

GROWING UP WITH POETRY SIMPLIFIED

TOPIC ONE : LOVE

POEM: LULLABY

POET: AKAN (GHANA)

Lullaby

Someone would like to have you for her child
but you are mine.
Someone would like to rear you on a costly mat
but you are mine.
Someone would like to place you on a camel blanket
but you are mine.
I have you to rear on a torn old mat.
Someone would like to have you as her child
but you are mine.

Akan (Ghana)

1. What is the poem about?

The poem is about the intense feelings of affection of a mother for her child. The poem emphasizes the mother's love and ownership of the child, and her desire to provide for and protect the child. It shows what length the mother has to go to protect and care for the child. In the lullaby, the mother directly communicates to her child even though she knows that the child may not understand what the mother is saying. This shows selfless and pure love parents have for their children.

2. What makes the poem appealing?

The poem is appealing because it is a beautiful and touching expression of a mother's love for her child. The language used is simple and easy to understand, making it accessible to a wide audience. The repetition of the phrase "but you are mine" emphasizes the mother's ownership and love for her child and makes the poem memorable.

3. Discuss the poetic devices employed by Akan in the poem Lullaby.

The poetic devices employed by Akan in the poem Lullaby include:

Repetition: The repetition of the phrase "but you are mine" is very effective in emphasizing the mother's ownership and love for her child. It creates a sense of security and comfort for the child.

Anaphora: Anaphora is a figure of speech that consists of repeating a sequence of words at the beginning of neighbouring clauses, phrases or sentences. The poem uses anaphora "Someone would like to" at the beginning of different lines to emphasize the mother's desire to protect and provide for her child.

Imagery: The use of visual imagery in "torn old mat" creates a sense of poverty and hardship, which emphasizes the mother's sacrifice for her child. The use of the metaphor "a costly mat" emphasizes the mother's desire to provide for her child. "the camel blanket" creates a sense of luxury and wealth, which emphasizes the mother's choice to prioritize her child over material possessions.

Contrast: The contrast between the torn old mat and the costly mat emphasizes the mother's sacrifice for her child. The mother is so attached to the child that she would not give her up for adoption or exchange the child for anything else.

Hyperbole/deliberate exaggeration: The use of hyperbole in "but you are mine" emphasizes the mother's ownership and love for her child.

4. Explore the themes in the poem.

The themes in the poem include love, ownership, sacrifice, and protection. The poem emphasizes the mother's love and affection for her child, her ownership and protection of the child, and her sacrifice for the child's well-being.

5. What is the intention of the poet?

The intention of the poet is to express the intense feelings of a mother's love for her child and to create a sense of security and comfort through the use of a lullaby.

6. Discuss;

a) the tone in the poem

The tone in the poem is soothing and calming, which is appropriate for a lullaby

b) mood

The mood is peaceful and serene, which creates a sense of security and comfort.

c) attitude of the persona towards the child.

The attitude of the persona towards the child is positive. It is one of love, ownership, and protection.

7. What lessons do you learn from the poem above.

The poem above teaches me;

The importance of love, ownership, sacrifice and protection in a mother-child relationship

The value of prioritisation of love over material possessions.

The soothing and calming effect of a lullaby in creating a sense of security and comfort.

The importance of expressing love and affection to our loved ones.

TOPIC TWO: IDENTITY POEM: I SPEAK FOR THE BUSH POET: EVERETT STANDA

I speak for the bush

When a friend sees me
He swells and pants like a frog
Because I talk the wisdom of the bush!
He says we from the bush
Do not understand civilized ways

For we tell our women
To keep the hem of their dresses
Below the knee.
We from the bush, my friend insists,
Do not know how to 'enjoy':
When we come to the civilized city,
Like nuns, we stay away from nightclubs
Where women belong to no men
And men belong to no women
And these civilized people
Quarrel and fight like hungry lions!

But, my friend, why do men
With crippled legs, lifeless eyes,
Wooden legs, empty stomachs
Wander about the streets
Of this civilized world?

Teach me, my friend, the trick,
So that my eyes may not
See those houses have no walls

But emptiness all around;
Show me the wax you use
To seal your ears
To stop hearing the cry of the hungry;
Teach me the new wisdom
Which tells men
To talk about money and not love,
When they meet women;
Tell your God to convert
Me to the faith of the indifferent,
The faith of those
Who will never listen until
They are shaken with blows.

I speak for the bush:
You speak for the civilized
Will you hear me?

Everett Standa (Kenya)

ABOUT THE POEM

The poem "I Speak for the Bush" by Everett Standa is a powerful and moving critique of modern urban life. The speaker, a person from the rural areas, challenges the reader to question the assumptions of the modern world and to consider the wisdom of the bush.

The speaker begins by describing the reaction of a friend who is disgusted by the speaker's traditional values. The speaker's friend sees the speaker as being out of touch with the modern world and insensitive to the needs of others.

However, the speaker argues that the modern world is itself insensitive and lacking in wisdom. The speaker points to the poverty, violence, and alienation that is so common in modern cities. The speaker also criticizes the materialism and greed of the modern world.

The speaker concludes by asking the reader to listen to the wisdom of the bush. The speaker suggests that the traditional values of the bush, such as community, family, and respect for nature, offer a more humane and fulfilling way of life.

The poem is a powerful reminder that the modern world is not perfect. The speaker challenges the reader to think critically about the values and assumptions of our society. The speaker also reminds us that there is wisdom to be found in the traditional cultures of the world.

1. What is the poem about?

The poem "I Speak for the Bush" is about the speaker's defense of the wisdom of the bush and his criticism of the civilized world. The speaker challenges the reader to question their own assumptions about what is civilized and what is not, and to appreciate the wisdom of different cultures and ways of life.

2. Who is the poet?

The poet of the poem "I Speak for the Bush" is Everett Standa from Kenya.

3. Who is the speaker in the poem?

The speaker in the poem is not explicitly identified, but it can be inferred that he is a person from the bush/village who is defending his way of life and criticizing the ways of the civilized world.

4. What makes the poem appealing?

The poem is appealing because it presents a contrast between the wisdom of the bush and the perceived ignorance of the civilized world. It also challenges the reader to question their own assumptions about what is civilized and what is not.

5. Comment on;

a) tone

The tone of the poem is defiant and challenging. The speaker is challenging the reader to question their own assumptions and to appreciate the wisdom of different cultures.

b) mood

The mood of the poem is critical and questioning. The speaker is critical of the ways of the civilized world and is questioning the assumptions of the reader.

c) attitude towards the persona's friend

The attitude towards the persona's friend is dismissive of his friend's criticisms of the bush and the speaker's way of life. The speaker challenges his friend's assumptions about what is civilized and what is not.

6. Discuss the themes in the poem.

The poem explores a number of themes, including:

The clash between traditional and modern values: The speaker is from the rural areas and has traditional values, while his friend is from the city and has modern values. The two friends clash over their different values, and the speaker criticizes the city for its materialism and greed.

The poverty and violence of modern cities: The speaker describes the poverty and violence that he sees in the city. He is shocked by the sight of people with crippled legs, lifeless eyes, and empty stomachs.

The materialism and greed of the modern world: The speaker criticizes the materialism and greed of the modern world. He says that people are more concerned with money than with love and compassion.

The importance of community, family, and respect for nature: The speaker emphasizes the importance of community, family, and respect for nature. He believes that these values are essential for a good life.

The need to question the assumptions of the modern world: The speaker challenges the reader to question the assumptions of the modern world. He asks the reader to think about the problems of the modern world and to consider how we can create a better future.

7. Comment on the effective use of poetic devices in the poem

Simile: "Like nuns, we stay away from nightclubs" is a simile used to describe the speaker's way of life in the bush. The simile suggests that the speaker and his people are like nuns in their dedication to their way of life and their avoidance of the temptations of the civilized world. This simile is effective in creating a clear image of the speaker's way of life. "He swells and pants like a frog" is a simile used to describe the friend's reaction to the speaker's wisdom. The simile suggests that the friend is overwhelmed by the speaker's knowledge and is struggling to keep up. This simile is effective in creating a vivid image of the friend's reaction.

Rhetorical question: "Show me the wax you use to seal your ears" is a rhetorical question used to challenge the friend's assumptions about the bush and the speaker's way of life. The question suggests that the friend is willfully ignoring the suffering of others and is not willing to listen to the speaker's message. This rhetorical question is effective in challenging the reader to question their own assumptions.

Repetition: "I speak for the bush" is a repetition used throughout the poem to emphasize the speaker's message and to create a sense of unity among the people of the bush. This repetition is effective in creating a clear message and in emphasizing the importance of the bush.

Alliteration: "When we come to the civilized city" is an example of alliteration used to create a rhythmic structure in the poem. This alliteration is effective in creating a sense of flow and in emphasizing the contrast between the bush and the civilized world.

Personification: "Tell your God to convert me to the faith of the indifferent" is an example of personification used to give human qualities to the concept of God. This personification is effective in creating a sense of urgency and in emphasizing the speaker's message.

Imagery (Visual): "With crippled legs, lifeless eyes, wooden legs, empty stomachs" is an example of imagery used to create a vivid picture of the suffering of people in the civilized world. This imagery is effective in creating a sense of empathy and in emphasizing the contrast between the bush and the civilized world.

Hyperbole: "Quarrel and fight like hungry lions!" is an example of hyperbole used to exaggerate the behavior of people in the civilized world. This hyperbole is effective in creating a sense of contrast between the two worlds.

Irony: "Teach me the new wisdom which tells men to talk about money and not love, when they meet women" is an example of irony used to criticize the values of the civilized world. This irony is effective in creating a sense of contrast and in emphasizing the speaker's message.

Symbolism: "The wax you use to seal your ears" is an example of symbolism used to represent the friend's willful ignorance. This symbolism is effective in creating a clear image of the friend's behavior. The bush also symbolises the old culture while the city symbolises the modern culture.

8. What is the intention of the writer?

The intention of the writer is to challenge the reader's assumptions about what is civilized and what is not, and to defend the wisdom of the bush.

9. What lessons do you learn from the poem?

The poem conveys several messages, including:

The modern world is not perfect.

We should question the assumptions of the modern world.

Traditional cultures have much to offer us.

Community, family, and respect for nature are important values.

10. What feelings does the poem evoke in you?

The poem evokes a range of feelings, including anger, sadness, compassion, and hope. The poem is a powerful reminder of the problems of the modern world, but it also offers a message of hope for a better future.

11. What does the speaker dislike about the life of his friend.

The speaker dislikes the fact that his friend criticizes the bush and the speaker's way of life. The friend believes that people from the bush are backward and primitive because they tell their women to keep the hem of their dresses below the knee. The speaker challenges his friend's assumptions about what is civilized and what is not.

12. What is the intention of the writer?

The writer's intention is to critique modern urban life and to celebrate the traditional values of the bush. The writer also wants to challenge the reader to question the assumptions of the modern world.

13. What is the relevance of the poem to the society(ugandan setting)?

The poem is still relevant to Ugandan society today. Uganda is a rapidly developing country, and many Ugandans are moving to cities in search of a better life. However, cities can also be places of poverty, violence, and alienation.

The poem reminds us that we should not be seduced by the superficiality and materialism of the city. We should also remember the importance of traditional values such as community, family, and respect for nature.

In addition, the poem is a reminder of the need to question the assumptions of the modern world. We should not simply accept the status quo. We should be critical and think about how we can create a better future for ourselves and for generations to come.

TOPIC THREE: DEATH AND ANCESTORS

POEM: DEATH, BE NOT PROUD

POET: JOHN DONNE

Death, be not proud

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.
Questions.

1. What is the poem about?

The poem "Death, be not proud" is about the speaker confronting Death, personified as an enemy, and arguing that it is powerless because it acts merely as a "short sleep" between earthly living and the eternal afterlife.

The poem looks at life's biggest question of death. Though some look at death as something that should be dreaded and feared, the persona looks at it, not with fear but scorn.

2. Who is the poet of the poem, "Death, be not Proud"

The poet is John Donne, an English poet and Christian cleric who lived from 1572 to 1631.

3. Who is the speaker in the poem?

The speaker in the poem is not explicitly identified, however, he is a religious person who believes in life after death and believes that death is a short sleep between earthly living and eternal life. He believes that once we die, we shall resurrect and death will not have power over us anymore.

4. What makes the poem appealing?

The poem is appealing because of its confident tone and direct confrontation of Death, which provides an ironic sense of comfort to readers by implicitly suggesting that Death is not to be feared at all, but that in the end, Death will be overcome by something even greater. **(More devices that make the poem more appealing is discussed later)**

5. Comment on

a) Tone

The tone of the poem is confident and confrontational. The persona confidently confronts death and shows that unlike many people, he is not of death.

b) Mood

The mood of the poem is ironic and comforting.

c) Attitude

The attitude is positive. It is one of defiance and fearlessness in the face of Death. He believes that death will finally be defeated and will have no power over man.

6. What is the intention of the poet?

The intention of the poet is to provide comfort and reassurance to people that death is powerless and should not be feared. The poem also reflects on important religious beliefs in eternal afterlife.

7. Comment on the effective use of poetic devices.

John Donne's poem "Death be not Proud" makes use of various poetic devices to convey its message. Some of these devices include:

Personification: Death is personified throughout the poem, given human qualities such as pride and arrogance.

Metaphor: The poem makes use of several metaphors, such as comparing Death to a haughty person and to a slave to fate.

Apostrophe: The speaker addresses Death directly, even though Death cannot respond.

Paradox: The poem contains paradoxical statements, such as "Death, thou shalt die," which emphasizes the speaker's belief that Death is powerless.

Rhyme scheme: The poem follows a strict rhyme scheme of ABBAABBACDCDEE, which adds to its musicality and memorability.

Alliteration: The poem makes use of alliteration, such as in the phrase "for those whom thou think'st..." in line 3, "Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow" in line 6. This makes the poem musical and memorable.

Overall, Donne's use of these poetic devices helps to make the poem more appealing and memorable, while also conveying its message about the nature of Death and the afterlife.

8. What lessons do you learn from the poem?

Lessons learned from the poem "Death Be not Proud" by John Donne are:

Death is not to be feared because it is merely a temporary state between earthly living and the eternal afterlife.

Death is not all-powerful, but rather a slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men.

The poem provides comfort and reassurance to readers by arguing that Death is powerless and should not be feared.

Death will be overcome by something even greater.

TOPIC FOUR: VILLAGE LIFE

POEM: THE LAZY MAN

POET: YORUBA (NIGERIA)

THE LAZY MAN

When the cock crows
The lazy man smacks his lips and says;
So it is daybreak again, is it?
And before he turns over heavily,
Before he even stretches himself,
Before he even yawns -
The farmer has reached the farm,
The water carriers arrive at the river,
The spinners are spinning their cotton,
The weaver works on his cloth,
And the fire blazes in the blacksmith's hut.

The lazy man knows where the soup is sweet
He goes from house to house.

If there is no sacrifice today,
His breastbone will stick out.

But when he sees the free yam,
He starts to unbutton his shirt,
He moves closer to the celebrant.

Yet his troubles are not few
When his wives reach puberty,
Rich men will help him to marry them.

Yoruba (Nigeria)

INTRODUCTION

This is a poem from Yoruba culture in Nigeria that criticises the behaviour of some members of the society that seem to sleep too much than work. Finally they end up becoming poor and can hardly afford a living as a result they end up being burden to others as they keep begging from others' houses. Additionally, the poet shows that in this society the betrothal for marriage is done at a young age and children wait until puberty to officialise the marriage. In the traditional set up those days, one was betrothed to his future wives at young age and they could only get married when both a man and a woman mature. So the lazy man could not afford dowry payment and either had to be helped or let go the women to be married by men of/with honour/wealth.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

LAZINESS/IRRESPONSIBILITY.

The lazy man in this poem is surely very lazy. While other wake up early in the morning to engage in different economic activities like farming, spinning cotton, weaving and iron working he sleeps till daylight. His laziness becomes more evident when he gets angry at the time of the day when he notices that it is daybreak since he doesn't want to wake up. He complains "so it is daylight again, is it?" When he notices

that it is daybreak he does not wake up but rather he turns over heavily, stretches himself, yawns and then goes on with sleeping. Laziness is one of the major causes of poverty to most people.

RESPONSIBILITY

The poem shows that other people in the same society are very hardworking. They wake up early and get engaged in different economic and domestic activities such as; farming, spinning cotton, weaving cloths, iron working and fetching water. This is a spirit that has to be encouraged in our society as it makes people get rid of poverty. He says:

**The farmer has reached the farm,
The watercarriers arrive at the river,
The spinners are spinning their cotton,
The weaver works on his cloth,
And the fire blazes in the blacksmith's hut.**

TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE (BETROTHAL)

In the traditional set up those days in some African societies, one was betrothed to his future wives at young age and they could only get married when both the man and the woman mature. So the lazy man could not afford paying the bride price and either had to be helped by men with wealth or let go the women to be married by others. As the persona says;

Yet his troubles are not few
When his wives reach puberty,
Rich men will help him to marry them.

The 'wives' here is used to mean 'betrothed to'. By the time they mature (in an African set up puberty is regarded as a sign of maturity) and readiness for marriage. But since the man is lazy, he will not have the required dowry payment for his betrothed wives so, he will request the rich to assist him or he may give up and leave his wives to get married to other rich men.

POVERTY

The poet shows that one of the major causes of poverty in the society is laziness. This man is so poor because while other hardworking people rise up early in the morning and start engaging in different social economic activities he spends the whole morning in bed. When he finally wakes up he starts calling from house to house looking for free yam. As a result the poet suggests that he won't be able to marry the girls he has betrothed but rich people will marry them for him.

When his wives reach puberty,
Rich men will help him to marry them.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Ø What is the poem about?

The poem is about a lazy man who doesn't like to work. He wakes up late and begins going house to house begging for soup or looks for a house with sacrifice where he can get free yam. Because of his laziness he won't be able to marry the wives betrothed to him, as a result rich men will marry them for him.

Ø What the type of the poem is this?

It is a freeverse/modern poem of the Lyric type as it expresses the strong feelings of sadness by the poet towards lazy people in the society who end up becoming troublesome and burdens to others.

Ø What is the tone and mood of the poem?

The tone is unhappy and sad because the persona is not pleased with the behaviour of the lazy man who doesn't want to work but keeps on going to other people's houses looking for free food.

Ø Who is the persona? How do you know?

The persona might be a neighbour. This is revealed from stanza one where he seems to know the lazy man's behaviour from his bedroom.

Ø What is the tone and mood of the poem?

The tone is disappointed and unhappy about the behaviour of the lazy man. This creates a sad mood towards the man who dislikes working but keeps on begging food from house to house.

Ø Comment on the language use

The language used is simple and easy to understand and get the intention of the poet. The poet has made good choice of vocabulary that carries the message across. Words like farmer, water carrier, spinner, weaver and blacksmith represent hardworking people while lazy man suggest the lazy man who dislikes working. The poet has also made use of poetic licence to achieve a particular poetic effect. The fact that the lazy man does not care about his grammar shows that he is not serious about life itself or that he comes from a low class that speaks non -standard English and uses the general tag question is it? In a place where isn't it? was supposed to be used. So it is daybreak again, is it?

Ø The figures of speech

ü Consonance

The lazy man smacks his lips and says

ü Alliteration

When the cock crows

ü Anaphora

And before he turns over heavily,
Before he even stretches himself,
Before he even yawns

ü Parallelism

The farmer has reached the farm,
The water carriers arrive at the river,
The spinners are spinning their cotton,
The weaver works on his cloth,
And the fire blazes in the blacksmith

MESSAGES

- Ø We should be hard working to alleviate poverty in our families and the society at large
- Ø Laziness is a bad behaviour that should be discouraged.
- Ø Some traditional customs like early childhood betrothal are outdated. They should be discouraged.

RELEVANCE

- Ø There are lazy people everywhere. These believe that someone somewhere has a duty to help them and they have made themselves permanent beggars.
- Ø Hardworking people can also be found in our societies. These ones know that they are the authors of their own destiny. So they work up early and begin chasing their dreams.
- Ø There are some societies that are still practising early childhood betrothal. The Maasai of Northern Tanzania are reported to practise the same.

TOPIC FIVE: SEPERATION
POEM: FOOTPATH
POET: STELLA NGATHO (Uganda)

Footpath

Path – let ... Leaving home, leading out
Return my mother to me.
The sun is sinking and darkness coming,
Hens and cocks are already inside and babies drowsing,
Return my mother to me.
We do not have firewood and I have not seen the lantern,
There is no more food and the water has run out
Path – let me pray, you return my mother to me.
Path of the small hills, path of the small stones
Path of slipperiness, path of the mud
Return my mother to me.
Path of papyrus, path of the rivers
Path of small forests, path of reeds
Return my mother to me
Path, I implore you, return my mother to me
Path of the crossways, path that branches off,
Path of the stringing shrubs, path of the bridge
Return my mother to me
Path of the open, path of the valley
Path of the steep climb, path of the downward slope
Return my mother to me.
Children are drowsing about to sleep,
Darkness is coming and there is no firewood,
And I have not found the lantern;
Return my mother to me.

~ Stella Ngatho.

QUESTIONS

(a) Who is the persona in this poem? (2 marks)

The persona is a child – perhaps an older child – whose mother is away. The child is longing for her return. ‘Return my mother to me’.

(b) Identify and explain the effectiveness of any two stylistic devices. (6 marks)

Repetition – ‘Path’ is repeated severally, to create the tone of the poem/ emphasis on the cause of the mother’s absence.

Personification – the paths are personified; the speaker begs them to return the mother.

Apostrophe – Path ... Return my mother to me...- to show the persona’s desperate longing for the mother

Metaphor- path of papyrus... path of small hills etc.-shows the various places or challenges the persona or mother may have faced/ indicates the various paths the mother could have taken as she went out

(Expect any two well illustrated styles + the effectiveness 3marks for each. No mark for lack of one of these).

(c) What is the tone of the poem? (2 marks)

The poem has a pleading / imploring / beseeching tone. ‘..Path, I implore you, return my mother to me.

(d) What is the mood of the poem? (2 marks)

The poem is in a sad mood. One feels sad at the concern and despair of the child who pleads for the mother’s return.

(e) Comment on the title of the poem. (2 marks)

The title is appropriate as it leads us to the events in the poem. The persona addresses the footpath requesting it to return the mother.

(f) With illustrations, briefly state three problems that the persona is facing. (3 marks)

No food -There is no more food

No water- and

the water has run out No firewood -We do not have firewood

Missing the mother -Return my mother to me

(g) Describe the setting of this poem. (3 marks)

The poem is set in a home stead and is in the evening. 'The sun is sinking and darkness coming,'/ 'Hens and cocks are already inside and babies drowsing,' (3 marks)

TOPIC SIX: POWER
POEM: BUILDING THE NATION
POET: HENRY BARLOW
BUILDING THE NATION.

BUILDING THE NATION

Today I did my share In building the nation.
I drove the permanent secretary
To an important urgent function
In fact to a 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
Ice-cream to cover the stereotype 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,
Did you have any lunch friend?
I replied looking straight ahead
And secretly smiling at his belated concern
That I had not, but was sliming!

Upon which he said with a seriousness
That amused more than annoyed me,
Mwananchi, I too had none!
I attended to matters of state.
Highly delicate diplomatic duties you know,
And friend, it goes against my grain,
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 Only they are caused by hunger,
No sumptuous lunches!

So two nation builders
Arrived home this evening
With terrible stomach pains
The result of building the nation –
-Different ways.

By Christopher H. M. Barlow (Uganda)

Introduction

Building the nation is a poem by a Ugandan poet Christopher Henry Muwanga Barlow that principally explores the lifestyle of African bourgeoisie who came to power after colonialism and ideally, simply replaced the coloniser. There is a need for African leaders to create hope for those they lead but they are caught up in the same evil lifestyle of their colonial predecessors. The aspects of nation building which were supposed to dominate public and political policies have been thrust to the periphery of human thought. In a way, the persona calls for a reaction towards the ruling class's hypocritical nation building where they pretend to have welfare of the masses at heart while in real sense they just want to capitalize on their efforts.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

DISILLUSIONMENT/DISAPPOINTMENT

The kind of disillusionment portrayed in the poem is that which Africans have towards their leaders who have adopted the very tenets of the colonisers from whom they got power. Essentially, the idea of nation building turns out to be a very complicated phenomenon where those who are central to the process have their efforts wasted by leaders who can implement policies.

The persona shows more disillusionment by stating that at the meeting “the menu reflected its importance/ Cold Bell beer with small talks/ Then fried chicken with niceties/ wine.../ ice cream .../coffee... (lines 6-11). This reflects the triviality of a meeting where serious issues were supposed to be discussed.

LIES AND HYPOCRISY.

This has been a vital tool for most politicians when they want to win more votes from the ignorant masses. They make heaps of lies on the optimistic crowds but eventually everything turns out only a nightmare. The PS lies to the driver that he did not have any meal just as did the driver yet you and I know that he had a very heavy and sumptuous lunch. He even shows his hypocrisy more clearly when he asks this question. “then to keep awake he suddenly asked/Did you have any lunch friend?”. It is rather sad to note that he does not ask whether the driver has eaten anything because he is concerned about his welfare, but it is simply to keep himself awake throughout the journey.

CLASSES/MARGINALIZATION

In a broader way the poem thoroughly depicts two classes in one society. There is high class and lower class. Both of them are supposed to mutually benefit from the national resources, yet the high class that is represented by the PS exploits the lower class that more often than not comprises those who are involved in the modes of production. For example the chauffeur drives the PS to the place where there is feasting (eating) while the driver does not take part in the feasting. The persona himself comes from the marginalized class. The role of both classes is building the nation, but the high class has just become the parasites who feed on the national resources at the expense of the masses. They are not building the nation at all but building their stomachs.

EXPLOITATION

Furthermore in the poem, the two parties represent the two strands of nation builders that are in most African states. On one side there are those represented by the driver (the local masses) while on the other hand we have high class being represented by the PS. The latter is very busy squandering the public funds which can be used to rebuild the nations. The masses are the hardworking people whose benevolence is easily taken for granted by those in power. There are those who eat extravagantly and those who work on empty stomachs. The persona knows about this exploitation done by African leaders and informs his fellow countrymen what is actually happening.

AWARENESS

The poem paints a picture of awareness that those who are oppressed, exploited and marginalised are now aware of what is happening. This is an important step as long as the liberation of the oppressed is concerned. It is also a significant step if the nation is to realise sustainable development where the national resources will be mutually utilized for the benefit of not only the ruling class but the masses as well.

If we examine the end of the poem, it seems to induce a kind of anger that should lead to vengeance (revenge). The persona is appealing to the oppressed to rise to the occasion and deal with the ruling class.

The fact that “two nation builders/ arrived home this evening/with terrible stomach pain/the result of building the nation/different ways” is more like an appeal to emotions where the persona seeks actions from the masses.

MISUSE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES.

The persona shows that the PS goes to the meeting where important matters were supposed to be discussed. Instead the PS meets his friends and all they do is eating, cracking jokes and laughing. If we need to do well at nation building we must respect everything that belongs to the state. We must not misuse the public funds, the working hours and the state properties like cars for our own interests. The PS goes to feast using

the government car, and after the feast he is driven back home. So he wastes not only the public resources but also the working hours.

REPERCUSSION OF OUR LIFESTYLE.

Nevertheless, the persona seems to have hopes in some facts that both the African bourgeoisie and the proletariats have their points of vulnerability. They both suffer in one way or another because of their own actions and lifestyles. For instance the driver becomes sick because of lack of food while the PS becomes sick for eating too much.

So Ps has ulcers too!

My ulcers I think are equally painful

Only they are caused by hunger,

No sumptuous lunches!

MESSAGES/LESSONS

Ø If we wish to do well in nation building we must as public servants respect everything that belongs to the state; money, property, working hours etc.

Ø If the high class is not careful with nation building one day the oppressed may revolt.

Ø Hypocrisy, classes, and exploitation should be discouraged.

Ø Awareness is very important in the liberation of the oppressed.

Ø All human beings have their points of vulnerability. They both suffer in one way or another because of their own actions and lifestyles

RELEVANCE

Ø The poem is relevant in our country in a number of ways.

Ø Today we have a lot of leaders who misuse the public funds while those who are involved in the means of production live in dire poverty.

Ø Hypocrisy, Classes, exploitation and marginalization are also major issues in our society.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

a. What is the poem about?

The poem is about the concept of nation building as taken by African bourgeoisie class who came to power after colonialism. The poet shows that independence was just the change in colour but the leaders adopted the very tenets of their predecessors.

b. Who is the persona? How do you know?

The persona is a driver (chauffeur) who represents the low class.

In line 3 he says “I drove the permanent secretary”

c. Suggest some literary and poetic devices used in the poem.

i. Alliteration

Highly delicate diplomatic duties..

And secretly smiling...

Cold Bell beer

ii. Borrowing/code mixing

Mwananchi, I too had none!

iii. Onomatopoeia

Ah, he continued yawning again.

This is the sound of yawning

iv. Satire

To an important urgent function

In fact to a luncheon at the Vic.

Lunch is called an important urgent function, this is very satirical

v. **Irony.**

The title of the poem 'Building the Nation' is ironical because the guys in the poem were not building the nation.

d. **Why did the PS ask the question "Did you have any lunch friend?"**

It was just to keep himself awake throughout the journey and not because he is concerned about the welfare of the driver.

e. **What is the tone and mood of the poem?**

The tone is both sad and ironical/satirical and the mood is angry and hatred towards the ruling class.

f. **What type of the poem is this?**

It is a lyric poem as it expresses the strong feelings of the chauffeur but it can also be a narrative poem as it tells the story about the PS.

g. **The poet says in the last stanza 'so two nation builders arrived home this evening' were the two people building the nation?**

Not really. The poet uses this as a satire to criticise the idea that people always claim to build the nation but they end up building their stomachs.

TOPIC SEVEN: FREEDOM
POEM: A FREEDOM SONG
POET: MARJORIE OLUDHE MACGOYE (KENYA)

A Freedom Song

Atieno washes dishes,
Atieno plucks the chicken,
Atieno gets up early, ooh!
Beds her sucks down in the kitchen,
Atieno eight years old,
Atieno yo.

Since she's my sister's child
Atieno needs no pay, ooh!
While she works my wife can sit
(Sewing each sunny day,)
With her earning I support
Atieno yo.

Atieno's sly and jealous
Bad example to the kids, ooh!
Since she minds them, like a school girl,
Wants their dresses, shoes and beads.
(Atieno ten years old,)
Atieno yo.

Now my wife has gone to study
Atieno's less free,
Don't I feed her, school my own ones,
Pay the party, union fee
(All for progress?)
Aren't you grateful, Atieno yo?

Visitors need much attention,
Specially when I work nights.
That girl stays too long at market
(Who will teach her what is right?)
Atieno rising fourteen,
Atieno yo.

Atieno's had a baby
So we know that she is bad
Fifty-fifty it may live
To repeat the life she had, ooh!
Ending in (post partum)
Bleeding, Atieno yo.

Atieno's soon replaced
Meat and sugar more than all
She ate in such a narrow life
Were (lavished in her funeral)
Atieno's gone to glory
Atieno yo.

ABOUT THE POEM

Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's poem "A Freedom Song" is a powerful and moving indictment of the exploitation and oppression of young girls in African society. The poem tells the story of Atieno, a young girl who is forced to work as a domestic slave for her uncle and his family. She is denied an education and subjected to physical and emotional abuse. Atieno's story is representative of the many young girls in Africa who are deprived of their basic rights and freedoms.

The poem begins with the image of Atieno washing dishes, a task that she is forced to perform on a daily basis. The poem then goes on to describe the many other chores that Atieno is responsible for, such as plucking chickens, making beds, and minding the children. Atieno's uncle exploits her labor and refuses to pay her. He also denies her the opportunity to go to school.

As Atieno grows older, she becomes increasingly isolated and vulnerable. She is not allowed to have friends and is constantly monitored by her uncle and his family. Atieno's lack of education and social support make her easy prey for predators. In the poem, Atieno is impregnated at a young age and dies in childbirth due to post-partum bleeding.

The poem's title, "A Freedom Song," is ironic. There is no freedom for Atieno or the many other young girls who are exploited and oppressed in African society. The poem is a call to action, urging readers to fight for the rights of young girls and to end their exploitation.

The final lines of the poem, "Atieno's gone to glory / Atieno yo," are both poignant and hopeful. They suggest that Atieno is finally free from the suffering that she endured in her life. The repetition of her name at the end of the poem reinforces her identity and her humanity.

"A Freedom Song" is a powerful and moving poem that gives a voice to the voiceless. It is a reminder that we must all work to create a world where all children are free to reach their full potential.

QUESTIONS

1. Who is the persona?

The persona of the poem is Atieno's uncle. He is the one who exploits her labor and denies her basic rights. The poem is written from his perspective, which allows the reader to see the situation through his eyes. However, the poet uses irony and satire to expose the uncle's hypocrisy and cruelty.

2. Discuss the themes in the poem.

Child exploitation and abuse: The poem tells the story of Atieno, a young girl who is exploited and abused by her uncle. She is forced to work long hours without pay, and she is denied an education. The poem highlights the physical and emotional abuse that Atieno suffers.

Gender inequality: The poem also explores the theme of gender inequality. Atieno is discriminated against because of her gender. She is not allowed to go to school, and she is forced to work as a domestic slave. The poem shows how gender inequality contributes to the exploitation and abuse of young girls.

Lack of education: The poem also highlights the importance of education. Atieno is denied an education, which makes her more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The poem shows how education can empower young girls and help them to break the cycle of poverty and exploitation.

Poverty: The poem also explores the theme of poverty. Atieno's family is poor, and this makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The poem shows how poverty can lead to child exploitation and abuse.

Social injustice: The poem also explores the theme of social injustice. Atieno is a victim of social injustice because she is denied her basic rights and freedoms. The poem shows how social injustice can lead to the exploitation and abuse of young girls.

Death: The poem also explores the theme of death. Atieno dies in childbirth due to post-partum bleeding. Her death is a reminder of the high cost of child exploitation and abuse.

The poem explores a number of themes, including:

3. Comment on the

Tone

The tone of the poem is ironic and satirical. The speaker pretends to be sympathetic to Atieno, but his words are full of sarcasm and contempt.

Mood

The mood of the poem is dark and oppressive. The poet uses imagery and language to create a sense of hopelessness and despair.

Attitude

The speaker's attitude towards Atieno is condescending and dismissive. He sees her as a burden and a nuisance, not as a human being.

4. What feelings does the poem evoke in you?

The poem evokes a range of feelings in the reader, including anger, sadness, and compassion. The reader is likely to feel angry at the speaker's exploitation and abuse of Atieno. They may also feel sadness for Atieno's plight and for the many other young girls who are exploited in similar ways. Finally, the reader may feel compassion for Atieno and her family.

5. Comment on the effective use of poetic devices/figures of speech.

Imagery: The poet uses vivid imagery to create a sense of place and atmosphere. For example, she describes the "kitchen" where Atieno works as a place of "narrow life" and "post partum bleeding." This imagery helps to create a sense of darkness and despair in the poem.

Repetition: The poet uses repetition to emphasize certain words and phrases, such as "Atieno yo" and "fifty-fifty it may live." This repetition helps to create a sense of rhythm and urgency in the poem.

Irony: The poet uses irony to expose the speaker's hypocrisy and cruelty. For example, the speaker claims to be "grateful" to Atieno for her work, but he clearly exploits her and denies her basic rights. This irony helps to create a sense of satire in the poem.

Satire: The poet uses satire to criticize the social and economic conditions that contribute to child exploitation and abuse. For example, she mocks the speaker's claim that he is paying the "party" and "union fee" for "progress." This satire helps to expose the absurdity of the speaker's position.

6. What is the intention of the writer?

The poet's intention is to raise awareness of the issue of child exploitation and abuse. She wants to challenge the reader to think about the social and economic conditions that contribute to this problem, and to take action to create a more just and equitable society.

7. Discuss the messages in the poem.

The poem conveys a number of important messages/lessons, including:

Child exploitation and abuse is a serious problem that must be addressed.

Gender inequality is a major contributing factor to child exploitation and abuse.

Education is essential for breaking the cycle of poverty and exploitation.

We all have a responsibility to protect children from exploitation and abuse.

8. What is the relevance of the poem to the society(ugandan setting)?

The poem is highly relevant to Ugandan society. Child exploitation and abuse is a serious problem in Uganda, and girls are disproportionately affected. The poem highlights the factors that contribute to child exploitation and abuse, such as poverty, lack of education, and gender inequality. It also calls for action to address these issues and to protect children from exploitation and abuse.

In addition to the specific messages mentioned above, the poem also has a broader message about the importance of social justice and human rights. The poet reminds us that all children, regardless of their gender, social class, or background, deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.