivers
 - (d) Women.
2. What impression do the following characters make on you?
 - (i) The President
 - (ii) Cabinet ministers
 - (iii) Ikem Osodi

6.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

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Module 3

Unit 5: PROSE AND OTHER GENRES OF LITERATURE

Table of Contents

This unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2. 0 Objectives
- 3.0 Prose and other genres of literature
 - 3.1 Distinction on the basis of use of language
 - 3.2 Distinction on the basis of subject
 - 3.3 Emphasis on literary elements
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 6.0 References

1. Introduction

You will recall that prose fiction is itself only one of the major genres of literature. The other two are poetry and drama. There are certain features that prose shares with the other genres and some which are peculiar to prose. Our discussion in this unit is adapted from Module3: Unit 4 of the National Teacher's Institute's Coursebook on English .

2.0 Objectives

In this unit you are supposed to be equipped to

- identify the special features of prose ;
- describe the relationship between prose and the other genres of literature : poetry and drama;
- differentiate prose from poetry and drama

3.0 Prose Fiction And The Genres of Literature

Let us begin by examining the relationship between prose fiction, poetry and drama. We shall discuss this relationship from three perspectives: language, subject and formal characteristics

3.3 Distinction On The Basis Of Use Of Language.

One of the factors that distinguish the branches of literature, called genres, is the way each of these branches (genres) uses language. The language of prose fiction is the closest to the ordinary everyday language. It is relaxed, simple, easy to understand and tends to avoid the use of too many figures of speech which cause difficulties in poetic texts.

By contrast, the language of poetry is highly compact. It is highly compressed and tends to use sentences in which some words or phrases have been left out. Meaning is not expressed directly as is mostly the case in prose, but indirectly through the use of imagery and figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, personification, metonymy, irony and hyperbole. Even the sounds of words are carefully controlled in poetry and used to achieve specific effects through devices such as alliteration, consonance, assonance, onomatopoeia, repetition and rhyme. Similarly, the pauses one is allowed to make while reading poetry are rigidly controlled depending on the nature of the organization of poetic "feet" and "stanza".

As a result of this meticulous attention, which the poet pays to every aspect of language usage, poetry is usually complex and difficult to understand. It thus contrasts with the language of prose fiction. Drama uses either prose or poetry. But even when drama uses poetry; language is not as rigidly controlled as is the case in pure poetry. Sometimes however, drama often combines prose and poetry as a medium of expression.

Therefore, to compare the language of prose and poetry is to examine the degrees of manipulation of language. In extreme cases

the most literary and difficult is the language of poetry; and the least literary and easiest to understand is the language of prose. But we do have poetic prose and prosaic poetry, which seem to make the differences in form less important. To say all this is not to imply that the language of prose fiction is artless and exactly like the daily usage of language. You shall indeed discover later in this unit that a lot of artistry goes into the selection and organization of the language of prose.

3.2 Distinction On The Basis Of Subject

Two factors explain the differences that are generally observed in the lengths of the major genres of literature, with prose fiction being the most voluminous. The first relates to the attitude to language discussed above. Since poetry aims at maximum economy and conciseness in language usage, a lot is often said in a few lines. Since prose fiction is not as meticulous with respect to the economy of words, it ends up saying little in many words.

However, even when the language of prose is concise and economical, it still remains more voluminous than poetry. The reason for this has to do with the second factor mentioned above. This factor concerns what we have described as the subject and scope. This means the extent to which the subject matter has been treated. In this respect, the most ambitious in the coverage of subject matter is prose fiction, which aims at telling a full and complete story about the life of its characters. Hence a work of prose fiction like the novel, *Things Fall Apart*, gives us a comprehensive coverage of incidents or events. Prose fiction often has a wider scope than poetry.

Poetry, on the other hand, is the least ambitious in the coverage of the details of a subject matter. In fact, on the average (in spite of the existence of long narrative poems) a poem concentrates on an episode and even sometimes only on a fleeting emotion in the life of

a man. Consequently, not much space is required for a poetic composition, because poetry rigorously economizes words.

3.3 Emphasis On Literary Elements.

There are certain elements like “story”, “character”, “dialogue”, “plot”, “action”, “figurative language”, “sound devices”, and others, which all branches (genres) of literature have in common. However, these elements are not used in the same degree by all the major literary genres. In fact, these genres are differentiated depending on which of these elements they rely, highlight or emphasize in explaining their subjects.

Prose fiction, for instance, relies on the elements of “story” and “character” more than the others. In fact, prose fictions (the novel, novella or short story) cannot exist if they have no story to tell. Hence E.M. Forster defines “story” as the backbone of the novel. The story in a novel cannot exist itself except it is about some characters. Hence “character” is the second most important characteristic of prose fiction.

Although drama always has characters and a story to tell, these are not as important for this genre as “dialogue” and “action” are. If you remove the two elements from a play, it will cease to be a play. What makes a play distinctive are usually the dialogue and the action. It is the dialogue between the characters, which reveals the story, the personal traits of the characters and the development of the action. Action is the second most vital element and it is our interest in the way it develops towards a climax and then resolution that keeps us glued to the stage. If actors on stage say nothing to one another or do nothing by way of action, there will be no drama.

On the other hand, although poetry sometimes tells a story about a character or characters who may engage in dialogue and

some action, these elements are of little importance to its existence. Rather poetry relies mostly on:

- 1) The figurative use of language and
- 2) The manipulation of the elements of sound and rhythm.

If these two elements are taken away, poetry will be no more than bad prose.

Thus, if you want to distinguish between the three major genres of literature- prose, poetry and drama, you have to consider at least three main issues:

- 1) The use of language;
- 2) Their coverage of subject matter (thematic scope); and
- 3) The elements of literature on which each relies for its existence.

Self Assessment Exercise(SAE) 1

1. What do you understand by the phrase “genre of literature”?
2. Which are the three major ways by which you can distinguish between the major genres of literature?

4.0 Summary

The main points that have been made in this unit are:

- Prose is one of the three major genres of literature; the others are drama and poetry.
- To distinguish between the three major genres of literature, you consider: the use of language; the scope of the work with regard to the subject, themes and characterization and the important elements often used in the genre.
- Prose is distinguished on the basis of language and the scope of the subject

5.0 Tutor Marked Assignment(TMA)

Discuss the peculiar characteristics of each of the major genres of literature.

6.0 References and Other Resources

Abrams, M.H. *A glossary of Literary Terms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.

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National Teachers' Institute : *Coursebook on English Language* ,
Module 3 Unit 4, 227- 280.

Module 4:

Unit 5: INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

This unit will introduce you to poetry, its social functions, how to study poetry effectively and features to note in the study of poetry. In Unit 1 you were told what poetry is, its nature and form, and other aspects of its beauty. It serves a useful purpose to restate that poetry serves the triple function of

- a) Creation of beauty,
- b) Entertainment and
- c) Education

Table of contents

This unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 How to study this unit
- 4.0 Word Study
- 5.0 Aspects in the study of poetry
- 6.0 Meaning , intention, tone etc.
- 7.0 Summary of unit
- 8.0 Tutor marked assignment
- 9.0 References

1.0 Introduction

There is this popular but erroneously misleading belief among students of all categories and a few teachers that poetry is difficult and uninteresting. This is not so. The best approach to poetry is to go in with an open, unbiased mind, and to view it as a slice of educative life experience captured in print. Equally you should expect to derive pleasure from it; even when you may not understand the story or actions involved, at least, enjoy the sounds

of the words. And at this point, it may also benefit us to state that the best way to have the feel of poetry and be involved in it is to READ POETRY ALOUD. This is so because poetry primarily has an **Oral** and **Aural** appeal. By oral, we mean that poetry is primarily a **spoken art**. Because it is a spoken art, the spoken sounds appeal to the ears (aural) and so make a memorable impression on the mind. The next section shall deal with the analysis of poetry.

2.0 Objectives

After a careful study of the materials in this unit, you will be able to:

- i) Identify the link between traditional African poetry (oral) and modern (written) African poetry.
- ii) Identify some of the components that are required for a proper appreciation and analysis of poetry.
- iii) Analyze traditional (oral) African poetry.

3. 0 How To Study This Unit

- 1) Read the materials including the poems very carefully and aloud to yourself where nobody is likely to be disturbed by your reading. You will have to read the poems many times.
- 2) Try to observe the punctuations or pauses indicated in the poem through the punctuation marks. Where there are none, impose yours while reading so that your reading can make sense to you.
- 3) Try and listen to yourself while reading aloud to notice the sounds of the words you are reading.
- 4) Where you are not competent at such reading enlist the help of a good reader to assist you in reading the poem

aloud while you follow his reading with your eyes on the page.

As the “expert” reads listen very attentively to his reading, and note the sounds of the words, and the rhythm his reading produces.

- 5) Note down difficult expressions and seek help in understanding them from your tutor.

4. 0 Word Study

It is most beneficial for you to try to sort out difficult words by reading them within the context of the poem. Dictionaries are seldom of much use here. Remember that in poetry many words are used connotatively. It must be restated here that the language of poetry is different from that of prose because in poetry language is compressed. This compressed and economical use of words is what presents difficulties to most readers. Due to this seeming difficulty, poetry has become a subject to be endured and studied for examination purpose only. What a pity!

A good reader of poetry, on the other hand, is usually sensitive to the **what**, the **how** and the **why** of the poems that he reads and knows that he must explore the poem in order to look out for hidden meanings. The language of poetry is compressed and energetic. No words are wasted or used carelessly: they are made to work hard. Meaning is more often suggested than directly stated. Equally, the method of expression is usually more figurative than literal. Comparisons – often made through similes and metaphors are more frequent than straight-forward description. This kind of language use assumes a life of its own, and is charged with meaning as a battery is charged with electricity.

Poets use language in this special way to communicate their ideas about life as well as their deeply felt emotions, and to share

with their readers experiences of great importance to them. Writing poetry is no easy task; as we the readers must bring to the reading of these poems the same seriousness and attention that the writers put into their writings. Such concentration often results in pleasure and understanding. The more effort we put into our reading, the more understanding and pleasure we derive from the enterprise.

When studying poetry, the reader is expected to comment on the following features:

- (a) The poet's meaning and intention
- (b) The poet's tone of voice
- (c) The poet's diction
- (d) The poet's use of imagery
- (e) The poet's use of metre and rhyme
- (f) The poet's use of sound effects and other devices.

Once these features are accessible to the reader from the poem, then communication has taken place, and the reader can react in one of many ways which include:

- (a) agreement with the poet;
- (b) disagreement and rejection of the experience;
- (c) critical examination and reordering of the experience;
- (d) commenting on or writing of another poem from another point of view;
- (e) answering questions based on the poem.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) I

1. Why is poetry regarded as difficult?
2. Poetry appeals to ----- and -----
3. A good reader of poetry should be sensitive to -----,
----- and -----.

4. The language of poetry is -----
5. Mention six features which a good reader of poetry must note.

5.0 Meaning, Intention, Tone

5.1 The Poet's Meaning and Intention: The poet has a special meaning and an intention when he writes. It is the responsibility of the reader to find out that meaning and intention. This means that the reader should not impose his own meaning on the poem, nor even speculate on what ought to have been the meaning, but to state clearly and unequivocally what the writer means. To do this requires sensitive and careful reading, with close concentration. Every word of the poem demands close attention. A close concentration on the over-all meaning of the poem and how it is expressed, reveals the poet's intention in writing. Once a reader is able to enter into the mainstream of the poet's meaning, he is able to state this meaning under another heading: **theme/subject-matter**, and **setting**.

5.2 The Poet's Tone of Voice

The reader must listen carefully to **how** the poet is saying what he says. For example, ask yourself whether the poet is speaking calmly, angrily, boastfully, seriously, playfully, or thoughtfully. Or is he sarcastic? Or shouting? Or is he whispering? These are some of the indices of the possible tone of voice a poet might use. But it is also noteworthy to observe that a poet's tone of voice can change in the course of the poem; we should be able to note these changes through the hints and signals in the poem.

5.3 The Poet's Diction

This refers to the poet's choice of words. In other words, what kind of words does the poet use? Is he using words of everyday speech? Is he using long difficult words or short simple words? Is he using scientific words? Is his choice of words drawn from the language of politics or some other special activity or occupation? Do certain words help you in understanding his meaning or do they distort meaning? Which words help you to interpret his tone of voice? Do the words a poet uses **suggest** various meanings simultaneously or do they make plain statements? These are just a few of the questions to be asked when a reader is dealing with a poet's diction. The issues under the heading of diction can also be treated under the heading **language use**.

5.4 The Poet's use of Imagery/Symbolism

The word "imagery" refers to the use of images. An image can be defined as a **mental picture** created in the mind of the reader by the poet through his use of words. Through the use of words, a poet can create images that appeal to the reader's sense of touch, smell, taste, hearing, as well as sight. The poet uses imagery to create "sense impressions" in his reader's mind. These sense impressions help the reader to re-create in his own mind the objects that the poet is describing.

Sometimes, the poet's images act as symbols. Then, the objects described by the images **symbolize** ("stand for" or "represent") ideas or emotions that are more significant than the objects themselves. The poet wishes to impress his readers with these ideas and emotions and not with the objects embodied by the images. The ideas or emotions are larger than the images and they

lie beyond them. And at such a point, the descriptive function of the image becomes secondary to its symbolic function.

5.5 The Poet's use of Metre and Rhyme

Metre and rhyme have to do with the regularity or otherwise of the “beats” in a poem as it is read. These are powerful weapons in creating the atmosphere that the poet is trying to convey to the reader. They are part of the sound created in the poem. They can add to the meaning and help us to “tune in” to his tone of voice. Some poems have a much more regular and powerful metre than others. Some poems make use of rhyme (e.g. non-African poems) and others do not (e.g. some African poems). Their use or non use contributes to the overall effect of the poem.

5.6 The Poet's use of sound effects and other devices

Sound is very important in any poem. The poet can make use of alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia and so on, to create sound and melody in his poem. Other devices include the poet's free hand in using figures of speech in the poem to create meaning and sound effects: these can be classified under the title **figurative expression**.

6.0 Summary

From the discourse above, we can say that from the poet's use of words, the following major elements can be drawn there from, which the reader may look out for in order to interpret, make meaning and appreciate a poem,

- 1) Subject-matter (what the poet is apparently saying).
- 2) Setting (the physical and historical place of events).
- 3) Theme (the major ideal(s) the poet is communicating)
- 4) Language use (diction)
- 5) Tone

6) Imagery/Symbolism

7) Figurative expressions and sound effects.

From the next unit we shall delve into the analysis of poems based on the elements listed above.

7.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Answer the following questions:

- 1) How can we arrive at the meaning of a poem?
- 2) What do we mean by the poet's tone?
- 3) How can diction help us in getting into the poet's meaning?
- 4) Differentiate between imagery and symbolism
- 5) Differentiate between the language of prose and poetry.

8.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

Burton, S. H. & C. J. H. Chacksfield *African Poetry in English: An Introduction to Practical Criticism*. London: Macmillan, 1979.

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Module 4

Unit 2: ORAL ANTECEDENTS TO MODERN AFRICAN POETRY

Table Of Contents

This unit will introduce you to the traditional oral antecedent to modern African poetry.

The unit is arranged as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Oral Poetry
- 4.0 Some elements of oral poetry.
- 5.0 The panegyric/praise poetry
- 6.0 The dirge/elegy
- 7.0 Special purposes poetry
- 8.0 Religious/ritual poetry
- 9.0 Purpose and function of traditional poetry
- 10 Summary
- 11 Tutor Marked assignment
- 12 References

1. Introduction

It has often been stated that of the three genres of literature – prose, poetry and drama – poetry is the oldest genre. This assertion is nowhere truer than in Africa. Long before the colonizers came to Africa, Africa had had a long and ancient tradition of literature which was basically orally rendered. Of these, oral poetry was the most outstanding and most pervasive. This form of literature was an integral part of the African so much so that every activity he undertook was steeped in poetry. This poetry took various forms, as part of the everyday life of the African. Out of ignorance when the colonizer came and did not find

a written literary tradition in Africa, he erroneously thought that he was the purveyor of humane letters and the arts to Africa.

Even though the White man came with the writing culture and with it education and the literary arts, we state here that modern African poetry does not owe its development only to this Western standard, but had its roots deeply embedded in its traditional oral antecedents of the past.

2.0 Objectives

By the time you read through this unit you shall have been able to

- (i) trace the origin of the traditional oral literature of Africa.
- (ii) identify oral poetry as the most basic aspect of oral literature.
- (iii) identify and differentiate various sub-categories of oral poetry.

3.0 Traditional Oral Poetry

Traditional oral poetry is made up of verbal articulations of human experiences presented in beautiful and memorable words, with facial gestures, movements, tone of voice, and other special effects like musical accompaniment, and meant to satisfy man's intellectual emotional spirit and aesthetic needs. To make this poetry memorable the artist-performer had to choose his words carefully in order that they may have a special effect on his/her audience. From their reactions, he/she would know whether the poetic rendition has achieved its goal.

Traditional oral poetry embraces a wide variety of phenomena that include chants, recitations, songs and verbal rituals among others and they "constitute the core of our

traditional heritage of poetry” (NTI English Course Book, Cycle 2 1990:1). Oral poetry like all poetry is rather compressed in style. Traditional poetry developed from chants and rituals to the gods.

4.0 Some Elements Of Oral Poetry

Traditional oral poetry has many aspects. Some of the major aspects include praise poetry, the dirge, religious and ritual poetry and other special purpose poetry like work songs, drum poetry and lullabies, among others. These all jointly constitute traditional oral poetry. Though all poetry is oral, it is traditional poetry that achieves orality most, in its presentation, appeal and appreciation. This is so because the words hold a special appeal for the audience in addition to his facial gestures, tone of voice, movement and costumes .

5.0 Panegyric / Praise Poetry

This form is the most widely practised of all. In traditional Africa, life is lived as a celebration, therefore, there were usually many occasions that called for celebrations with poetry songs and dance. For instance, important achievements, important persons and deities, and other significant human endeavours called for praise. These praises were usually expressed in poetry on certain festive occasions to the appreciation of the community.

In its formalized setting, panegyric poems were composed to celebrate and glorify the achievement of kings, chiefs, noblemen and men of substantial wealth in a community. In the case of royalty, these praise poems were performed by court poets who were part of the king’s entourage wherever he went. Some of the praise poems these court poets used had been handed down by ancient court poets to those of the present generation and the latter were not expected to change the words of the text except to extrapolate and put in salutations or make new observation of the

present time. With praise poems like these the oral history of a community or lineage are preserved.

On a general level, just about anybody can become an object of praise-e.g. achievements of heroes, great hunters, military officers, mothers and fathers, etc, who have qualities that have led to the well-being and stability of the community, and are therefore, cherished by their community. Some of the praises may not be rendered in public but in private or within a small gathering of the extended or nuclear family. Whatever the setting of performance, praise-poetry is an ubiquitous art in Africa, associated with solemn celebrations like funerals, initiations, as well as religious ceremonies.

6.0 Dirge/Elegy

Also popular and diffuse in traditional Africa is the dirge. The dirge is a mournful chant or song that is rendered on the occasion of the death of a loved one. These songs or chant usually involve wailing sobbing and weeping, and therefore, women are some of its best performers. The songs or chants usually deal on the theme of death as man's enemy or on the mystery of life. It also involves praises for the good or heroic deeds of the deceased. Also, in the elegiac chant is this resignation to an acceptance of the inevitable. As man is celebrated in life so is he mourned and celebrated in death. African communities known for their funeral dirges include, the Akan of Ghana, the Igbo, Yoruba and Efik of Nigeria, and the Limba of Congo.

7.0 Special Purpose Poetry

This kind of poetry covers a wide range and variety of poetry among which are poems of abuse, work song, play songs, and lullabies. There is really no aspect of African traditional life that does not appear in poetry. In some communities, contests are held

between villages to determine which village can out-abuse the other. To make communal and other forms of labour lighter, Africans usually engage in songs and poetry beating time with their work implements to give the rendition rhythm. By so doing, the labourers are revived and given extra strength to complete their task.

Another kind of poetry is the lullaby. Lullabies are songs or chants rendered by mothers, fathers, nurse-maids or other adults, to keep a crying baby quiet and/or to soothe him to sleep. All these poetic forms are common in African societies to this moment.

8.0 Religious / Ritual Poetry

This kind of poetry includes invocatory/ incantatory poems, prayers, divination poetry and other special poems used during rituals dedicated to the gods. Religious poetry centre around the aspects of worship. They consist of various songs, recitations and chants. These various forms are used in different rituals to serve as means of establishing some link between the worshippers and the divinities in question. Where the community is supposed to have offended the divinity in question, rites are performed and appropriate sacrifices carried out to pacify the divinity concerned.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

1. What is traditional oral poetry?
Mention three distinct types.

9.0 Purpose And Function Of Traditional Poetry

Like all literature traditional oral poetry served the same basic purposes that all literature has performed, as follows:

1. They educate (morally and socially)
2. They create beauty, and enjoyment.

For specific purposes, they are moral boosters; they fulfill the function of giving man his worth and therefore boost his ego; they inspire men into action, e.g. wars, hunting and wrestling; they also help man to forget the cruel realities of life, overcome boredom and serve as accompaniment to various tasks e.g. canoe paddling, grass-cutting, road-mending, grain-pounding etc.

10 SUMMARY

The following points have been made in this unit.

- Poetry is the oldest form of literature in Africa .
- It was rendered orally and was well developed and diffused all over the continent.
- Its various branches include panegyric or praise poetry, elegy or dirge, special purpose poetry (which embraces a wide variety of poetic forms) and religious cum ritual poetry.
- Oral poetry originated from chants and other rituals to the gods.
- Oral poetry like all poetry anywhere in the world, functions to teach, to create beauty and to give pleasure in addition to satisfying man's spiritual needs and inspiring man to greater heights in most endeavours in life.

11 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Look within your community and select a traditional oral poem and analyze it showing its type and the function it plays in your community.

12 REFERENCES

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Module 4

Unit 3: TRADITIONAL AFRICAN POETRY

In the previous unit, you must have read about traditional African Oral Poetry. You must have read about its elements and types. In this unit you will be introduced to a specimen of traditional African Oral poetry which has been recorded and translated into English. This specimen under review is a panegyric or praise poetry dedicated to the elephant.

Table of contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 How to study this unit
- 4.0 The poem “Salute to the Elephant”
- 5.0 Analysis
 - 5.1 Background/Setting
 - 5.2 Subject-Matter
 - 5.3 Language
 - 5.4 Figurative Expressions
- 6.0 Summary
- 7.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 8.0 References

1.0 Traditional African poetry

Traditional African poetry has been a major aspect of the celebration of African traditional life and culture. Traditional African poetry was essentially oral and unwritten and therefore easily appreciated by members of the community whenever it was performed by the poet. In traditional Africa, almost all events in human life drew upon the powerful resources of poetry to make them memorable.

Poetry provided a sense of mystery which enlivens the rites that mark the phases of life, whether they be joyous happening or sad occurrences. In view of the above, traditional poetry took up subjects as diverse as birth to death, hunting, war, individuals, societies, kings, paupers, ancestors. The poem we shall be examining in this unit is a traditional Yoruba poem that emanates from the hunting guild. This poem is classified as “Ijala” – poems that glorify hunting and its patron-god Ogun. Equally, Ijala poetry can have the animals themselves as subject-matter, like the case of the one we shall be examining in this unit. The poem has only been translated into English and written down by Adeboye Babalola.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- 2) discuss some aspects of traditional oral poetry
- 3) identify and discuss an Ijala poem
- 4) isolate and analyse the themes and other elements of the Ijala poem presented in this unit.

3.0 HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

- 1) Study the unit carefully and relate the poem discussed in this section to your experience.
- 2) Carefully read and re-read the poem noting its peculiar oral qualities.
- 3) Identify the subject-matter, themes and figurative expressions.
- 4) Attempt to answer the Self Assessment Exercise questions at the end of the unit.

4.0 Salute To The Elephant

O elephant, possessor of a savings-basket full of money
O elephant, huge as a hill, even in a crouching posture.
O elephant, enfolded by honour, demon, flapping fans of war.
Demon who snaps tree branches into many pieces and moves
on to the farm

5 O elephant, who ignores 'I have fled to my father for refuge',
let alone 'to my mother'.

Mountainous Animal, Huge Beast who tears a man like a
garment

And hangs him up on a tree

The sight of whom causes people to stampede towards a hill of
safety.

10. My chant is a salute to the elephant

Ajanaku who walks with a heavy tread.

Demon who swallows palm-fruit bunches whole even with the
spiky pistil-cells.

O elephant, praise-named Laaye, massive animal, blackish-grey
in complexion

O elephant, who single-handed causes a tremor in a
dense tropical forest.

15. O elephant, who stands sturdy and alert, who walks slowly as
if reluctantly.

O elephant, whom one sees and points towards with all one's
fingers.

The hunter's boast at home is not repeated when he really
meets the elephant.

The hunter's boast at home is not repeated before the elephant.

Ajanaku looks back with difficulty like a person suffering from a sprained neck.

20. The elephant has a porter's-knot without having any load on his head.

The elephant's head is his burden which he balances,

O elephant, praise-named Laaye, "O death, please stop following me"

This is part and parcel of the elephant's appellation.

If you wish to know the elephant, the elephant who is a veritable ferry-man.

25. The elephant whom honour matches, the elephant who continually swings his trunk.

His upper fly-switch,

It's the elephant whose eyes are veritable water-jars.

O elephant, the vagrant par excellence,

Whose molar teeth are as wide as palm-oil pits in Ijeshaland,

30. O elephant, lord of the forest, respectfully called Oriiribobo

O elephant whose teeth are like shafts.

One tooth of his is a porter's load, O elephant fondly called Otiko

Who has a beast-of-burden's proper neck

O elephant, whom the hunter sometimes sees face to face

35. O elephant, whom the hunter at other times sees from the rear
Beast who carries mortars and yet walks with a swaggering gait

Primeval leper, animal treading ponderously

(Trans. by. A. Babalola)

5.0 Analysis

5.1 Background/Setting

The poem is set in traditional Africa before the coming of the white man.

5.2 Subject – Matter

This poem is a hunter's chant addressed to the elephant. It deals with all aspects of the elephant beginning with its economic potentials, physical size as well as its mythical and destructive qualities. For specific detail, aspects of the elephant described are:

- a) Its awe-inspiring great size which is described as "huge as a hill" (line 2), "Mountainous Animal", "Huge Beast" (line 7), and "molar teeth as wide as palm-oil pits in Ijesa-land" (line 29). The elephant is equally described as an animal "whom one sees and points towards with all one's fingers" (line 16), suggesting that its huge size is such that it would be insulting to point at it with one finger.
- b) Its great weight is depicted by such expressions as "walks with a heavy tread" (line 11); "stands sturdy and alert" (line 15); "One tooth is a porter's load" (line 32); "carries mortars and yet walks with a swaggering gait" (line 36)' "treading ponderously" (line 37).
- c) Its real and mythical destructive and terror-inspiring abilities are suggested by expressions such as "demon, flapping fans of war" (line 3); "who snaps tree branches into many pieces and moves on to the forest far," (line 4); "who ignores 'I have fled to my father for refuge',/let alone to my mother" (lines 5 & 6); "who tears a man like a garment/And hangs him up on a tree" (lines 7&8); "praise-named Laaye, 'O death, please stop following me" (line 22); "Ajanaku" (lines 11 & 19)

- d) The elephant's extraordinary strength is referred to with such expressions as: "Demon who snaps tree branches into many pieces and moves on to the forest farm" (line 4); "who swallows palm-fruit bunches whole, even with the spiky pistil-cells" (line 12); "who single-handed causes a tremor in a dense tropical forest" (line 14); "whose teeth are like shafts" (line 31);
- e) The elephant's economic value is referred to in the poem in lines such as: "possessor of a savings-basket full of money" (line 1)

This poem inspires in the reader a feeling of admiration, respect and awe for the elephant for its grandeur and greatness. Also, being an oral traditional praise poem, it is characterized by excessive use of repetition and hyperbolic metaphors.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

Mention three aspects of the elephant which the poem deals with

5.3 Language

The language of the poem recalls its traditional setting in which it was orally rendered to a cross-section of the community. Therefore, difficult words are rarely used so that the wordings would be easily communicated to both small and great, old and young. The performer succeeds in his ability to manipulate sounds, as well as the creation of imagery.

5.4 Figurative Expressions

There are various instances of figurative usages in the poem. Some of them are identified below:

Alliteration

Examples from the poem include “huge as a hill” (line 2); “flapping fans of war” (line 3), “fled to my father for refuge (Line 5); forest farm” (line 4); “stands sturdy” (line 15), part and parcel of the elephant’s appellation” (line 23), “palm-oil pits” (line 29) , “beast-of-burden” (line 33) and “...burden which he balances” (line 21).

a) Assonance

Examples of this can be found in the following lines: “massive animal, blackish-gray” (line 13); “praise-named Laaye (line 22); “elephant who is a veritable ferry-man” (line 24)

c) Onomatopoeia

Examples of this can be found in: “flapping” (line 3); “snaps” (line 4); stampede (line 9)

d) Repetition

This poem is an example of effective use of repetition in the traditional oral poem. Examples are: “O elephant” (lines 1 – 3, 5, 13 – 16, 22 28, 30 – 31, 34 – 35); “huge” (line 2 & 7); “The hunter’s boast at home elephant” (line 20 -21); respectively called/fondly called...” (line 31 & 32). “Praise-named Laaye” (line 13 & 22); Ajanaku (line 11 & 19)

The repetitions are for emphasis and variation and for creation of music to delight the ear.

e) Simile

Examples abound in the poem such as: “huge as a hill” (line2); “tears a man like argument” (line 7); “looks back with difficulty like a person suffering from a sprained neck” (line 19); molar teeth as wide as palm-oil pits in Ijesaland” (line 29) and “whose teeth are like shafts” (line 31). These similes are used to enhance the effect of the hyperboles so as to underscore and exaggerate the qualities and size of the elephant.

f) Use of Praise-names

Examples of the use of praise names in the poem include “Ajanaku” (line 11 & 19); “Oriiribobo” (line 30); “Otiko” (line 32). This identifies the poem as a praise poem or panegyric.

g) Metaphor

There are many examples of this in the poem, e.g.: “a savings-basket full of money” (line 1) – economic significance; “porter’s knot” (line 20) describes the size of the head which is its “Burden” (line 21). “Others are: veritable water-jars” (line 27) – to emphasize the eyes; “primeval leper” (line 37) – refers to its toeless legs which resemble that of a leper; “Demon (line 3, 4, and 12) and “death” (line 22) – refer to the terror inspiring and dreadful nature of the elephant.

h) Hyperbole

There are many hyperboles in this poem. Examples are: “huge as a hill, even in a crouching position” (line 2); “who single-handed causes a tremor in a dense tropical forest” (line 14); “vagrant par-excellence” (line 28); “whose molar teeth are as wide as palm oil pits in Ijesaland” (line 29); “Lord of the forest” (line 30)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 2

- 1) Mention two praise names of the elephant.
- 2) Mention three expressions that imply the elephant’s size.
- 3) Mention 3 statements that emphasize the elephant’s destructiveness.
- 4) Mention two examples of alliteration in the poem
- 5) State two examples of repetition in the poem

6.0 Summary

This unit analysed the traditional oral poem: “Salute to the Elephant”. The issues discussed include:

- Background/ setting: this is in traditional Africa before the coming of the white man
- Subject matter/ theme: the poem praises the elephant for its physical size, economic potentials and its destructive abilities among others
- The language is that of the traditional Yoruba chant full of onomatopoeia and other sound devices but simple enough to be understood by the community as a whole
- Figurative expressions used include sound devices simile, metaphor and hyperbole. Repetition is also a major feature of most traditional poetry; it is given prominence in the poem
- Another cardinal feature of traditional praise poetry used in the poem is praise names .

7.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Look within your community and select a traditional oral poem and analyse it showing its type and the function it plays in your community.

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Module 4

Unit 4: INFLUENCES OF ORAL ART ON MODERN POETRY

This unit will introduce you to the influences which traditional oral poetry has had on modern African poetry as well as the phases that have characterized the development of modern African poetry.

Table Of Contents

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Influence of traditional poetry on modern African poetry
4.0	The phases of modern African Poetry
5.0	The pioneer phase
6.0	The negritude phase
7.0	The modernist phase
8.0	The revolutionary phase
9.0	Summary
10	Tutor marked Assignment
11	References

1.0 Introduction

Modern African poetry began during the colonial period, when writing and formal education came to Africa. With colonial education. Africans were able to read and write in the language of the colonialists, first beginning with the bible, and then other literary texts that were introduced by the White man. In the literary sphere, European poetry was a cardinal area of concentration. With the familiarity with written European poetry, Africans gradually, gained a

mastery over the colonizer's tongue as to be able to write their own poetry in the White man's language.

But it must also be stated that modern African poetry was “a child of two worlds”: the traditional oral poetry indigenous to Africa and the written poetic medium and language of the white colonizer. These two sources formed a confluence of influence that have shaped modern African poetry.

2.0 Objectives

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

1. explain the influence of traditional African oral poetry on modern African written poetry.
2. identify the different phases of development of modern African poetry.
3. place modern African poets into the era or phase that they belong.

3.0 Influences Of Traditional Oral Poetry On Modern African Poetry.

Africa's traditional oral poetry has greatly influenced the origin and development of modern written African poetry through the techniques used by modern poets. In other words, modern African poets have adopted and adapted the features and techniques of oral traditional poetry into the modern written medium. Some of these features include, repetition of words for emphasis, use of sound effects like onomatopoeia , alliteration and consonant sounds etc.

Other features include the conversational tone used of praise names and titles, salutation, direct address, transliteration, code-mixing (i.e. adoption of African words into the poem), use of African metaphors, use of proverbs, riddles and other wise sayings indigenous

to Africa, use of African myths and legends. Equally, most African poets adopt African thought patterns for which the Western written poetic medium was only a vehicle for expression. A good example of such an African poet who adopted all the features of the traditional oral poet is Okot p'Bitek in his *Song of Lawino*.

Since art in Africa is community based and not individualized, we see Lawino (the heroine of the long narrative poem) acting as the spokes person for her community (Africa), lamenting the passing away of sound African values. Three other poets whose ideas are wholly African include Wole Soyinka in his "Abiku" (based on African / Yoruba myth); Christopher Okigbo in his "Mother Idoto" sequence (also based on the indigenous "mammy water" myth); Kofi Awoonor in his "Songs of Sorrow" (which is a written version of the traditional Ewe oral dirge poetry). As we examine African poetry, these influences will become apparent.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) 1

Explain ways in which the traditional oral poetry has influenced the writing of modern African poetry.

4.0 The Phases Of Modern African Poetry.

Modern African poetry has developed in phases or eras. Each of these epochs have had an over-riding concern which has made poets in that era to write in conformity with the pressing issues or concern of their time. The phases of the development of modern African poetry can be collapsed into four, for purposes of convenience and ease. These are (a) the pioneer phase (b) the negritude phase and (c) the modernist/post-independence phase and (d) the revolutionary or Marxist / socialist phase. We shall examine each phase carefully.

5.0 The Pioneer Phase (1900-40's)

With colonization and the coming of colonial western education, the first crop of educated Africans began to interact with European books, beginning with the bible, and then moving on to the other texts which included literature texts. To improve their mastery, Africans started creating literary works of their own.

The earliest attempt in this direction was in the area of poetry. These early poets were known as “pioneers”. They were mostly of anglophone African background. They did not create any innovation in their poetry but were content to imitate biblical and victorian poetic conventions, on most occasions lifting the form and language of known poems to make them express their own ideas. The major issue of their time was the colonial burden. These pioneers used poetry to complain about the yoke of colonialism and to foresee the dawn of independence in the near-future. Therefore to these pioneers, poetry, served a political purpose – yearning for future liberation of Africa from the colonial yoke as well as an end to the denigration of the Black man.

Some of these early poets who were mainly from West Africa included Raphael Armattoe, Gladys Casely-Hayford, Dennis Osadebay, Michael Dei-Anang, among others. These pioneers paved the way for the modern poets because they had two over-riding concerns which subsequent poets could not ignore:

- (a) yearning for liberation of Africa from the colonial yoke, and
- (b) Love for and pride in Africa and her heritage.

But they were only poor wholesale imitators of European poetry conventions as Senanu and Vincent (9) sum up this phase as follows:

The Anglophone pioneer poets...
seemed satisfied with poorly imitating the English
victorian poets and the tradition of hymn writing.
Hidebound by the essentially Edwardian and
Georgian conventional forms of regular metre,

standard rhymes and hymnal rhythms... and ...
now sound archaic. There is no mistaking their
pride in Africa, their desire to use the medium of
poetry to express the virtues of Africanness...

With the above summation, we will move on to the next phase to see how the next generation improved on the achievements of the former.

6.0 The Negritude Phase (1940-60)

This phase began in the early 1940's in Paris, when a few black students came together to form what was known as the Negritude Movement. This movement was a cultural, philosophical and literary movement meant to uphold and reassert the integrity of the Black man in the face of unrelieved racial discrimination, segregation and oppression in Europe. Therefore, these black students felt an acute sense of abandonment and exile and this feeling in turn generated a sense of nostalgia for their African homeland. These pioneers and founders of this movement included the Martiniquans – Aime Cesaire and Leon Goutran Damas (blacks in the diaspora), and the African, Leopold Sedar Senghor. Others who joined the movement included David Diop and Birago Diop.

To these poets, European culture and civilization was decadent while hypocritical trying to deprive them of their own culture through the policy of “assimilation” a policy whereby blacks were to be trained in French culture and regarded as black French men and not Africans. While in France these young men experienced racial discrimination and segregation and therefore sought recourse to their black culture through the philosophy of negritude.

The aim of this movement was among other things to reassess and revive through literature, the cultural values, identity and authenticity of Africans, and to extol the ancestral glories and beauty of Africa, partly through a renunciation of what is Western (Senanu

and Vincent, 53). The ideals of negritude in poetry manifested in the use of traditional images, local symbols, rhythms of traditional oral poetry, and a bold declaration of and acceptance of those qualities that distinguish Africans from Europeans among others (Senanu & Vincent 53), and to say, “I am black and proud”.

It must be stated that this group were really poets who brought in innovations in the writing of poetry as evident in their use of many traditional African poetic features. Through their poetry, the negritude poets joined the fight against colonialism in Africa, and contributed to Africa’s independence. In their poetry, Africa was treated in mythic/idealistic terms as a woman, a lover and a mother.

7.0 The Modernist/Post-Independence Phase (1960-70)

After political independence had been achieved by almost two thirds of African nations in 1960, we were ushered into the post-independence era. The new ruling elite of Africans who took over from the colonizers behaved worse than the colonizers. General misrule and further oppression of the masses was the rule rather than the exception. Mismanagement, corruption and politically-motivated violence was the order of the day. Therefore, poets (like other writers) became disillusioned with the ruling class at their betrayal of the masses’ hope after independence. This situation resulted in poetry that was critical of government and society. Poets withdrew into themselves and wrote poetry with obscure meanings saddled with a private imagery and personal vision.

African myths legends and oral poetic devices were employed to create poetry that was beautiful but beyond the understanding of the ordinary man in the street. These poets were Anglophone poets who had been trained in the universities. They included Gabriel Okara, J. P. Clark, Wole Soyinka, Koffi Awoonor, Henry Barlow, Lenrie Peters,

Joseph Jariuki and the early Christopher Okigbo. Others include Mabel Segun and Micheal Echeruo.. Why their poetry was difficult to understand was that in addition to traditional African motifs, they undertook experimentation and were influenced by the foremost twentieth century European poets like Manley Hopkins, W.B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, among others.

8.0 The Revolutionary Phase (Middle 70's – 90's)

This was the generation that followed the modernists. They were not just satisfied with cataloguing the evils of post-colonial governance, but went ahead to suggest an alternative vision-the Marxist/ socialist system for societal salvation. They also approved of violence (where necessary) as a legitimate tool for bringing about change in society. They believed that if Marxism/socialism is adopted in Africa, society's problems will be over. For this reason, their main concern was the welfare of the deprived, oppressed and underprivileged masses. As a result, they saw themselves as spokesmen of the masses. In order to be able to play this role of advocates of the masses, these poets pioneered certain innovations as follows:

1. The language of poetry was simplified to the understanding of the ordinary man.
2. Every attempt was made to highlight the ills of the society and by so doing, educate the masses as to their rights.
3. Popular myths, legends and other traditional African poets' techniques were used to embellish their works.

The poets within this generation include Atukwei Okai, Kofi Anyidoho, Niyi Osundare, Okot p'Bitec, Funso Aiyejina, Femi Osofisan, Tanure Ojaide, Joe Ushie, Chris Egharevba, Kalu Uka, Olu Obafemi and many others.

As we study African poetry we shall notice that each poet writes according to the pressing issues of his time.

9.0 SUMMARY

The issues dealt with in this unit are as follows:

- Modern African poets have been influenced by their cultural background in the form of traditional African oral poetry.
- Modern African poetry has developed in phases or eras. Each era or phase had its over-riding concern.
- The pioneer phase had poets who made the earliest attempts at written poetry. There was a poetry of protest against colonialism, even though they were imitators of 19th century English poetry conventions. They were mainly Anglophones.
- The negritude phase had concern with cultural and racial reassertion and revival. They were mainly francophones living (in exile) in France during the second world war. They created the first true African poetry by combining traditional imagery and forms to European forms
- The modernist phase was made up of poets of the post independence era. Disillusionment and anger were the main characteristics of their poetry, as well as private imagery and vision and a conscious influence from modernist European poets like Pound, Yeats and Eliot.
- The revolutionary phase was concerned with not only criticizing but providing the society with an alternative vision in the Marxist/socialist mould. They were not only revolutionary in ideology but also in innovation. They took sides with the underprivileged and oppressed masses.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) II

Mention the phases of the development of modern African poetry and mention the concern of each phase, and at least one poet connected to each phase.

10 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Select one poem each that is representative of the major phases of modern African poetry and state what in each poem exemplifies the concern of its phase.

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Module 4

Unit 5: MODERN AFRICAN POETRY

1.0 Introduction

This unit will introduce you to a modern African poet of the modernist phase. You will be led through a step by step process of poetry appreciation using the poem under study.

Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Subject matter/ Themes
3.1	Language/Diction
3.2	Structure Tone/mood
3.3	Figurative Expressions
4.0	Summary
5.0	Tutor Marked Assignment
6.0	References

2.0 Objectives

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

- discuss the subject matter and themes of the poem
- Identify and discuss the effect of figurative language in the poem
- Say what is modernist in the poem

“Building the Nation”

- Henry Barlow.

Today I did my share

In building the nation.

I drove a Permanent Secretary

To an important urgent function

5. In fact to luncheon at the Vic.

The menu reflected its importance

Cold Bell beer with small talk,

Then fried chicken with niceties

Wine to fill the hollowness of the laughs

10. Ice-cream to cover the stereotyped jokes

Coffee to keep the PS awake on return journey

I drove the Permanent Secretary back.

He yawned many times in the back of the car

Then to keep awake, he suddenly asked,

15. Did you have any lunch friend?

I replied looking straight ahead

And secretly smiling at his belated concern

That I had not, but was slimming!

Upon which he said with a seriousness

20. That amused more than annoyed me,

Mwanachi, I too had none!

I attended to matters of state.

Highly delicate diplomatic duties you know,

And friend, it goes against my grain,

25. Causes me stomach ulcers and wind,

Ah, he continued, yawning again,

The pains we suffer in building the nation!

So the PS had ulcers too!

My ulcers I think are equally painful

30. Only they are caused by hunger

Not sumptuous lunches!

So two nation builders

Arrived home this evening

With terrible stomach pains

35. The result of building the nation –

Different ways.

3.0 Subject-Matter/Themes

This poem highlights the bane of all post-independence African nations today, which is the systematic and colossal wastage of natural and human resources by the ruling elite, in the name of building the nation. They engage in all kinds of questionable activities and projects, giving the public the impression that they are “building” or developing the nation. But in reality, they hide under these same projects and schemes to dupe, embezzle and siphon money from the national treasury, thereby ruining the nation. On the other hand, those who serve these government officials (and who really perform their duties to the letter) bodyguards, drivers, gardeners, cooks, etc., witness how these officers squander the nation’s wealth at lavish and wasteful parties which contribute nothing to further the growth of the nation’s economy. These “servants” alone are in the best position to know their master’s weaknesses and habits, and could expose these if forced to do so. The poem in this case is such an exposure; it is narrated from the perspective or point of view of the driver of a Permanent Secretary.

As already stated above, it is the idea of cheating the nation by the ruling elite while claiming to be building it that the poem is dealing with. In symbolic terms, the Permanent Secretary represents the wealthy ruling class, while the driver represents the poor underprivileged but oppressed masses. The main issues highlighted in the poem are:

- The mass deception of the nation by the ruling class.
- The pains the masses undergo in building the nation.
- The hypocrisy of the ruling elite in Africa.

The poem is built on an extended irony: the ruling elite are those who do little or are destroying the nation while claiming to be building it whereas the unmentioned working class and peasants are actually those moving the nation forward.

3.1 Language/Diction

The diction of this poem is very simple, made up of common everyday expressions. And this is in line with the fact that the commentator is not a highly educated person. But the simplicity of the language of the poem also emphasize the mockery and sarcasm in the poem against the ruling elite.

The words “hollowness” (line 9) and “stereotype” (line 10) all highlight the insincerity and falseness of the “laughs” and “jokes” respectively. Equally too, the PS’s concern for his driver’s welfare is said to be “belated” (line 17), which suggests hypocrisy. This hypocrisy is well-known for what it is, as is portrayed in the driver’s own sarcastic response.

3.2 Structure/Tone/Mood

This poem is made up of six stanzas of unequal lines and length. It is a free verse with no definite rhyme scheme. Exclamation marks are used in some lines to emphasize the irony and sarcasm implied in the statements involved. The dash used in the last but

one line creates an effective pause to emphasize the “different ways” in which both the Permanent Secretary and his driver are “building the nation”

Stanza One!

The driver reports on how he has just completed his assigned duty in the bid to build the nation by driving a Permanent Secretary to an important and urgent public function; luncheon at the Vic. The Vic could actually be the shortened form of a hotel, just like we say “Metro” for Metropolitan Hotel.

Stanza Two

The driver describes the variety and richness of the menu which includes cold beer, fried chicken, wine, ice-cream and coffee, all of which are consumed by the “honourables” with “hollow” laughs and “stereo typed” jokes.

Stanza Three

Over-consumption, it seems, makes the PS tired and sleepy on the return journey, “yawning several times in the back of the car,” trying to fight off sleep. In order to stay awake he asks whether the driver had had lunch, to which latter replies that he has not had because he is “slimming”.

Stanza Four

The PS, who may be stricken by conscience, immediately responds that he too has not had lunch, having been preoccupied with delicate matters of state. He goes on to lament the pains they (the educated ruling class) suffer in “building” the nation.

Stanza Five

The driver seems to be surprised that the PS has ulcers too, but concludes that they are caused by over-feeding, unlike his (the driver’s) which are caused by persistent hunger and undernourishment.

Stanza Six

The driver concludes the commentary that these two “nation-builders” return home “with terrible stomach pains” as a result of “building” the nation in their own different ways.

The tone is ironic and sarcastic, pretending to be respectfully stating the obvious but actually mocking the PS and his class. The mood is rather relaxed; the driver seems to enjoy the fact that he is taking a swipe at, and laughing at the PS behind his back.

3.3 Figurative Expressions

Alliteration: “cold bell beer” (line 7), “secretly smiling” (line 17); “delicate diplomatic duties” (line 23); goes against my grain” (line 24) – all emphasize the irony in the poem.

Irony

This poem is predominantly an exercise in irony. For example, the words “important” or “importance” are really the opposite of what they stand for. The sarcastic tone of the poem comes out in the way the so-called “important” issues are made to seem trivial. The beer goes with “small talk” (line 7), the wine fills the “hollowness of the laughs” (line 9), while the ice-cream covers the “stereotype jokes” (line 10). The driver makes the sarcastic response to the PS’s “belated” question as to whether he has lunch in the negative, saying that he was “slimming” (line 18). This elicits a strong hypocritical rejoinder from the PS that he too has not had lunch. In spite of the lavish food he has had, the PS claims only to have been attending “to matters of state” (line 22) which have resulted in ulcers for him (line 25). He goes on to lament the pains he suffers in building the nation when in actual fact he means “gains” he enjoys at the nation’s expense. The poem ends with these two nation-Builders – the PS and his driver arriving home each in terrible pains resulting from two opposite

conditions the PS suffers constipation from over-feeding, and the driver, starvation.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (SAE) I

What symbols are used in the poem?

4.0 Summary

In this unit we have attempted an analysis of Henry Barlow's "Building the Nation". The issues discussed include:

- Themes: the corruption and deception of the masses by the ruling elites
- The driver represents the masses while the permanent secretary represents the masses
- The language is simple because the narrator is a humble character; a driver
- The main figurative usages include irony which is used to mock the permanent secretary; alliteration which is used to show the amusement of the driver at the hypocrisy of the permanent secretary.

5.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Comment on the use of symbols and irony in the poem “ Building the Nation” and their effectiveness in bringing out the themes of the poem.

6.0 References and other Resources

Emenyonu, E. et al. (eds.) *Critical Theory and African Literature*.
Ibadan: Heinemann, 1987.

Jack, Abiola (1981). *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology*. London: Heinemann, 1981.

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(rev. ed.) London Longman , 2002.