

THE MOON ALSO SETS BY OSI OGBU

SIMPLE CAST INTO THE NOVEL.

The Moon Also Sets is an interesting story set in a typical African village of Isiakpu in Nigeria and the modern University of Embakassi. The novel explores an interesting topic of conflict between traditionalist and modernists. The expectations from the two sides are what give life to the plot of the novel. It follows the lives of two women, mother and daughter, i.e Mama Oby and her daughter Oby.

Mama Oby, is a widow and at the same time a devoted catholic. Her whole mindset is on how her daughter Oby should grow into a meaningful child amidst a male dominated society of Isiakpu. All she wishes for her daughter is to attain education, and not only education but higher education in a sense. Mama Oby is a strong willed woman, generous and virtuous, but her generosity and strong will are strongly opposed by her brother-in-law, Pa Okolo. He tries so hard to make life unbearable for the widow, Mama Oby, but all his plans hit a dead end due to Mama Oby's visionary mindset. Pa Okolo is described as a cowardly bully who uses others to do his filthy acts.

Much as she is not educated at all, Mama Oby knows that the education of her daughter, will elevate the family to a privileged status. As a widow in a male dominated society of Isiakpu, she knows very well the difficulties women experience at the hands of their male counterparts. We learn that Oby, Mama Oby's daughter is an auxiliary or local teacher in one of the schools in her community, her dream however is to study up to university. The story continues to unfold as Oby is admitted to University, her dream and her mothers' have been fulfilled. However, Oby and her mother must struggle through thin and wide to transcend the difficulties paused by male chauvinism in traditional Isiakpu and modern Embakassi University.

Oby joins University at last, but when she joins, Oby hopes that life would be different at campus since people will be educated and living in a more civilized society than traditional and conservative Isiakpu. However, what Oby finds at University is a story for another day. Oby must take on a new life, she comes at a point where she must make decisions on her own than before where she relied on her mother's decisions. She is her key decision maker. When she looks at the life at campus vis a vis her expectations, Oby concludes that "the jungle is full of traps. You skip one; you are caught in the other. You can never be immunized against the attacks. You have to hop, skip and jump"

Oby, has now fully understood the meaning of a male dominated society. She must however struggle to assert herself in that society. She is now at university where modernity and trend rules the minds of the occupants, Oby too must sway to the rhythms of the campus music. Without taking long to watch, Oby finds herself a heart soother. The handsome one is called Chike. Mama Oby's daughter must thus balance the boat, between her academic career and her relationship with Chike. All that her mother needs is a university degree. Chike and Oby's erotic relationship develops into a fond one, the two love birds begin to pursue a modern and open sexual relationship, but in a society which is still in many ways conservative. Much as the two

enjoy sex at any rate, Oby, must endure the bitter pills for her future of becoming pregnant.

The novel's plot then takes on a different twist, from traditionalism to erotic modernity and purely campus lifestyle. It becomes a tale of love, campus life, family life and the pain and struggle of widowhood. The author however, puts all these events in a male chauvinistic society, whose traditions and caricature do not ably tolerate. We later on learn that Mama Oby a devout catholic and widow is working and striking relationships in a strongly patriarchal society. She faces the strong challenges of upbringing her own daughter without the help of any of her in-laws. She is at the same time struggling to do away with the demands presented by the traditional culture of her community, especially her being inherited by Pa Okolo her husband's brother, something she hates to the last letter. When her first daughter Oby got admitted at University, Mama Oby again has to endure and face the challenges and demands presented by the modern setting of University life. She must also deal with the scars university life has caused on her daughter Oby.

Therefore the whole novel can be summarized at this triangular level that is to say; TRADITIONAL AND ITS ASSOCIATED DEMANDS REPRESENTED BY (Pa Okolo), CHRISTIANITY AND ITS DEMANDS REPRESENTED BY (Mama Oby) and MODERNITY AND ITS DEMANDS REPRESENTED BY (Oby). However, at a deeper analysis of the novel, the reader realizes that this triangular working is not all that clear since each of the representatives of each life style, end up cutting across all. For instance, Oby is always quick to defend traditional values in her discussions with Chris, while Mama Oby considers it her duty to adhere to her village customs when the elders of Isiakpu rule that Obeta should be ostracized for committing murder, though it is against Christian principles to engage in such. Therefore the viewing of the novel is from a paradoxical point of view, one looks at the paradox of the difficulties facing society that is occupied by different demands ranging from traditional culture, religion and the pressing modernity.

THE SETTING OF THE NOVEL.

The novel is set in post -colonial societies, of Isiakpu and Embakassi University. The traditional setting of Isiakpu is revealing of the African traditional beliefs such as widow inheritance ostracization, female genital mutilation and above all placing the male figures at the helm of everything but placing the women at the bottom of the ladder. Men like Pa Okolo stand for all these traditional values and expect each African, both women and men, young and old to observe them to the last letter. However, Pa Okolo's struggle and hope for a purely traditional society are thwarted by the arrival of Christianity, which came along with a contradictory modern culture that scoffs venom against traditional values and Christianity itself. The society then faces a dilemma on the choice of selection and loyalty, people wonder which aspect and belief they ought to adhere to.

This confusion of loyalty is revealed through Mama Oby and other devoted Catholics who profess Christianity but at the same time chose to follow the traditional demands of ostracizing

Obeta yet it is against the Christian faith. Obeta is accused of murder and has refused to swear by the village idol. We learn that the igwe who takes himself as a modern man, cares very little about Christianity and traditional values especially if these two stand on his way to success, yet he is supposed to be the custodian of the culture as a ruler of traditional Isiakpu.

MEANING OF THE TITLE "The Moon Also Sets.

We can easily understand the meaning of the title, if we pay close attention to chapter twelve of the novel. In this chapter, we read from the notes of one man called Mark, who finds Oby and Chike spending quality time at the beach as they delve deep into enjoying their new found love.

Mark addresses Chike and Oby and reveals to them that much as they seem to be enjoying life now or what he calls the full moon, time will come when things will change especially for Oby. And when things change, the moon will have set. Mark is hopeless that the way things wrongly appear at the beach and outside in a modern society, the moon will set or life will become bitter in future. Despite his queer lifestyle and general appearance, he knows how incapable of doing good service to people his country men are. His country is full of a lot of immorality and covered by the blood of corruption and moral degeneration., including that in Chike and Oby. He again tells the lovebirds that life now seems enjoyable and glowing like a full moon for them, but in future the moon will set. He specifically reveals this to Oby. "but young girl, remember the moon also sets? By implication, Mark indicates that much as the two may enjoy life and create memorable moments as the one now at the beach, one day things shall turn dark or bitter for them.

On the other hand however, the title can be viewed at a positive angle. It seems to offer a message of hope. Mark seems to suggest that time will come when things will change for the better.

Lets consider the questions below so that we can at least get some glimpsy into the title.

Qn. 1. Justify the title "the moon also sets.

2. what is the meaning of the title "The Moon Also Sets?"

The following aspects can illustrate how the moon also sets in the novel.

- Things are no longer the same in the traditional Isiakpu village, the moon had set on the daughters of Nwa Agu.
- Their drums and flutes had been silenced by greed, modernity and corruption.
- The dancing steps of their daughters had also become timid and less assertive.
- Father Damian is replaced by another priest.
- Pa Okolo commits suicide.
- Uncle Ben is arrested and sentenced.

- The igwe has disappeared from his palace and escapes to Lagos on a six month business trip as they say.
- Oby gets pregnant and nearly dies in an abortion induced by Chike and Okoro.
- Professor Okpanu's sexual exploits are exposed.
- Chike loses his place in Oby's heart and is replaced by Chris.
- Oby remembers the mad man at the beach who reminded her that the moon also sets.

The events above indicate that things in life will always change and will never be the same always, just like the moon glows so much in the night and gives way gives light to people, it does not stay longer, time comes when it has to give way to sunshine in the morning. Thus the moon also sets.

1. Discuss the theme of injustice against women as portrayed in the novel, *The Moon Also Sets*.

The novel, *The Moon Also Sets* rotates around the lives of two female characters, Mama Oby and her daughter Oby who struggle to assert themselves in a male dominated society of Isiakpu and Embakassi University respectively. The two eventually realize that they share the same experiences at least with their male counterparts. Both the educated and the un educated men have no sympathy for the female characters, the best they can offer them is discrimination. Their experience with men reveal that women are only needed for sex and enjoyment and nothing else, thus they must endure a lot of injustices perpetrated against them by their male counterparts, their rights are violated just for sexual pleasures. Below is a detailed discussion of the injustices perpetrated against women in the novel.

- Women are subjected to discrimination and are only viewed as sex objects by their male counterparts. The novel brings this out clearly. This discrimination is both to the married and un married women, young and old and illiterate and literates, widowed or not. Pa Okolo hopes to inherit Mama Oby against her will, when she rejects the offer, the family duly erects Uncle Ben to take over Mama Oby as her new husband as culture and tradition demands. Without even caring anything about the widow, Oby, the family of her in-laws cares much about having someone who will quickly occupy the vacuum left by their brother and engage Mama Oby into sex. It is not surprising that just after being given full inheritance of Mama Oby; Uncle Ben shamelessly comes to the widow's home for a night to fulfill his conjugal rights in bed, something repelled by mama Oby. We are told that at the church after mass, Father Damian sends his cook to fetch Mama Oby for they had very important church matters to discuss, the priest, dressed rather in a queer and suggestive way, lures the sheep

to his bedroom and forces her into having sex, much as she repels his advances. Life at the university is not any different. We learn of a series of relationships all of which are not meant for nothing but sex. While in their hostel room, Oby wakes up to the horror of her other friends and roommates rolling and tussling it out in their beds with their boyfriends enjoying in a sexual mood. Professor Okpanu is also not exceptional, he spares not the beauties of the young girls at university, and he finds comfort in pinning them down alongside his lectures. Chike and Oby also engage in sex to cement their new relationship, later on, Chris drills from Oby's borehole after her break off with Chike. These events presented in the novel, are clear evidence that, women are seen as sex objects by the men, even the religious and elites like Father Damian and professor Okpanu.

- In the Isiakpu society, women are considered women only if they have had children in their marriages. Their only respect therefore is in the children they bare. The society therefore has no single grain of sympathy and respect for a woman who has no child. Such a woman is considered an abomination and has no identity. One wonders why the likes of Pa Okolo, Chike and Uncle Ben are called by their names, but women such as Mama Oby and Mama Ijeoma cannot be called by their birth names. Thus, it is an injustice, for a woman who bears no child in her marriage is meaningless and inconsequential yet the man continues to wield respect from the society with or without a child.
- In Isiakpu women are seen as indecisive by the men. They are looked at as people who cannot think and come up with a sound decision that effect things. They therefore must be thought for by the men. It is not surprising that all the decisions including those that affect the women themselves in Isiakpu are made by men. The chief of Isiakpu has the audacity to decide that his son must marry Oby without even consulting her. The in-laws of Mama Oby arrange for her someone to inherit her after her husband's death without even consulting her. Thus an injustice because women just like any other creature have the right to be listened to and have their decisions respected.
- It is also a rule that for a woman to be recognized as a real woman and confirmed as a wife in Isiakpu, she has to give birth to male children. The society believes that males become heirs to their fathers when they die. Therefore a woman who does not give birth to a male child is half woman and commands no respect at all. Female children are therefore seen as decorations and tentative occupants of the homestead since they are liable for marriage.
- The tradition of inheritance among the people of Isiakpu is an injustice to the women. It was a belief and confirmed tradition among the Isiakpu community that upon the death of a husband, his wife had to be inherited by the husband's brother. That is why Mama Oby must be inherited by either Pa Okolo or Uncle Ben. A man was believed to be the epitome of power and authority in his family,

and one who failed to control his wife had no respect among his peers and age group. Therefore, a woman was seen as an object to be controlled by the remote of her man and she had nothing to advance.

- A lengthy period of harsh treatment was accorded to any woman whose husband died young in Isiakpu. This is because, they believe that a man who dies early and young must have been killed by his wife and the wife has to answer to explain why her husband died so early and young. Upon the death of her husband, a woman was subjected to a mandatory one year of mourning the loss of her husband and one who gives birth during the one year period of mourning would face the brunt of the people of Isiakpu, while the man responsible for the pregnancy would walk squat free. What is surprising is that it is the women who are used to punish their fellows.
- Women have no right over their husbands, even when they feel they should be with them it is the husband to decide. A polygamous man is respected in Isiakpu but a woman would not be allowed to be married to more than one man. Pa Okolo is a man of many wives, he has to draw a timetable to schedule how he will be spending nights with his wives, but he must do this alone and follow the schedule at his own discretion. We learn that while he has drawn a schedule for his wives to share his bed, he does not honor the schedule at all, rather he gives the whole time to his new, fresh and young wife yet his other wives would also wish to feel his warmth. Because of this, his second wife gets frustrated and begins to engage in long-distance trade. This is an injustice to the women, who are supposed to share equal opportunities in accessing the services of their husband. One wonders, what wrong women have to draw from only one source singly without any form of competition.
- During cultural and tradition functions in Isiakpu, invitations to attend especially for the women were discriminative. While men of all levels enjoyed the reception and participated fully. Only women with grandchildren and exemplary behavior were invited. Childless women were not invited because they were considered disfavored by the god who were believed to give children. The senior daughters were invited because they were believed to have concluded their monthly trip to the moon at their senior age and were therefore considered spiritual. Such ceremonies included the cleansing ceremony of one who had desecrated the Ndu Nwa Agu clan by doubting some cultural beliefs like men turning into lions at night. It is therefore unjust for young girls and childless mothers to be denied access to cultural ceremonies, because they can also be able to showcase off their skills and develop their talents. The society is so unfair to the women, it places them into a tight corner hard for them to move out, it is only their sex that gives them position without which they are outcasts. They are meant to endure the generational stigma that passes on from generation to generation, from mother to daughter. That is why mama Oby reveals to her daughter Oby that;

“The life of a woman in Isiakpu is doomed” indeed, Oby experiences what her mother told her when she gets admitted at Embakassi, there’s no difference between the life she finds at the university and that in Isiakpu at least in terms of male dominance. The whole system operates in a patriarchal system where the men are in charge while the women bear the burden of being sex objects and motherhood.

- In Isiakpu women are personal possessions or movable property of the men, who own them like territories and fight like wounded lions to defend their territories. The narrator reveals that they fight for women as their territories because “manhood, egos are all at stake, not to talk of the big backyards” as seen on page 74.
- The narrator further reveals that “In Isiakpu being adult, female and single made you inconsequential.” Oby is aware of this disdain because her young brother enjoys more rights than her. She is fully aware that her customary rights can only be acquired when she is in her husband’s homestead if she got married, however, she is also aware that the rights of a married woman are prescribed by the Isiakpu tradition, when Papa Oby dies, Mama Oby’s nuclear family rights are limited for she only had a small farm, an acre of red soil where tough weeds thrive, even before she can acquire the infertile and small piece of land, she has to fight with her brothers-in-law.
- In Isiakpu, a woman especially a widow is not supposed to own any business that will give her freedom and thus she will begin rejecting her man’s decisions. That is why the brothers-in-law to Mama Oby vandalize her provisional store at Eke market to teach her a lesson in humility and submissiveness. Her refusal to allow Ndubisi the chief’s son to marry Oby brings her the wrath of the patriarchs especially Pa Okolo, Uncle Ben and Chief Ugwueze. Pa Okolo directs Ben to destroy Mama Oby’s economic base which gives her the freedom to under look her husbands. The injustice is that, the society presents men as ruling figures over women that even the little they wish to do is frustrated by the so called family heads. Their women are their property.
- Women especially widows in Isiakpu are not allowed to inherit property according to the traditions of their land. Whether the man dies intestate or he has a will bequeathing property to his wife, the patriarchs sit to denounce the will of the dead of bequeathing property to a woman. We learn that Pa Okolo is heavily interested in taking his brother’s house at Nsukka because according to him; “A man’s brothers and uncles had first claim to a man’s assets, whether or not he had a wife and children” therefore, widows had no right at all “it is only sons that can grant a widow status. If her sons are young, she still suffers until they grow into adults. It is only then that her full rights are restored. A woman is therefore viewed as an outcast who also has no right to own property in Isiakpu.

- Women in Isiakpu are battered and assaulted by their men . Mama Oby is forced to look down by Pa Okolo's blazing eyes after she had protested the decision of being inherited by uncle Ben whom the author describes as a loafer who had spent 15 years from one Nigerian town to another with nothing to brag about. When Pa Okolo realizes that Mama Oby has vehemently rejected her husbands' decision of being inherited by Uncle Ben shuts her up by remarking that "I will not allow any woman brought into this family to bring shame to it" Mama Oby is accused of being Father Damian's lover a reason perhaps for her refusal to be inherited, she protests the allegations. However, her protest does not go well with the gathering, we are told she is humiliated and assaulted. According to the narrator, "uncle Ben, who had been sitting quietly, dashed across the room in a gesture that showed clearly he was going to slap Mama Oby back into respect but was restrained" Uncle Eze, Uncle Ben's senior brother also encourages him with, "Teach her a lesson" despite her apology, she is sanctioned for and fined to pay two cockerels by her husband's brothers for being rude to Pa Okolo. She is lucky for just being fined two cockerels for the offence she has committed otherwise in the past "she would have been declared missing and that would have been the end of the matter.
- Married women in Isiakpu are also punished by their husband's family kindred or relatives. They are also excluded from sharing in the only time when women are ever honored in Isiakpu. The narrator states "The clan elders had a way of investigating complaints against their daughters, and when they set out to punish anyone, the decision was arrived at by consensus. It did not matter whose daughter it was. The punishment was often to exclude the errant woman from feasting and merry-making"
- The lives of women in Isiakpu are filled with thorns and humps, even the modern University of Embakkasi is also unfair to the women. The female students appear out to be preys to cultists, rapists and bonified victims of sexual exploitation by male lecturers, despite of his level of education and his major titles even that of Jerusalem pilgrim, Professor Akpanu tortures his foreign wife. This is evidenced by the note left behind by Professor Akpanu's Russian wife who has escaped with her two children. The note reveals a lot about her marriage, she has indeed been living in trauma and torture. She writes, "I have forgiven you for all the emotional and physical abuse you meted out on me, but I had to bring this misery to an end for our children's sake" this is truly revealing of the torture and humiliation women faced in Isiakpu and Embakkasi even at the hands of the elites.
- The widowed practices of in Isiakpu are also another menace to reckon with. If the man died early than expected by the community, the wife faced it rough, she was accused of letting her husband die and was treated like a criminal. Even in cities such as that of Lagos where civility was flourishing, women still faced the

same treatment when they lost husbands.

- Patriarchal institutions such as Akatakpa which is a masquerade cult that appears during the celebration of the new yam and to symbolize the spirits of the forefathers of Isiakpu, were used to degrade the females. The old men were the ones to converse with the masquerade while women of sixty and above were advised to step aside as a sign of respect if both men and women happened to be on the same path. During the festival, the Akatakpa often hides in the bush off a footpath leading to the market and would run after a woman who would attempt to flee, screaming and yelling as it lashed at them. It is this masquerade cult that Uncle Ben uses to set fire on Mama Oby's shop in Eke market
- The publication of the Bee in Embakkasi University also reveals the exploitation and degrading of women. Chris Onuoro is the only undergraduate who dares to protest the malicious publications of the Bee against Oby. He sets the tabloid on fire before students. The bee prided in nakedly aggressing women at Campus.
- The right to a woman's reproductive health is yet another injustice against the women of The Moon Also Sets. Mama Oby as old as forty does not have the right to choose to be single and look after her children or re-marry or to go through the customary practice of wife inheritance. The one to inherit her is decided by Pa Okolo and his brothers, Okolo remarks that they have decided that Uncle Ben inherits her since she has also inherited their brothers wealth, in addition to becoming one of the head men of Isiakpu, Okolo has decided to give off Oby to marriage with Chief Ugwueze's son, Ndubuisi without even asking from Oby. As chief Ugwueze reveals his plan for his son to marry Oby, Pa Okolo firmly accepts to follow up the matter; "As head of this family, I promise to meet your expectations. She is my daughter, and I shall decide" even when Oby is an educated woman, she cannot decide on her choice of a husband or at least consulted before she is decided for by her paternal uncle.
- In Isiakpu tradition and modernity clash. Mama Oby openly tells her daughter that both adult female, widow and single are fair game to the men. It is no wonder that Uncle Ben who is treated with contempt by his family for being unable to do anything also tells Mama Oby that; "I have come to do the necessary. I mean, eeh..." at 9:30pm in her house. Father Damian who is corrupt and amorous also attempts to use Mama Oby as a sex object. Before she can rebuff his sexual advances, he has "planted a kiss on her lips. His hands grabbed her left breast and squeezed it" her refusal to be his lover, she suspects, earns punitive measures for he excommunicates the congregation on a pretext. The community at University is not different from that at Isiakpu, girls are raped by students and their male lecturers. Oby falls prey to Chike's sexual advances only to be abandoned when she is pregnant for him.
- In order to persuade Mama Oby to give her daughter's marriage to Ndubisi, Pa

Okolo reminds her that any uncircumcised woman in Isiakpu is unwholesome. He says, "if word gets out that she has not been cut, who in this village would want to marry her". The issue of female genital mutilation is an injustice among the women, in a male dominated society female genital mutilation is done to ensure that women are not wayward, no one bothers about their physical and psychological trauma as they are led to the abattoir to face the knife and being deprived of their sexual joy. Mama Oby's account of her friend's FGM experience is very telling, "she nearly bled to death. Years after this incident, she still avoid sex because it is often a very painful experience for her" This is an unjust to them.

- Further on, the violation of the right to women's reproductive right is also experienced in the University. When Oby gets pregnant and Chike wants her to abort the foetus, she refuses, she prefers to keep it as the mother has earlier advised her not to abort since abortion was a sin against God and against humanity. However, she says, "I am only saying that I would expect you to have the baby if you were to find yourself in such a submission. I could raise the baby if you didn't have the time, that's all I am saying" Oby is ready to keep the baby but Chike who is responsible for it insists, "well, you have to have an abortion. I think that is our only option" When she refuses the plan to do so, Chike hatches the plan with Okoro who has impregnated many women and would have had "God-knows-how-many children" to abort her pregnancy without her consent. According to Okoro's explanation, the abortion concoction works in this manner "Touch-and-go dissolved completely in water or any other drink and was therefore especially appropriate in this case. Okoro had employed it under similar circumstances and it had worked perfectly well. Up till today, the girl still thought she had a miscarriage"
- At last Chike succeeds in tricking Oby into drinking the abortion concoction which induces an abortion. However, she almost dies in the queer process and plans to rush her to a medical doctor are there then effected, so that the fetus could be evacuated for her safety. Okoro had asked for a potent abortion in order to quicken the process.
- Women in Isiakpu cannot freely associate with other women. In Osei's world, barren women are prohibited from attending feasts, dancing and merry-making when the women of the clan are honored. This explains why the Isiakpu women's meeting organized by Mama Oby and Mama Ijeoma to protest the violence Akatakpa commits on the women fails because women were warned by their husbands to disassociate from meeting and the protest. The men had met and resolved that if there was anything wrong with the tradition, they would meet and resolve it. They would not allow women to dictate to them what to do, to stampede or force them to act as if they were a bunch of spineless men.

2. Examine the different ways through which the women of the novel world can liberate

themselves from the claws of the male chauvinistic society as evidenced in the novel, *The Moon Also Sets*.

- ✓ The author presents different ways through which the females of the novel world can extricate from the hard but soft shell of the male dominated world. He presents both ample and rudimentary ways for as long as the freedom of the feminine gender is realized. The body below presents those suggested remedies;
- ✓ The author suggests that women can harden and become defiant to men. Perhaps this defiance can draw some sympathy and respect for them from their males. This defiance is revealed through Mama Oby's character, even when she is a widow, she is able to resist her brother-in-law's proposal that Uncle Ben inherits her, at the meeting, she is summoned in Pa Okolo's house, the narrator says, "under the surface of Mama Oby's placidity lay an indefatigable spirit. Her in-laws knew this. But they had to kill that inner spirit. They were not expected to give up. It is their social obligation not to give up". Despite their several sanctions on her, her in-laws become unsuccessful. This is evidenced when Uncle Ben comes to her house to sleep with her, he is humiliated by the defiant woman in Mama Oby. She has the guts to say, "foolish man if you come back here again, I will circumcise you a second time. If you think that you have balls, do come back" we learn that Pa Okolo the head of the family has too tasted Mama Oby's defiance. Before he goes to inform her about chief Ugweuze's proposal for his son to marry Oby, it is clear that he is not sure that Mama Oby will accept the proposal. The narrator says; "he had not slept very well himself because he was not sure how Mama Oby would react. He had spent part of the night working and reworking the anticipated conversation. He knew Mama Oby would not be an easy nut to crack"
- ✓ Her defiance is further revealed when she repels Father Damian's sexual advances when he wants to rape her. When he presses his lips against hers in what they call a kiss and tries to caress her, the narrator reveals " She shoved him away so hard that he landed on all fours on the small table, then crashing with the books on to the floor" Mama Oby successfully repels Father Damian and does not yield to the amorous desire even when she is aware that the whole Christians in Ishi-Ugwu are being punished for his unrequited love.
- ✓ The author also calls upon women not only to become defiant but also be sensible and have an insight into people's behavior. Mama Oby knows very well how treacherous Mama Ijeoma and does not want to be helped by her at any cost. When Mama Oby comes to advise her to buy contraceptive for her daughter Oby as she leaves for University, she thinks of her as a "double-edged sword and could cut both ways" Again as she sends her son to go to Onitsha and tell her brother about Oby's admission, she says, "his wife is a hard nut to crack" she is also aware that Pa Okolo is a manipulative man and Chief

Ugweuzwe cannot be trusted, she skillfully keeps away from the two men and avoids their dangerous schemes. She vehemently turns down Chief Ugweuze's request through Pa Okolo even when her store at Eke market had been burnt down.

- ✓ Mama Ijeoma and Ada are extremely defiant and insensible. Mama Ijeoma who is believed to be wayward is not as bad as people think, but she is not bothered about people's opinions about her conduct. Her extremity in decency is revealed in her defiance of the elders of Isiakpu and their customs. When Father Damian baptizes Obeta who refuses to swear an oath, according to the custom of the people, when he is accused of killing his nephew, she is the only Christian who associates with him and defies the community's sanctions against him. In fact, Mama Oby briefs her about her role in the dispute between the priest and the other Christians he excommunicates. She says, "Mama Ijeoma has been Fr Damiana's dedicated emissary. He passes all the instructions and warning through her and she cherishes playing the role" Ada, even though an undergraduate, sees her relationship with any man as a cash-and-carry business. Pa Okolo's second wife is also defiant. When she sees that she is out of favor in the politics of a polygamous family, rumor has it that she has adulterous affairs during her travels, "she carried on, though, as if none of this bothered her"
- ✓ The author also presents education as another instrument to liberate the woman from the oppression of the males. This explains why Mama Oby struggles to educate her daughter up to university, she is well aware that her University education is an advantage to her family. She greatly rejoices that "a great thing has happened to this family. Let's not slight it. Thank you for placing me above my mates" Pa Okolo. Though a rural and uneducated man, also appreciates that education is very important, and "also brought two gallons of palm wine in demonstration of his support" during her send-off party. It is because of Oby's education that Chief Ugweuze sends a proposal to Mama Oby for his son to marry her daughter. It is also with Oby's education that she has the courage to report the arson that destroys her mother's stall at the market. She refuses to be deterred by the collection of bribes by the police men the inspector sends to investigate the crime. It is also with education that young men now detest girls who are circumcised because they are frigid during sexual intercourse. They do not see the custom as instilling virtues in them.
- ✓ The author also calls upon women of the novel world to embrace metropolitan life as away of doing away with the male dominance. We learn that Mama Oby and Mama Ijeoma have both tasted city life and as the narrator says, "Their exposure to the city had led them to have a common appreciation and disdain for certain things" One of the things they disdain is Akatakpa's violence on the young women of Isiakpu that they organized an aborted demonstration against the cult. Pa Okolo is very aware of the impact of metropolitan lifestyle on the

tradition of his community and he says several times to Mama Oby, "I am aware that many of you who have lived in those rotten cities have lost respect for our tradition and the elders"

- ✓ The criminal justice system is also another important aspect that women in Isiakpu can use to liberate themselves from the chauvinistic society. This is evident when Oby reports the arson and the conspirators are brought to justice, by the diligent investigations of an honest police officer, Pa Okolo commits suicide and Uncle Ben was arraigned before the magistrate's court and sentenced to twelve months in prison, with hard labour. We learn that the chief left Isiakpu purportedly for an extended business trip abroad. The reader realizes that the chief's trip was an escape strategy so that matters cool down.
- ✓ The author calls upon women to realize and appreciate the fact that those who propel the vices and practices of the patriarchal system are themselves afraid of the law, and if taken to courts of justice, they would easily denounce even their beliefs. This is revealed through the act of suicide Pa Okolo commits, he commits suicide because of the realization that Uncle Ben, who has been arraigned before court may implicate him and he could not imagine going to prison at his age and what society would think about him yet his ambition is to become one of the titled men of the council of Isiakpu. He says, "I would still not be accepted by the council of elders even if the prison term was one week" He then decides to end his life which is a more shameful act than being imprisoned.
- ✓ In conclusion, the author of *The Moon Also Sets* clearly shows his stand in jotting down the novel as that of exposing the violation of women's rights and freedom by patriarchal societies at the same time calling upon the feminine gender to avoid being complacent in matters that affect them, but rising up to their feet and strongly stand against male chauvinism, extricate themselves from the bondage of tradition and live free from stress. He believes that this can only be done through legislation which is the only way to punish the violators of their rights though some wealthy people may seem to be beyond the law.

THE THEME OF CULTURAL CLASH (Tradition vs Modernity)

- ✓ In Isiakpu community the elders had an organized way of communication in which information was channeled from the top to bottom. People would gather at the village square after a keg of palm wine known as the Otobo. All this happened before the arrival of Christianity and modernity.
- ✓ Children in Isiakpu were taught morality, respect for elders and other values were taught to children through folklore and role play, mothers bonded and were taught the tricks behind child rearing, they learnt this from one another. During the full moon, the Otobo was transformed into a theatre where social activities such as dram, songs, dances, wrestling and story telling competitions were

staged. The games such as the brain tasking village chess, the eeche, was a witty game used by the society to determine the brightest villager.

- ✓ Intercommunity competitions were held in the Ottobo and victors in such competitions were highly respected and celebrated as well as being honored. They were then made famous to all people in the community. These happened before the coming of Christianity and modernity and life was normal and enjoyable among the people of Isiakpu. Society had no complaints about the manners of their people since they all grew up following the admired tenets of their traditional Isiakpu.
- ✓ However, the introduction and arrival of the new visitors; Christianity and modernity all the above practices lost meaning no longer hold water in Isiakpu, thus cultural clash. The Christians and modernists started condemning the practices as archaic and anti-Christian. The Ottobo which used to be a place of joy and happening for the people of Isiakpu is no more, the intercommunity competitions that aimed at forging unity, promoting talents and preserving culture were trumped upon. The Reverend Father was to be consulted first before any activity happened around the village. A culture of individualism cropped up, people who once united along the same cause started opposing one another, Catholics and Protestants separated and could no longer mix freely as it was before Christianity. Christians and non-Christians could no longer interact even if the gathering was for their own benefit. This is pure cultural clash, the new culture is therefore a strange and dangerous one that has brought divisionism other unity and has alienated people from their once cherished cultural norms.
- ✓ We learn that the church and the traditional practices of the people of Isiakpu are in direct clash and serious conflict. Obete, a man accused of poisoning his brother's son Ezekiel Nwaeze, disappears without swearing before the alusi to prove his innocence as culture demands, as he runs away from this cultural demand, the reverend father Damian warmly welcomes him as a member of the Christian community and instructs all Christians of Isiakpu to make sure that no harm comes to him
- ✓ Mama Oby remarks that Obete's actions would tantamount to banishment from the village by the whole village as demanded by tradition but father Damian has ordered that nothing happens to him, and the Mama Oby's who are members of father Damian's association must sway to the rhythms of their new religion. The priest has therefore come to dismantle a society that once cherished unity and tolerance as well as concern for one another.
- ✓ When asked to reconsider his decision, Father Damian excommunicated all the Christian faithful, except for Obete and Mama Ijeoma. He even went ahead to instruct all Catholics to pass through Obete's house on their way to church

every Sunday as the only way of confirming that they had, indeed contravened or denied the act of banishing Obete. This is a pure indicator of cultural clash in the novel.

3. How does Osei portray the theme of corruption in the novel *The Moon Also Sets*?

- ✓ Mama Oby clear states that everything in Nigeria defies logic and understanding. One will never know when to queue and jump the queue, this is because the whole system of their government depends on who knows who and the way one understand in society. She makes these remarks having realized the difficulties therein even in the simple process of securing admission for one's child at the University. She has scratched her head on how to get her daughter into Embakkasi until she learns that her brother, Amechi who lives in Onitsha could help "unlock some door." In actual sense, Mama Oby expects some money from her brother which she could use to bribe so that her daughter lands herself a place in the University of Embakkasi.
- ✓ Corruption is also revealed through Mama Ijeoma's suggestion to Mama Oby about her daughter securing a University admission. She suggests that Oby should use the charm of her beauty to win the hearts of the lustful lecturers so that they give her admission to the University. This reveals a lot about the corrupt society of Nigeria, where even the elites like university professors find it joy and their own invented contentment to exchange their services for sex. In Osei's world academic credentials that are meant to be the only entry to university, must be spiced up with sex as another serious complement before one is admitted.
- ✓ Mark reveals that their government of Nigeria is always at loggerheads with the oil companies over pollution caused to the environment in the process of drilling and processing oil. This is due to the corruption in the country which is not only institutionalized but also baptized in names such as "settlement". The government does not use the funds collected from the oil companies to clean and protect her people from the dangers of pollution. When a local environment conservation group embarked on a public sensitization campaign to educate the people on the dangers of pollution, the demonstration is quickly dispersed and silenced by armed police.
- ✓ The chief himself, Chief Ugweuze is an osu or an alien in Isiakpu. He bribed his way to chieftdom we are told by the narrator that "...by the time the chief had made his late night or early morning rounds with his generous envelopes among elders and the opinion leaders in the town, people were talking from both sides of their cheeks"
- ✓ It is not surprising that chief Ugweuze extorted a lot of money from foreigners and companies that hired expatriates using his position as a junior immigrant

officer.

- ✓ The wise saying “No one should play with the tail of a Lion whether dead or alive” summarizes the corrupt tendencies of the elders and leaders of Isiakpu and how their corruption lands them in hot soup with the gods. We learn that at last the wrath of the gods unfolds starts to unfold against those who were involved in the chief’s affair. While the whole ceremony was supposed to be a divine ritual involving the divine selection by the gods, this one was an affair of “envelopes” the narrator reveals that “those who had received envelopes offered sacrifices to appease the gods. Many gave away the money in an unusual burst of generosity. The envelope handlers, those who had eaten from the chief, could be seen sweating all the time even in the morning”. The corruption here so precious that it goes even beyond the divinity of their gods.
- ✓ It is therefore finally revealed that Agu, their father was a sleep but not dead. The lion had ceased to appear for some time because the elders who held the Ofo, the symbol of authority and justice had been compromised. Thus, in the face of corruption divinity ceases to prevail but divine punishment can be felt.
- ✓ It is therefore not surprising that the chief bribes the police officers who are investigating the arson in which himself; Pa Okolo and Uncle Ben are involved. The chief then stretches his corruption to Mama Oby and tries to give her a large brown envelop full of money only to be greeted by a humiliation of rejection by the woman herself Mama Oby.

4. Discuss the portrayal of moral degeneration in the novel, The Moon Also Sets.

- ✓ At Marry Slessor Hall at Embakkasi university moral degeneration plays its rightful role. It’s a meeting point where lovers meet their loved ones. Boys meet here to meet their “girl friends”. At the university, the narrator reveals that “senior girls’ who have seen it all enjoy staying at Marry Slessor hall, they even fought to be placed in this Hostel. However, Bethel Hall has been completely shunned by such senior girls because they claim it is for the born again students. Even the men at Campus had feared visiting Bethel because sometimes they had been dragged into prayers and fellowship forcefully.
- ✓ We learn through Oby lenses that library which is supposed to be the center of academic excellence and concentration at the University of Embakkasi is purely a love den; it has no any tenet of a reading hall. It is not surprising that most cars around Marry Slessor Hall normally disappear from the scene at around 11:00am on Friday with an additional occupant who is always brought back on Sunday evening. It is for this reason why Chike calls the hall a slaughter house. This

speaks volumes of the moral degeneration depicted in the novel.

- ✓ At the University, it is not a sin for one to openly discuss his sexual records with fellows. Okoro finds pleasure in revealing all his sex secrets with his girl friends to his friends. He tells them that during intercourse, "her kicks and cries of passion simply drove me crazy" Chris supplements Okoro's ordeal by revealing the story of the girl he took to a room he had booked, and during sexual intercourse he asked her whether she was cumming and she opened her eyes widely, pushed him aside and asked him who was coming and if he was expecting someone else. They all roar into laughter. This casual sex that university students engage in is a revelation of moral degeneration prevalent in society.
- ✓ "The Bee" reports Chike's reckless sexual encounter with a university girl and that the girl feared the huge size of his sexual organ and ran away and this becomes news all over campus such that Oby's friends later on begin asking her to reveal the truth of whether her boyfriend has an extra-large. It is not surprising that Pa Okolo tells Mama Oby that the chief's son wants to marry Oby because the chief doesn't want him to marry American girls or Oyibo girls who even wear underpants in public and they only eat in hotels and cannot cook in the native which is something un called for in the Isiakpu society.
- ✓ It is revealed that Ndubisi the son to the chief who is said to be in America for eight years now, is working in one of the pubs where women dance purely nude.
- ✓ The novel reveals how moral degeneration is even among the religious leaders. As Oby dresses up for her boyfriend's handover ceremony, it comes out clearly through the conversation between the two that Father Damian is a real degenerate with insatiable appetite for women in particular. He recalls an incident when the father and two catholic nuns went to his apartment and announced one time when he was still teaching at Asaba; the man of God increased the volume of the cassette player and breathlessly held one of the sisters to electrifying dance moves with a lot of impunity.
- ✓ The second Nun feeling lonely invited Chike to fill the gap, pulled him up for fondle and caress her breasts. The large bronze crucifix dangling near the sister's breasts got him scared. The sister instead held him tightly close to her that he almost fainted. Such an immoral act even from the professed men and women of God is enough to reveal the magnitude of moral degeneration that is beyond repair in the society of the novel and in the world outside Osei's.
- ✓ Talking about sexual immorality at Embakkasi, one cannot leave behind the name of renowned sexual maniac the professor Akpanu. He is good at asking for sexual favors from his female students to give them good grades; he exchanges marks for sex which is totally against his professional ethics. The immoralities in

the novel are so immerse that they are done by people of different dignitaries, that even the elites and religious leaders are so loose that they can't control themselves. As we read the novel, we realize that the feminine gender becomes the greatest victim of the immoralities.

HYPOCRISY.

- Mama Oby is lured into lovemaking by the priest Father Damian and he attempts to assault her sexually. It so hypocritical for the shepherd to begin feasting on the sheep that is not his. It reveals how pretentious he is as a man of God who is expected to live at least an exemplary life style.
- In chapter two we learn how Father Damian forcefully kisses Mama Oby and and grabs her breasts in attempt to assault her sexually. He therefore has no moral authority to preach against immorality in the society.
- His dancing with the sister and holding her tight for a luring dance speaks volumes of Father Damian's immorality.
- His hypocrisy is also revealed when at first he pretends to be against the young man who walks out of the sermon then later he praises him and head blessings on him after he has made a generous donation to the church.
- Father Damian is supposed to be the epitome of moral principle as a religious leader, but his morality is totally wanting. Chike narrates to Oby about an incident when Father Damian promised to some good time with the two catholic nuns, it is reported that he danced with one nun on Chike's music cassette player and then later sneaked into Chike's bedroom living the other nun with Chike to keep vigil over a few bottles of beer. It is an indication that these professed religious leaders are always engaged sexual relationships which is against the catholic church faith they claim to profess.

5. Examine the narrative technique of the novel, The Moon Also Sets.

- ❖ The author uses flashbacks in the novel. It is through flashback that we learn of the death of Mama Oby's grandfather and how her grandmother was treated was treated like a criminal for causing the death of her husband as tradition did not expect him to die young. She was accused of killing her husband, clean-shave and dressed in ugly black without allowing her to bathe and kept in isolation for some days. The author uses this technique of flashback to depict how unfair the society was or still is to the women in Isiakpu at that time.
- ❖ On page 22 we encounter a flashback story of a city dweller who walked out of a boring Sunday sermon, only to be preached against in the same sermon; we learn

that this same young man is later on praised for generously donating to the church. This flash back is used to reveal hypocrisy in church and the double standards of religious leaders.

- ❖ We learn of Papa Oby's death still in flashback. He died in a crisis in a city in Kano when Mama Oby was one month pregnant, there is a lot of speculation that came with her pregnancy after the death of her husband tells a lot about how women suffered a lot in Nigeria, the society of the time, people thought she conceived with another man during the compulsory period of mourning for widowed women, something that was considered an abomination. The author here reveals how women were humiliated and frustrated in a patriarchal society like that of the novel.
- ❖ We also learn about the circumstances surrounding the death of Papa Oby in a flash back. We are told he was a rich man who owned rentals in Kano, and with a successful business and rentals in Nsukka. He was killed on the eve of the civil war in the second massacre of the Igbos and his body was never found. This flash back helps to reveal to the reader the type of instability that existed at the time of the novel's setting.
- ❖ It is still through flashback that we learn of the reason why uncle Ameachi dislikes cassava fufu in preference for gari fufu. It is because when he was a pupil in primary school, he had a bout of malaria and suddenly vomited pellets of cassava, and the teacher wondered if they were bullets. This rightly earned him the nick name "bullet" and brought great shame on him. He then vowed never to allow cassava in his house when he grew up. This helps to create a jovial atmosphere in the novel as well as comic relief.
- ❖ We learn of the origins of Chris, Okoro and Chike's friendship through flashback. It is traced to three years back when they were all first year students who hated the lecturer of statistics and had planned to revenge against him. When this leaked, they were cautioned by the lecturer, the fact that they were all Igbo cemented their relationship.
- ❖ While in Oby's room waiting for her to dress up for the economics gala night, Chike looks through the photo album that Oby has provided to keep him busy and comes across Father Damian's photography. This evokes memories of events that transpired when Chike was still a teacher at Asaba. He vividly recounts an ugly story involving himself, Father Damian and two catholic Nuns, they drank alcohol, danced vigorously, the Reverend Father and one of the sisters sneaked into his bedroom, guess what followed while Chike and the other nun danced and romanced. This flash back reveals religious hypocrisy on the side of clerics and portrays Chike's character as naïve, innocent and ignorant in matters of the flesh because while Father Damian enjoyed, Chike felt embarrassed and kept vigil over bottles of beer.

- ❖ The author also employs irony to drive his message home in the novel. We learn that Mama Oby goes to attend a meeting that is convened purposely to deal with her but she is not aware of its intention, it is the readers however, who are fully aware of the purpose of the meeting. This is dramatic irony which the author uses to evoke the reader's sympathy for Mama Oby and anger for Pa Okolo and all other family members who wish nothing good for her but frustration.
- ❖ Oby who expects a more normalized and civilized life at University than that in Isiakpu, is surprised when she realizes that life at Emakkasi is a total contradiction of her expectations. She remarks, "This is a very strange place" normal activities are scheduled on Sunday: the security of students is not guaranteed; lecturers are busy are teaching and students are not mindful, the library is a love den not a study room, the hostel is very noisy. Oby expects a community that is ideal reflecting its status as an ivory tower something that is far from the truth, thus ironical.
- ❖ It is ironic that the reverend father Damian and the sisters of the Catholic Church who are supposed to be the epitomes of morality are the qualified advocates of immorality. Father Damian's sexual advances towards Mama Oby the nun in Chike's bedroom directly bring out the opposite of a priest and the way he is supposed to behave.
- ❖ Meg, Chike's ex-lover comes to attend the Economics gala with an intention of a shaming Chike, the irony is that it she who is finally a shamed and humiliated. A meticulous plan had been made to plug her out of the gathering and take her. Indeed at the gate drama unfolds between the security men, Jim and Meg. This is dramatic irony since the reader knows very well what the plans for her are, but Meg knows nothing.
- ❖ The author also uses proverbs in the novel, to give it an African touch. "A masquerade is not watched from one spot. If something defies a straight-forward solution, it cannot defy other means". The proverb is aimed at revealing to Oby to try to find other means of accessing university admission if the rightful means have not yielded fruits. In the same vain the proverb reveals how unfair and corrupt the society is that things need not to be done in the rightful ways but always in the contrary.
- ❖ Mama Oby tells off her daughter at the sendoff party that "God drives away flies for a cow without a tail". This proverb reveals the hope Mama Oby has about the education of her daughter regardless of the situation is.
- ❖ To assure her that he will never ever look elsewhere for someone, Chike reveals to Oby, "No one has a whole elephant to himself and still pursues squirrels" This proverb later on proves ironic when Chike and Oby separate.
- ❖ While at the meeting convened by Pa Okolo whose intention is known to him and

his family members, Pa Okolo says; "It is not common to see a toad running during the day, usually something is behind it."

- ❖ At the sendoff ceremony Pa Okolo uses these proverbs, "it is important to appreciate and understand the source of water in a pumpkin leaf". He also says "if one doesn't know where rain started to drench him, he would not remember where he dried up". He speaks all these in reference to the backgrounds of the people gathered and showing how important it is for one to consider his or her background. The proverbs also reveal how Alfred Onyia, Mama Oby's husband built a strong foundation for the family. Thus the reader is able to know how a wise man Pa Okolo is at least in speaking proverbially.
- ❖ There are allusions used in the novel both Biblical and historical. These help in advancing themes, developing characters, enhancing the plot, evoking emotions and giving the meaning of the title.
- ❖ Mama Oby troubled on how to find a vacancy at university reads for her a verse of Isaiah 40:31, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and be weary, they shall walk but not faint" She goes on and reads from Psalm 23. After Uncle Ben's attempt to sleep with her, Mama Oby gets her Bible and reads from Psalm 119:133-136 "Direct my steps by your word, and let no iniquity have no dominion over me. Redeem me from the oppression of man, that O may keep your servant, and teach me your statutes. Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep your laws"