

## INTRODUCTION TO PROSE AND POETRY.

### PROSE:

This refers to a form of writing which is normally used in novels, magazines, newspapers and letters. It is normally written in long sentences which are arranged in paragraphs and properly punctuated. It presents either written or spoken language.

### POETRY:

This is sometimes referred to as verse. It is a form of writing arranged in lines, sometimes with a definite rhyme. Unlike prose, in poetry, poets may not put much emphasis on grammar and punctuation.

### Differences between prose and poetry.

Prose	Poetry
a. There is strict observation of grammar, punctuation and spellings.	a. The idea of poetic license enables poets to write freely to the extent of manipulating grammar and punctuation to suit their motives.
b. Usually written without metre, rhythm or rhyme.	b. Rhyme, rhythm and meter make poetry qualitative
c. The speaking voice is the author or	

<p>narrator.</p> <p>d. The structure is composed of sentences and paragraphs.</p> <p>e. Is more expressive, descriptive, analytical, narrative, expository.</p> <p>f. Writings are detailed in order to explain certain terms or phrases, ideas or views</p>	<p>and enjoyable.</p> <p>c. Speaking voice is the persona</p> <p>d. The structure is composed of lines, stanzas and verse.</p> <p>e. More emotional, brief, composed/condensed hence easy to memorize or express feelings.</p> <p>f. Relies more on comparison, for example images which create vivid expression</p>
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## **POETRY.**

As put forward by Eleanor Farjeon “Poets can make us see, hear and feel something that prose cannot”

Poetry is referred to as verse, it is a piece of writing in which words are chosen for their sounds, images and idea they suggest but not their obvious meaning. The words are often arranged in separate lines and sometimes end in rhyme.

Poetry is a highly organized artistic genre/branch of oral or written expression that seeks to instruct, inform and entertain.( To Myers and Simms)

It is a piece of writing in which words are chosen for their sounds, images and ideas they suggest, but not their obvious meaning. The words are often arranged in separate lines and sometimes end in rhyme.

Poetry is a spontaneous outflow of powerful feeling recollected in tranquility.

### **Compare the two pieces of writing**

#### **MATHEMATICS**

A. I have done so many sums that now instead of doing some, I rather not do any sums. I have worked until my figures are out of joint with writing but upto now I cannot see why we should use decimal points. Subtraction brings nothing to my weary mind but distraction, while I consider all fractions, vulgar and improper.

When I confided my problems with my teacher, he advised me to work harder and suggested that while multiplying I should try concentrate.

B. I have really done enough of sums

I have done so very many  
 That now instead of doing some  
 I'd rather not do any  
 I've toiled until my fingers are  
 With writing out of joint  
 And even now of Decimals  
 I can not see the point

Subtraction to my weary mind  
 Brings nothing but distraction  
 And vulgar and improper i  
 Consider every fraction

"Apply yourself," my master said  
 When I may woes confided  
 "And, when you multiply, bestow  
 Attention undecided"

From the poem mathematics  
 Author Clement Hilton

A	B
I. The structure is composed of sentences and paragraphs.	i. The structure is composed of lines, stanzas and verse
II. It is written without meter,	ii. It is written with rhyme,

	rhythm or rhyme		rhythm and meter which
III.	There is strict observation of punctuation and grammar.		make it enjoyable.
IV.	Is more expressive, descriptive and informative.	iii.	The poet manipulates grammar and punctuation to suit his motive because of the poetic license.
		iv.	Is more brief and compressed hence easy to memorize.

## ASPECTS TO CONSIDER AS ONE READS A PIECE OF WRITING

Studying prose and poetry requires a learner to be keen to certain aspects in relation to the text if the message confides by the author or poet is to be effective.

### 1. Title.

It's a mark/ label of the subject of the piece of writing ( represents what the text is about ).

A good title has to be precise/ brief, comprehensive and specific.

**2. Writer/Author/|poet.**

This is a good guide for making the appropriate judgment. Some writers are known feminists, others are known for writing neo-colonialism while others are known for writing racism.

**3. Speaker |persona/addresser.**

There is need to ascertain/ find out who the speaker/ speaking voice and who is being addressed. In this case consider characterization.

**4. Setting.**

This is where and when the event take place.

**5. The message/ subject matter.**

This is what the text is based on or what it is taking about.

**6. The style.**

This is how the text is written.

**7. The writer's intention.**

This is the reason why the text has been written.

## **THE TITLE.**

The title normally summarizes the general message in a piece of writing. A close scrutiny of the title enables one to acquire some knowledge about the subject matter (what the text is about) and the topic of a subject.

Consider the activity below.

### **Lesson from a Rooster.**

Poultry was a familiar part in everyday life in ancient Greece. A Greek writer in 320BC wrote a verse in which he said that people could learn four things on the roosters that they see around them. These were to fight, to get up early, to eat with your family and to protect your spouse when she gets in trouble.

- a. Suggest another suitable title for the text above.
- b. How appropriate is the title to the text above.

The significance of a title to any piece of writing is to give the reader an insight/ clough into the subject or theme of the work which is to be read. A title makes suggestions to the reader, explicit or

implicit. Therefore, close examination of a title enables the reader to acquire some clue about the subject matter. Studying the title is a primary stage in appreciating any work of literature. It is worthwhile that we look out for suggestions given by the title, how it relates to the message and its relevance to the text as a whole.

A suitable title to any text should observe these qualities.

- Should be precise, not long and winding, in order to serve as an appropriate clue.
- Should be specific in that, it spells/ suggests the central idea of the text.
- Should be comprehensive; it summarizes the messages in the text.

## **THE WRITER/ POET/ AUTHOR.**

Knowledge of who the writer/ poet/ author is and the time he wrote the text guide the reader in understanding why the writer presents the message the way he does. This provides a clue on the background of the text.

## **THE SPEAKER**

In any piece of writing, the speaker's voice is hidden in the "I" or "we" pronouns which we hear when



reading. It may be in one voice or more, depending on the situation being presented.

The speaker may take on different forms for example, a human voice, a bird voice an animal, an insect or an object of interest to the writer. Even when the above pronouns have not been used in the text we should examine the tone and the choice of words used as well as the title.

When “I” and “We” pronouns have been used in a form of reported speech, the reporting voice is regarded as the speaker. The reader should be able to identify who is speaking by observing the voice addressing him. In some texts, there is more than one speaker.

Activity.

### **VICIOUS CIRCLE.**

Master fisherman  
Drops the hook  
Concealed in tasty flesh

Hungry,  
I swallowed it whole  
Rotting flesh of my brother

Comrades,  
Beware my fate!

Starched beneath the scorching sun  
New bait to hide that hook  
Which lurks for you.  
E. A Mandia

- a. Who is the persona in the poem.
- b. Give evidence for your answer.
- c. How appropriate is the title to the poem.

## **VOICES HEARD IN THE TEXTS**

### **1. First person narrator.**

This refers to the “I” or “we” narrator who is usually part of the action in the text. He is involved in the events of the text and speaks in the context of the story. Whatever the “I” says comes from his own experience and is something known to him. He gives first hand information and the reader is more apt to believe him ( he sees, touches, listens, feel and smells)  
We over hear his thoughts and ponder about him as we read about the text.

### **Activity.**

“I have a small request to make,” said Obi. As you know its not easy to live in a new place. It costs a lot of money. All members laughed. “my request is that

you wait for four months before I start to pay back the loan.”

- a. Who is speaking?
- b. Who is the audience

The persona is obi who is pleading his creditor to give him some days of grace to pay the loan.

We have two audiences, i.e the creditor who is being addressed by obi and us the readers.

**Note.**

The speaker in the above extract is quite different from the “I”. The reported speech shows the reader that the I person is reporting what the “I” said. He is possibly an observer or listener who was around when Obi was pleading.

**The second person narrator.**

The use of this narrator put the reader at the center of the text, affecting him a great deal/ immensely familiar a lot. An implied reader is addressed as though very familiar to the writer/ poet, always an intimate and insinuating to the reader. The

narrator's voice forms the focus of the reader for the whole text.

### **Africa's plea**

I am not you  
But you will not  
Give me a chance,  
Will not let me be me.

“if I were you”

But you know  
I am not you;  
Yet you will not  
Let me be me  
You meddle, interfere  
In my affairs  
As if they were yours  
And you were not me

You are unfair, unwise,  
Foolish to think  
That I can be you,  
Talk, act and think  
That I can be you;

God made me me

He made you you  
For God's sake  
Let me be me  
Roland Tomekai

### **Third person narrator**

This is similar to the omniscient narrator, who is all knowing, he is every where with in the text, sees everything and can read people's thoughts which he reports to the readers. It is a Godlike voice whose account puts the reader in the position of the viewer.

### **Woman**

How sad it is to be a woman!  
Nothing on earth is held so cheap.  
Boys stand leaning at the door  
Like God is fallen out of heaven  
Their hearts brave for the four oceans,  
The wind and dust of a thousand miles  
No one is glad when a girl is born!  
by her, the family sets no store  
when she grows up, she hides in her rooms  
afraid to look a man in the face.  
She bows her head and composes her face,  
Her teeth are pressed on her red lips

She bows and kneels countless times.  
She must humble herself even to the servants  
His love is distant as the stars in heaven,  
Yet the sun flower bends towards the sun  
Their hearts more sundered than water and fire  
A hundred evils are heaped upon her.  
Her face will follow the year's change.  
Her lord will find new pleasures.  
They that were once like substance and shadow  
Are now as far as Hu from Chin  
Yet Hu and Chin shall soon meet,  
Then they whose parting is like Ts'an and Ch'en  
Fu Hsian.

The speaker in the above poem is possibly a woman who is not happy about her gender and is therefore expressing her dissatisfaction at the maltreatment of the female gender.

Basing on the name of the poet, we can tell the race or the place of origin of the speaker; either Chinese, Japanese, Korean, woman or man who sympathizes with females as per their mistreatment and cheap identity that rendered them inferior to men.

The above poem makes no mention of "I" or "We" pronouns. However, the reader can tell who the persona is being examining the title, the poet

and the diction (choice of words) as well as the tone of the poem.

**NB:” His love is distant as the stars in Heaven,  
Yet the sunflower bends towards the sun”**

*The above lines means that the love of a man for a woman is compared to the stars which are remote and give no warmth . A woman’s love for her man is contrasted with this in the metaphor in the 2<sup>nd</sup> line. Just as the sunflower turns to face the sun at all times, so the woman’s affections are centred on the man she loves.*

## **THE ADRESSEE/ AUDIENCE**

The type of language used in a text enables the reader to tell who is being addressed. This is because different situations demand different ways of language use. If the reader is able to tell who the speaker is as he speaks, he (the reader) is able to know who is being addressed. Referring to “**Africa’s Plea**” by Roland Tomekai and “ **if we must die**” by Claude Mckay.

## **CONTEXT.**

This refers to the situation/ setting the speaker speaks from. Context answers questions like where and when does the event or action take place. The

reader has to relate the words or phrases to the conditions they belong to so as to deliver/ get/ attain their proper meaning.

In reading a text, the reader should note details such as names of people in the text, places, styles of clothing, ways of talking and manners of characters' country of origin or region, time or dates.

Remember that writers base their writings on the things that happen around them (personal experiences)

### **Activity.**

Identify the context of this extract

- a. "Your departure created a gap that is hard to fill, your love , care and kindness is sadly missed by your family, relatives and friends. May your soul rest in eternal peace."
- b. "The departure time of the train is 4:00 o'clock. You should be at the station before that time."

In both context, the word **departure** has been used;

In context a, it means death

In context b, the word means time of leaving.



The use of departure in context (a) is different from that in example (b). In first, departure refers to death, that is; the disappearance of the addressed (you). In the second, the meaning of departure means leaving a place (railway station)

The context of a piece of writing should be identified by examining choice of words used (diction) the speaker and subject matter (message). Therefore, context portrays the place of action as people usually talk about things in their vicinity or they have experienced at a particular time and place. However, in poems, the situation may not be real but based on real life situations. The reader therefore ought to be flexible in his/her observations to study and understand the situation in detail in spite of the writer's imaginations and the reflections in a given setting.

Different words are used in different situations. To use language well, one must know which expressions are more likely to be used in the formal situations and those in informal situations.

### **FORMAL SITUATIONS.**

This is characterized by respectful, careful behavior. Here, characters speak about serious issues e.g leaders, strangers, elderly people, officials, teachers, among other.

## **INFORMAL SITUATIONS.**

This is a situation characterized by carefree relaxed behavior of the speaker. The language used is not attached to formalities. It commands for no respect or seriousness. The speaker speaks freely about simple matters or everyday things for example, age mates, friends, relatives, lovers. They use language according to their convenience without considering formalities of speech. The language used can be colloquial or full of jargon.

## **REGISTER .**

The choice of words in a text is influenced by where the speaker is and the audience. Register is the type of language used in a particular context to achieve a particular purpose. The reader can identify what people use the type of language by examining the nature of language used. Register can be scientific, religious, official, legal, technical, etc.

Register also helps the reader to tell who the reader is, for example, register used by age mates, friends, relatives is usually simple and casual as may be reflected in relaxed and casual behavior. This is contrary to language use in cases where people of different age, rank or race are interacting.

For example people of authority like presidents, ministers, etc use official and dignified register due to the respect they have for each other.

**Activity.**

Identify the context of the register used;

“Ladies and gentlemen, we are assembled here to discuss the cause of students’ failure in the final examinations and to devise ways of over coming it.”

- a. Who is speaking?
- b. Who is the audience?
- c. Where Is the speaker at that moment.

**ELEMENTS OF POETRY.**

**SETTING.**

The term setting refers to the time when and the place where events in the poem occur. Setting makes reference to the place, time or situation under which a poem is written. It may be social, economic or political.

Setting may remain constant or from one situation to another. It may also be rural or urban, real or imaginary.

Setting clarifies the themes of the poem as well as the feelings in the poem. (Refer to A S. Bukenya’s poem “I met a thief” Below;

### **I met a thief.**

On the beach, on the coast  
Under the idle, whispering coconut towers,  
Before the growling, foaming waves  
I met a thief, who guessed I had  
An innocent heart for her to steal

She took my hand and led me under  
The intimate cashew boughs which shaded  
The downy grass and peeping weeds  
She jumped and plucked the nuts for me to suck  
She sang and laughed and pressed close.

I gazed her hair was like the wool of mountain  
sheep  
Her eyes, a pair of brown-black beans floating in  
milk  
Juicy and round as plantain shoots.  
Her legs, arms and neck.  
And like wine-gourds her pillowy breasts;  
Her throat uttered fresh banana juice;  
Matching her face-smooth and banana- ripe  
I touched but long before I even tasted  
My heart had flowed from me into her breasts;  
And then she went – High and South

And left my carcass roasting in the fire she'd lit.

A.S BUKENYA

The poem above is set at a beach, at the coast. The setting in this poem is used to clarify the theme since as readers we expect a romantic atmosphere enhanced by environment of the whispering coconut towers, before the glowing forming waves.

Sometimes the setting can be indirect or implied i.e explicit or implicit setting while in other poems it may keep changing with progress of the poem.

Note;

Setting and context are always used synonymously since their meaning is overlapping. While setting has to do with time/place of events, context has to do with general circumstances surrounding speaker from which he views the events in the poem. Context is inferred/interpreted from details in the poem such as names of characters, places, style of clothing, ways of talking and manners. All these suggest country or region, time in history etc.

## **The Dog in Kivulu**

The dog in kivulu  
Thin, bony and yawning;  
The dog in kivulu,  
Panting and squatting  
Like its master.  
The dog in kivulu  
Barking at naked children,  
Children who sing a thanksgiving  
As they leave the rubbish heaps  
The dog in kivulu,  
Running away from fat flies  
And scratching its own gums,  
Swallowing nothing more than its own saliva.  
The dog of kivulu,  
Guarding its drunkard master  
And the hoard of fermenting millet,  
Kwete and malwa in clay-pots  
But the dog of kivulu.  
Lies by; with nothing to drink;  
Nobody call it Acaali, the bitch,  
It looks on at the trenches-  
And drinks the water from the cattle shed

Ralph Bitamazire

### Questions

- i. What is the setting in the poem above?
- ii. What is the subject matter of the poem?

## **SUBJECT MATTER AND THEME.**

This refers to what the persona talks about i.e the events and the actions of the poem while theme refers to what the readers or listeners learn from the persona's words (the central idea or conception from the poem)

Subject matter can therefore be referred to as the surface interpretation of what the poem is about. There is always a main reason or idea of particular interest to the writer/poet. Whereas themes can be clearly stated or indirectly done, there are always pointers to them. In fact, a poem can have one or more themes.

However, it should be noted that subject matter and theme are so interconnected/related to each other that theme is derived from subject matter.

### **Building the nation.**

Today I did my share  
In building the nation.  
I drove the Permanente 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 frial 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 a head  
And secretly smiling at his belated care on  
That I had not, but was slimming!

Upon which he said with a seriousness  
That amused more than annoyed me,  
Mwanainchi, I too had none!  
I attended to matters of states  
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 here this evening  
With terrible stomach pains  
The result of building a nation  
-different ways.  
Henry Barlow(Uganda)

The poem is about two nation builders. The driver who does his duty but the permanent secretary instead of attending to his official duties, builds his stomach. The poet's theme is a criticism to government officials who build neglect their official obligations towards the nation and even neglect fellow nation builders, hence the theme in the poem can be inefficiency, corruption, neglect of duty, incompetence, etc.

### **MOOD/ATMOSPHERE.**

Mood refers to the state of mind for the speaker or persona i.e the nature of his feelings that are evident/prevailing in his voice. Mood may be experienced or there may be one dominant mood

while in others,(poems) the mood may change with progress of the poem.

Mood is created through;

a . Sound effects (acoustics) which may include; one or a combination of the following;

- Rhyme
- Rhythm
- Alliteration
- Assonance
- Repetition
- Etc.

b .sound harmony i.e onomatopoeia; for example, click of cutting scissors, boom for a gunshot, hiss for a snake etc

### **common adjectives used to describe mood**

- Happy/jovial/friendly
- Angry
- Bitter
- Violent
- Nostalgic/melancholy(sadness)
- Quiet/resigned
- Gay/attractive
- Anxious
- Somber/sol\mn
- Light hearted

- Desperate
- humorous
- relaxed
- pensive (in deep thoughts)
- tense (full of worry/anger)
- romantic

Generally, mood is reflected by forecasting on the total sum of elements in the text, i.e the subject, the environment and the writer's/ poet's feelings, all of which affect the reader's emotions. Thus the situation created for the reader, the state he assumes and his actual reactions constitute the mood

### **TURN AWAY.**

He was refused entry  
This man  
Who broke and hauled rock  
That built the foundation  
To this skyscraper.

He was refused entry  
This man  
Who laid the blocks

And created these walls.

He was refused entry  
This young man  
Without toes  
Who fell off the ladder  
Hoisting blocks.

A pin-striped three-pieced suit  
Sauntered in  
And reaped  
A perfect salute  
Despite indifference.

J.K Anunda.

Questions.

- a) What is the theme of the poem
- b) How appropriate is the title to the poem
- c) Comment on the mood.

### **TONE.**

Tone refers to the quality behind the speaking voice from which the feeling and attitude of the speaker can be inferred. It is that hidden meaning or quality behind one's voice.

Decipher tone, we have to closely listen to what is said and also pay closer attention to how it is said because how something is said affects what is said

When we closely listen to the speaker's voice, we can tell whether they are sad and melancholy, bitter or angry, soothing, romantic, meditative. The tone of the speaker reflects their emotions and attitude.

Activity.

What is revealed in these expressions.

- a) Good trial.....encouragement.
- b) "I cant believe it!" .....surprise
- c) Congratulations.....appreciation
- d) Nice guy.....appreciation
- e) Get lost.....anger

The tone or voice reveals either contempt or mockery, praise or genuine gratitude

### **How to infer tone**

Tone is determined by the context in which words have been spoken. Therefore, it is determined by the setting, diction, associations of imagery rhythm and sound effects etc. Above all, we need to focus more attention on the choice of words (diction)

used by the speaker/persona and the context in which they are used.

The speaker's tone affects the meaning of words and how the words are used greatly affects their meaning. Additionally, tone reflects the emotions and feelings of the speaker and therefore, his attitude towards the subject.

However, it is important to note that some poems have varying tones depending on the mood and attitude of the speaker towards the subject. In some poems where there are more than one speaker, the different speakers may use different tones as they may want to express different emotions and attitudes.

### **Some common adjectives for describing tone**

**Bitter**- when expressing a deep permanent pain of a bad past experience . e.g refer to “ if we must die” by Claude McKay.

**Angry**- expressing temporary displeasure.

**Sarcastic/ironic**- expressing the opposite of what is said in order to criticize e.g “ I speak for the bush” by Everest Stande.

**Defiant**- against a person, group, policy or institution e.g the poem “ Death be not proud” by John Donne.

**Parental-** expressing a message of counseling and guidance e.g poem, “Mother to son”

**Melancholy-** expressing sorrow or sadness e.g the poem, “By the village wells”, “The lonely soul”

**Romantic-** expressing love or affection for something or somebody e.g a poem “I love you my gentle one” by Bitamizire Ralph

**Soothing-** comforting

**Matter-of-fact-** not expressing any emotions, sincere or franc.

**Ambivalent-** expressing two opposite sides, uncertain.

**Sardonic-** showing that you are better than other people and do not take them seriously.

**Despondent-** sad

**Paranoid-** suffering a mental illness in which you wrongly behave that other people are trying to harm you or that you are very important.

**Condescending-** behaving as though you are very important and more intelligent than other people.

**Cynical-** thinking/behaving that people only do things to help themselves rather than for good or honest reasons.

**Sincere-** showing what you really think or feel.

**Scornful**- a strong feeling that somebody/something is stupid or not good enough usually shown by the way you speak.

**Enthusiastic**- feeling or showing a lot of excitement and interest about somebody/something.

**Earnest**- very serious and sincere.

**Dejected**- unhappy and disappointed

In conclusion, tone in written composition, is an attitude of a writer towards a subject or an audience. Tone is generally conveyed through the choice of words or the viewpoint of a writer on a particular subject.

Every written piece comprises a central theme or subject matter. The manner in which a writer approaches this theme and subject is the tone. The tone can be formal, informal, serious, comic and cheerful or it may be any other existing attitudes, consider the following examples of tone;

### **Example 1**

“I want to ask the authorities what is the big deal? Why don’t they control the epidemic? It is eating up lives like a monster”

“I want to draw the attention of the concerned authorities towards damage caused by an epidemic.



If steps were not taken to curb it, it will further injure our community”

The theme of both tone examples is the same. The only way we can differentiate between them is their separate tone. The tone in the first example is casual or informal while , it is more formal in the second.

### **Example 2**

Father; “we are going on a vacation”

Son; “That’s great!!”

The tone of son’s response is very cheerful.

### **Example 3**

Father; “We can’t go on vacation this summer”

Son; “Ok Great! That’s what I expected”

The son’s tone is sarcastic in the given response.

Look at how the tone in the following poem is admiring and wishful:

The courage that my mother had

The courage that my mother had  
Went with her, and is with her still:  
Rock from New England quarried;  
Now granite in a granite hill.

The golden brooch my mother wore  
She left behind for me to wear:  
Yet, it is something I could spare.

Oh, if instead she'd left to me  
The thing she took into the grave!-  
That courage like a rock, which she  
Has no more need of, and I have.

-by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Answer the following questions.

- a) How effective is the use of comparison in this poem?
- b) Discuss the internal structure of this poem.
- c) What is more important in a person's life? Personality or possessions? Support your answer with reason.
- d) What other thing or things can make a person's legacy? And why?
- e) What does the speaker mean when she says,  
"The courage that my mother had  
Went with her, and is with her still"?

## **ATTITUDE**

Attitude is defined as the mood/feeling or frame of mind of a person. According to the definition, there is an overlapping meaning between mood and

attitude, in the words, “feeling and mind.” Therefore, attitude refers to the nature of feelings and thoughts of the person towards the subject matter or actions in the poem. The way we behave towards people in our every day interactions with them defines our attitude towards them. There are people we;

Hate, respect, fear, despise or admire. The same situations prevails in poetry. A poet treats his subject matter/characters the same way we treat people and situations in an ordinary life.

### **Common adjectives for describing attitude.**

- Despising/contemptuous/disdainful/disrespectful.

These words are used when the poet talks about a subject or character or place or event they look down on what they speak e.g the poem “I speak for the bush” by Everest Standar, “Death be not proud”

- Admiration

When a poet shows great admiration of a person or thing or event, e.g Owuor Kembo, in which the persona uses expressions that reveal her admiration for the husband

## **Owuor Kembo**

Women have given birth to sons  
But non are like Owuor  
The son of Kembo of the line of Maroko  
My friend, my husband

Men live with their wives  
Like cats and dogs, ravens and chicken  
But not the son of Kembo  
My friend, my husband.

When I first set my eyes on him  
So tall. So handsome. So full of Nyadhi  
My heart was smitten within me  
By my friend, my husband.

My father demanded thirty head  
And the son of Kembo did not demur  
Paid up like a real man  
My friend, my husband.

Yes women have had sons  
But none will ever be like Owuor  
The son of Kembo of the blood of Maroko  
My friend, my husband

(from The River and The Source by Margaret Ogola.

- a) Who is the persona in this poem?
- b) Describe the relationship between the persona and Owuor Kembo
- c) Describe the character of Owuor Kembo as portrayed in this poem
- d) What is the tone of this poem?
- e) What is the effect of repetition in the poem?
- f) What is the effect of using vernacular in the poem?

➤ Reverence/respect.

Reverence refers to great respect for someone or something. It is associated with sacred people, objects or events.

➤ Loving/liking

The persona shows a loving attitude towards someone or something e.g in the poem “I love you my gentle one”, “I met a thief”

➤ Fear

A poet/persona may express his fear towards a person or thing or situation.

➤ Hatred/Dislike

This is the opposite of liking and loving e.g a poem “Song of a worker”

➤ **Ambivalent**

When the persona has mixed feelings about someone or something e.g one may admire a person and yet despise him/her for a negative trait that they possess.

### **How to infer Attitude**

Attitude is another aspect related to the speaker/persona after tone and mood. Attitude is inferred from the point of view of the persona in the text, regardless of whether it is the poet himself or an assumed person. Our duty is simply to analyze the feelings and thoughts of the speaker towards the subject matter being described in the text. On no account, we are supposed to be concerned with our thoughts/feelings towards the subject but rather with those of the persona.

When infer attitude by examining the word choice (diction) and the speaker’s tone of voice. Generally, tone and language are a vivid reflection of attitude. When we listen to a speaker’s inflection of voice, we can decipher whether he cherishes what he is

talking about or he is annoyed and disgusted. For example, things/people we admire to revere, we use praising tone while we use angry tone when talking about things that annoy/irritate us. This is a pointer that both tone and attitude are closely related.

NOTE.

Where as it is acceptable to describe attitude as positive or negative or indifferent, these adjectives are too general and relative in meaning. Therefore, it is advisable that after using them, state the specific adjectives that qualify the general ones. For instance in a poem, after saying that the attitude is positive, go ahead and say for instance that it is clear that the persona is proud and respectful of her husband.

### **The Renegade**

My brother, you blush your teeth in response  
to every hypocrisy

My brother with gold rimmed glasses

You give your master a blue-eyed-faithful  
look

My poor brother in immaculate evening dress

Screaming and whispering and pleading in the  
parlous of condescension  
We pity you  
Your country's burning sun is nothing but a  
shadow  
On your serene civilized brow  
And the thought of your grandmother's hut  
Bring blushes to your face that is bleached  
And while you trample the bitter red soil of  
Africa  
Let these words of anguished keep time with  
your restless step  
Oh I am lonely so lonely here  
David Diop

The poem "The renegade" evokes the attitude of hatred. It is an address to Africans who have imbibed the culture of the western world and have made it part of their very lives. They have assimilated to a colonial ways of living. The speaker here, urges the Africans to be contented with their culture other than the western culture of hypocrisy.

### **LANGUAGE IN POETRY.**

The form of poetry (shortness or brevity) dictates the poet's choice and arrangement of words in a



skilful manner. In order that a poem may be considered good, the poet should not only be able to choose words appropriately, but also arrange them skillfully to express his or her ideas effectively and beautifully in limited words. The ability of a poet to select or choose words in the poem is diction.

In studying poetry, diction is a very fundamental feature in literary criticism. To analyze diction well, one needs to take note of several aspects and linguistic concepts both in considering and following analysis.

### **DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION.**

The sense of words in poetry matters a lot. Words in literary works have denotative and connotative meanings.

**DENOTATION** is the literal meaning of a word found in the dictionary.

**CONNOTATION** is the suggested or implied meaning associated with a word beyond its dictionary definition, or denotation. Connotation is the emotional response evoked by a word.

In simple terms, words are normally used at two linguistic levels; the primary level and the secondary level. At the primary level, words carry denotative

sense/literal      meaning/plain      sense/dictionary  
meaning'

However, often times in poetry words are used to mean much more than the ordinary or dictionary or something different all together. This is the connotative level. It is the additional meaning carried by a word according to the context of application.

### **Examples.**

1. "I shall always remember how cheerfully the birds sang that dawn."
2. "The events of that day marked the dawn of our surprise."
3. "Having failed to escape, it dawned on her that her future was ruined."

The word "dawn" has been used in all the three sentences above, but in different contexts.

**Sentence 1.** Dawn has been used literary/denotatively to mean early morning or break of day.

**Sentence 2.** Dawn has been transferred to mean the light and hope associated with the beginning of an experience.

**Sentence 3.** Dawn has been used to connote that it became clear or she got an

understanding that she was ruined (in danger)

In the last two examples/sentences, dawn can be said to have been used figuratively.

It is a duty of the student of literature to learn to distinguish between literally and figurative or connotative use of language. Through this, the poet's or writers' meaning and intension can be easily inferred/interpreted/discerned.

### **WORDS, MEANING AND CONTEXT.**

To arrive at the meaning in a poem, it is not important to consider the meaning of individual words. Words do not make much sense if they are considered out of context. This is because there is no intrinsic relationship or sense between words and objects they name e.g the word "house" and the structure we live in.

Therefore, words only make sense to us by considering the context in which they are used or circumstance in which they are used.

Context meaning is inferred by examining the words that come before and those that come after the word in question. Each word has an immediate context and what is called total context. Immediate context is the verse/sentence/ phrase of which the

word in question belongs where as total context is the meaning which the whole poem makes.

Words acquire more meaning and force through being associated with others as opposed to when they are considered in isolation. Through this, poets create multiple meanings in a poem. One needs to be sensitive to the relationship between individual words and their context or their words they are associated with.

### **Exploring diction**

- I. Identify the key words which the poet employs to establish the leading idea he wants to communicate which words immediately capture your attention?  
In which sense have they been used by the poet?  
One should have the ability to identify the meaning which the poet has intended these words to carry.
- II. Group the words which have similar connections or describe the same thing or feeling. These are very essential in communicating the meaning, tone, intention, attitude, etc in the poem.
- III. Identify the words in the poem which have been used in contrast with each other.

- IV. The poem should be read word by word (even aloud) then read it line by line, stanza by stanza and then reflect on the overall context of the poem.

### **Meaning of words**

It is words that make language change and grow continuously. However, the meaning of words keep shifting or changing with time and context. This also applies to images and symbols. For example the word “nice” means pleasant, good looking, but in the 16<sup>th</sup> century English it meant “foolish.” It then changed gradually to mean “strange”, rare, delicate, over refined. Besides, there are words that carry multiple meanings which calls for the reader to be very careful in order to judge appropriately which meaning is intended by the poet.

“Senior Antonio Belmont is a lady  
She is so fair  
And fairer than the word itself”  
(quoted from Bossonio’s statement in  
Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice)

The use of the word “fair” in the above extract is an illustration of meaning is ambiguous. Ordinarily (literary) the word fair means “not

good enough” but Shakespeare uses it to imply very good or so beautiful.

Due to shifting meaning of words and their relationship, context is vital to understanding the poet’s message.

Writers/poets often manipulate language and hence their meaning is not always direct. If a student or reader does not put this into consideration, grave mistakes are bound to be made in interpretation, particularly from classical writings.

### **Appropriateness of Diction**

In order to explore appropriateness of word choice, there is need to ponder why has the poet used a particular verb/adjective or adverb and not those words that have alternative meaning? Several verbs can be used to describe particular words.

CRYING- sobbing, wailing, shedding tears, etc

GOOD- nice, beautiful, fair, attractive.

Poets choose only those words they think would portray their emotions or actions or situations they are describing or presenting to their audience.

### **Activity.**

Consider these statements by the doctor

- I. "Your mother has died this morning."
- II. "Your mother kicked the bucket this morning."
- III. "Your mother passed away this morning,"  
The first reply from the doctor makes us assume that he/she is callous and unfeeling because the word "died" is harsh.  
The second reply; kicked the bucket, has humorous connotations and those not portray pity or sympathy.  
The third reply is appropriate. The word "pass away" is not as harsh as that of "die" or not as playful as kicked the bucket although the same message is being communicated.

### **Piano and Drums**

When at break of day at river side  
I hear jungle drums telegraphing  
The mystic rhythm, urgent, raw  
Like bleeding flesh, speaking of  
Primary youth and the beginning,  
I see the panther ready to pounce  
The Leopold snarling about to leap  
And the hunters crouch with spears poised;

And my blood ripples, turns torrent,

Topples the years and at once I'm  
In my mother's lap a suckling;  
At once I'm walking simple paths with no  
involutions,  
Rugged, fashioned with the naked  
Warmth of hurrying feet and groping hearts  
In green and wild flowers pulsing.

Then I hear a wailing piano  
Solo speaking of complex ways  
In tear-furrowed concerto;  
Of faraway lands  
And new horizons with  
Coaxing diminuendo, counterpoint  
Crescendo. But lost in the labyrinth  
Of its complexities, it ends in the middle  
Of a phrase at a dagger point.

And I lost in the morning mist  
Of an age at a riverside, keep  
Wandering in the mystic rhythm  
Of jungle drums and the concerto.  
Gabriel Okara.

## **IMAGERY AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.**



An image is defined as a word or expression used by the poet to help the reader imagine an idea or concept that he/she wants to express.

Most explanations of imagery link it with use of mental pictures. This is correct, but quite incorrect because it leaves out images that are not visual.

All images are not visual(pictorial). When our mind is at work, we think creatively/imaginatively.

In doing so, the mind does not operate only through the sense of sight or pictures. Indeed the mind operates through all the human senses.

Types of images

**a. Visual images.**

These stimulate our sense of sight for example;

- She is a rose amidst thorns.

In the above statement, Rose is a symbol of beauty while thorns symbolize danger. Therefore this image of rose amidst thorns associates/means beautiful but in danger.

**b. Auditory/Audile Images.**

These stimulate our sense of hearing, e.g

- It was such a deafening explosion. We imagine the noise of thunder with our ears.

**c. Tactile images.**

These stimulate our sense of touch. They arouse responses to stimulations to do with heat, cold.

**d. Olfactory image.**

These stimulate a sense of smell, e.g

- The choking smell of rotting garbage.

**e. Gustatory images.**

These stimulate a sense of taste. For example;

- Her voice uttered fresh banana juice.

Through using images, poets intend to present objects and situations clearer/more vividly. They enable us to see, hear, touch and smell just as they do. Therefore it is better to say that imagery is that language that evokes the mind to produce sensations that may appeal to human senses.

Lets take an example of “An African Thunderstorm” by David Rubadiri )

An African Thunderstorm.

From the west,

Clouds come hurrying with the wind

Turning

Sharply

Here and there like a plague of locusts  
Whirring, tossing up things on its tail like a  
mad man  
Chasing nothing.

Pregnant clouds  
Ride stately on its back  
Gathering to perch on hills  
Like dark sinister wings  
The wind whistles by  
And trees bend to let it pass.  
In the village  
Screams of delighted children  
Toss and turn  
In the din of whirling wind,  
Women  
Babies clinging on their backs  
Dart about  
In and out  
Madly  
The wind whistles by  
Whilst trees bend to let it pass  
Clothes wave like tattered flags  
Flying off  
To expose dangling breasts  
As jiggered blinding flashes

Rumble, tremble, and crack  
Amidst the smell of fired smoke  
And the pelting match of the slam  
David Rubadiri.

Images are used by poets to appeal the reader's sense and intellect so that the former and latter work and discern the qualities and physical out look of the objects in relation to the subject under description.

Just like other words in poetry, images too work through association, comparison, and suggestion.

Forcuse on Winston Churchil's description of Uganda;

The pearl of Africa.

He wanted;

- a. To appear to our sense of sight to imagine the visual images of the pearl such as; shining, bright, glittering, beautiful.
- b. To appeal to our intellect to think about other qualities beyond the visual, for example, preciousness, uniqueness and rarity.
- c. To compare these qualities of the pearl to Uganda, i.e through association, comparison and suggestion.

Poets create images and choose words with suggestive meaning to provoke the reader's mind to examine the suggestion of the word and associate them with what is being described. Refer to J.P Clarke's "Ibadan"

Ibadan

Ibadan

Running splash of rust

And gold-flung and scattered

Among seven hills like broken

China in the sun.

J.P Clacke.

### **IMAGES AND POETRY.**

Images in a poem should be considered in terms of the way they are used and in terms of how appropriately they have been used/applied, for example;

Do these images assist the poet to give or portray the intended effect in the poem? In other words; do these words assist the poet to convey the meaning he desires?

To answer these questions, we need to have knowledge of how image function.

- Inter-relationship between images.

Images are often chosen to work closely together to create meaning, which is cumulative (through different stages) where each image carries a component part of meaning of the entire poem.

- Relationship between images and other aspects of the poem.

We need to note that the elements of any poem are inter-related and the images do not work in isolation of others. The effectiveness of any image is governed by other elements such as;

- ✓ The overall tone of the poem.
- ✓ Rhythm of its language.
- ✓ Its contrast with other images
- ✓ Other poetic devices such as, punctuation

### **Foundation Images.**

There are some poems that have one or two images on which the meaning rotates. One image is introduced at the beginning and is gradually developed in the poem. In this case, failure to understand these images results in failure to understand the whole/entire poem.

In some of the poems, foundation images function as symbols. For example; Timothy Wangusa's "A strong wind", etc.

### **Descriptive Imagery.**

In some poems, poets intend to evoke a picture of overall impression of a scene or situation so that the reader sees it/feels about it as they did. This is achieved through closely combining or qualifying their language with descriptive verbs and adjectives in order to create a specific impression or mood or atmosphere on the reader. The reader is drawn into sharing the poet's feelings. In such poems, there is always a balance between figurative expressions and the normal function words (adjectives and adverbs) in order to paint a vivid picture or seen as experienced by the poet.

### **Old Granny**

A little freezing spider  
Legs and arms gathered in her chest  
Rocking with flu  
I saw old Granny  
At Harare market  
It was past nine of the night

When I saw the dusty crumpled spider  
A torn little blanket  
Was her web  
Bonus Zimonyo.

### Questions.

- a. Describe the speaker's feelings towards the old woman.
- b. Comment on the use of imagery and diction in the poem
- c. What effect is achieved by the use of the first person "I"

The poem paints a vivid picture as observed by the speaker/persona. She is at a deserted city market at night (lonely and homeless)

In the poem, vividness is achieved through;

- Foundation image of the spider which reflects
- Adjectives are used to qualify the image of the spider, for example, little, freezing, small, crumpled, dusty. There are other non-figurative details of granny such as; Rocking with flu- she is sick



The poet creates a picture of old Granny as he conveys his feeling as he sees/observes the old woman.

## **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**

The word “Figurative” is a term that is derived from shape/picture. However, in literature, the term refer to impression or imagination i.e to figure out an idea hence, there are expressions that require the mind to think, to imagine or form impressions not plainly or ordinarily. Therefore, figurative language is sometimes defined as language that uses indirect expressions.

In our daily communication, we use figurative language, including our illiterate folks, consciously or unconsciously. Figurative expressions are always used;

- To color our speeches or articles by being expressive and out of the ordinary.
- To express ourselves clearer because images work as verbal signals to people with active minds.

- To load our expressions with more meaning for better effect on the audience.

### **Figures of Speech**

It is important to note that figures of speech are forms of imagery due to the fact that they derive their effect by using figurative expression. Majority of the figures of speech use comparison. They concentrate on the relationship between the subject and an analogy. The comparison throws more light on an idea to aid our understanding.

Examine the following expressions;

1. As fast as a cheetah- speedy
2. Chicken hearted- cowardly
3. Stone hearted- merciless

Other expressions give a photographic and clear description of the physical qualities of what we are describing.

For example;

An army of ants. It gives a vivid impression of both the orderliness and vastness of number of the ants.

Swifter than eagles; quick/fast  
Blood-red; bright red  
Stronger than a lion- might/great  
strength.

Here are some of the common figurative expression in literary criticism. However, they should not be crammed but their meaning be internalized to become part and parcel of our daily use.

### **Metaphor and Simile.**

These are among the most commonly used figurative expressions which involve both comparison and analogy.

#### **i. Simile.**

This is a figure of likeness used to draw a comparison between two different things using words of likeness such as; like, as, resembles, etc.

For example.

The presence of our dear teacher in the classroom was like a ray of sunshine in a darkened room.

The love she has for her only daughter is as abundant as the light of the sun.

## ii. **Metaphor.**

Is sometimes referred to as direct or implied comparison that creates new meaning or picture. Metaphor transfers the qualities possessed by one thing to another and equates it as if they are the same thing.

For example;

- a. A house wife may describe her husband as a monster of a man; this means the husband is ruthless, remorseless, cruel.
- b. From Ralph Bintamizire's I love you my gentle one;
- c. "my love is fresh milk in the Rubindi"- this means purity of love.

### **Metonym and synecdoche**

This is an expression in which a striking part of an object is used to represent the whole or the whole to signify the part. For example,

- i. Thousands of hands waved to the pope,.....very many people.
- ii. I was brought up under this roof,.....house.

- iii. The island is very hospitable;.....islanders/people at the island.

### **personification**

Through this figure of speech, non-human objects/inanimate objects or abstract things or ideas are presented with human qualities in order to present such ideas striking or coloring. For example,

- Mother country---nourishes
- Idle whispering coconut towers(refer to “I met a thief” by A.S Bukenya)

### **Symbolism.**

Symbolism derives from the word symbol which means signal or indicator. Symbolism therefore is an image that stands for something different from what it is. Unlike the metaphor and simile, a symbol does not have any similarity with what it stands for.

For example;

The cross- Christianity

The crown- kingship

A red rose- love

White- purity

Darkness- evil

An olive branch- peace  
The crescent- islam  
The heart- love  
The drum- cultural heritage

Symbols indirectly reveal what they represent and their meaning is deduced after closely reading and analyzing the text. Additionally, an understanding of life and conventionally, literally and cultural symbols is also very relevant.

A red rose- love  
Hooting of an owl- doom  
A dove- peace

There is no resemblances between an owl/dove/rose, etc with what it represents (no analogy)/ resemblance but with time they have come to be associated with them, for example, the Uganda national flag or any other national flag does not resemble a particular country in any way, but because we learnt it over that way over time. The same includes all the road signs and the punctuation marks we use.

### **Types of symbols.**

- a. Public symbols.

These are symbols that have attained their meaning with time as to have a permanent or uniform interpretation (ie every one make the same interpretation about them) in this category are all symbols drawn from religious theologies and literature. For example the cross, color green-peace.

b. Private symbols.

These are developed by the writer in the course of his work. Such that some images become central to the meaning. Such symbols are constantly referred to as because their interpretation fosters discovery of meaning or it is the foundation image on which the text is built. For example, Gabriel Okara “piano and Drums” and Kofi Awoono’s “The weaver bird”

**Meaning in symbols.**

We need to know that symbols attain their meaning over time, but such meaning does not remain fixed. After sometime, they may acquire new meaning whether they are private symbols or public symbols.

A symbol will therefore make meaning to us by judging appropriately the context in which it has been used.

Note;

Some symbols have meanings that are double-edged or contrasting. For example;  
Red color- brotherhood/danger  
Therefore the red color in a poem has to be inferred depending on the context of a poem to derive the correct interpretation. Refer to 'the sick rose' by William Blake

### **The sick Rose**

O Rose thou art sick!  
The invisible worm  
That flies in the night  
In the howling storm

Has found out thy bed  
Of crimson joy;  
And his dark secret love  
Does thy life destroy.

The Rose is a flower image symbolizing youth and beauty in the conventional sense.



It reflects sensuality and richness of color. With time the Rose has been developed to symbolize youth and beauty as pointed out earlier.

In William Blake's poem, the Rose is used within extra connotation of innocence and vulnerability.

The poet addresses the Rose directly (apostrophe) 'O Rose thou art sick.' The Rose is sick due to ,

- Stupid innocence and therefore, cannot sense the impending danger/looming danger, that is 'the invisible worm' which is about to destroy it. This represent innocent sexuality and beauty.
- "thy bed of crimson joy "- sensuousness and sexuality

Crimson joy reflects the rose as attractive and pleasurable

The worm symbolize infection and disease or brooding passion/evil temptation that is out to destroy the beauty and innocence of the Rose.

The worm flies in the night. It is invisible suggests secrecy and danger.

The howling storm signifies chaos/uncontrollable wild passion.

Note the way the symbols are interconnected in the short poem to create a sexual image.

The worm would also suggest men's devilish and brooding passion that destroys instead of creating and hence brings sickness to the young virgins;

“And his secret love, does thy life destroy.”

Therefore, symbols do not merely stand for something indeed they are in the thing itself, reflected in the meaning they evoke. Symbols are largely affected by the context in which they are presented or used. Refer to “The Idol” by Laban Erapu.

### **ALLEGORY.**

This is a form of imagery that is derived from the word ‘allude’; meaning to refer to something indirectly or by suggestion. Allegories may refer to historical events, personalities, events, customs, etc which the readers are familiar with to convey a vivid picture of the subject being handled.

For example, hypocrites are often referred to as Judases due to the biblical fact that Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus Christ.

Some poems use allegory to develop their messages.

An allegory presents vehicles (signifiers) that are linked to one another to make a meaningful narrative without meaning the tenor (the thing/subject being referred to)

To arrive at the meaning, we have to use our knowledge of life and history. Therefore, allegory assumes that there is shared knowledge or experiences between the writer and the readers about what is being referred to.

If one doesn't know anything about the tenor in an allegory, then ought to be no possibility of deferring interpretations. The inter-relationship between the characters, incidences and the entire subjects of the poem/text should lead us to one interpretation. Refer to "The weaver Bird" by Kofi Awoonor.

### **The Weaver Bird**

The weaverbird built in our home

And laid its eggs on our only tree  
We did not want to send it away  
We watched the building of the nest  
And supervised the egg-laying.  
And the weaver returned in the guise of the  
owner  
Preaching salvation to us that owned the  
house  
They say it came from the west  
Where the storms at sea had felled the gulls  
And the fishers dried their nets by lantern  
light  
Its sermon is the divination of ourselves  
And our new horizons limit at its nest  
But we cannot join the prayers and answers  
of the communicants.  
We look for new homes everyday  
For alters we strive to re-build  
The old shrines defiled from the weaver's  
excrement.

Kofi Awoonor

### **FORM AND STRUCTURE.**

The term structure refers to the shape or form of a piece of writing as a whole. That is to say; it's pattern of construction and

arrangement of words. Normally in poetry, the arrangement is such that words make lines, lines make stanzas and stanzas and rhythmic patterns, etc. These ultimately give shape and meaning to the poem. A poem is a unifying wall (words, images, rhymes and rhythms) and should therefore have a recognizable shape referred to as form.

The word form therefore has been involved to mean the inter-relationship between a poem's parts or the logical and associational relationships among words, images, lines, stanzas, rhythm and other elements of a poem. On the other hand, structure is referred to as the organization of the parts or units of the poem into an order that conveys the message of the poem.

In this case, the term parts refers to as images, stanzas, rhyme and rhythm.

Note;

There are indeed no discernible distinctions between the definitions of form and structure because they both refer to how the arrangement of the different parts of a poem are arranged or organized to

create a meaning. Therefore, it is permissible to use both terms, form and structure synonymously/interchangeably.

### **Form And Meaning.**

Poetic form or structure is comprised of words, images, lines, stanzas, rhyme and rhythm as pointed out earlier.

We therefore need to put all these aspects together to see how they interrelate to develop a poem's meaning.

Form and meaning move hand in hand due to the fact that without form(shape) thoughts/ ideas cannot be expressed meaningfully.

Just like architects who design the shapes or structure of the buildings to suit the purpose of which they are being built, poets also design poems in a similar way. The structure of a school, hospital or church, etc greatly contrast each other due to their different purposes. Due to the unique difference in the structures, we can easily tell which is which. This imply that form conveys meaning and therefore subject matter and form are inseparable, just like

the body and soul, as expressed by Karl Klaus.

We must have the ability to explain how the aspects of form contribute to the meaning of a poem as a whole entity. We also need to note how lines and stanzas and punctuations marks mark the differences portrayed. In other poems, poets use structures to make a visual correspondence to the subject portrayed in a poem, for example, a tear drop, wings disorder in the lines, that is to say; a mixture of short and long lines etc. They use form to enact the situations and portray the emotions, feelings and mood they are writing about. If such a form is changed, the interrelationship of sound and rhythm are upset and consequently the entire meaning. For example, sonnets are strictly organized, logical and harmonized. Such a form would sharply contrast the subject. This is due to the fact that form is usually a reflection of feeling and thought in a poem.

### **External and Internal Structure.**

The term external structure is used to refer to those aspects of a poem's form which can be seen with the eye without scrutiny eg. Stanza patterns (arrangement of words, lines in stanzas and punctuation marks. Indeed external structure refers to the visual communication form from the poem as we look at it. It involves the regularity or irregularity of lines and stanzas, the dominant punctuation marks and the general shape and size of the poem.

Alternatively, internal structure involves aspects of a poem which cannot be communicated by the eye. These include the thought patterns of the poem and aspects of prosody (sound and rhythm). There is a close relationship between external and internal structure of a poem and therefore it is not worth separating them, for example; rhythm as an aspect of internal structure is largely affected by the way words are arranged in the lines and the arrangement of lines in a stanza, yet stanza and lineation are both aspects of external structure.



## **External Structure.**

- i. Stanza structures and Verse paragraphing.

They are major structural divisions of any poem. They comprise of lines which constitute a unity of any poem. They comprise of lines which constitute a unity of sense.

Stanzas are groups of lines which follow a particular pattern into which a poem is divided. A stanza is characterized by;

- a.** The number of lines
- b.** The meter of its lines
- c.** Its rhyme scheme

Some stanza names refer to special forms based on the number of their lines, for example;

- ✓ Couplets- two line stanzas
- ✓ Triplets/tersest- three-line stanzas
- ✓ Quatrains- four lines
- ✓ Sestets- six lines
- ✓ Octaves- eight lines

- ✓ Spenser- this was first used by Edmund Spenser. The ninth line was a conclusion to the preceding eight lines.
- ✓ Sonnet- fourteen line stanzas (special form)

ii. Lineation.

This refers to arrangement or patterning of lines in a poem. Contrary to sentences in a paragraph lines in poetry are not necessarily units of complete sense ( the reason they do not have full stops at the end)

Lineation in the poetic sense is a formal structural division of one or more feet. In this respect, foot means the possible subdivision of a line by the sounds of words.

## **FORM AND STRUCTURE IN SUMMARY.**

Form refers to the overall constitution of a poem in terms of

- Number of stanzas
- Number of lines per stanza
- Line length

- Sound pattern for example, meter, rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, onomatopoeia, consonance, assonance among others. Form is sometimes called external structure.

Form is the organization of ideas in a poem. It includes among other things; the shape of the poem and organization of its rhythms. When writing about form, endeavor to notice whether there is a regular form in terms of rhyme scheme, lineation per stanza, rhythmic regularity and equal division in stanzas.

Structure is the organization of parts of a poem into an order that is coherent and meaningful in terms of the content of the poem as a whole. It is how meaning and effect are developed using the various aspects of form. For example, stanzas, number of lines, line length and sound patterns.

Question

What devices have been used to achieve effectiveness in the poem below?

### **A True Child**

A child is like a rare bird.

A child is precious like coral.

A child is precious like brass.

You cannot buy a child on the market.  
Not for all the money in the world.  
The child you can buy for money is a slave.  
We may have thirty laborers.  
Only a child brings us joy.  
One's child is one's child.  
The buttocks of our child are not so flat  
That we should tie the beads on another  
child's hips.  
It may have a watery head or a square head,  
One's child is one's child.  
It is better to leave behind a child  
Than to let slaves inherit one's house.  
One must not rejoice too soon over a son.  
Only the one who is buried his child,  
Is the one who has truly borne a child.  
On the day of our death, our hand cannot  
hold a single courage.  
We need a child to inherit our belongings.  
Yoruba Traditional

**Devices used in the poem above include;**

- i. Repetition has been used, for example  
“one's child is one's child”  
This has been used for emphasis and to  
maintain rhythm.

- ii. There has been use of similes to illustrate and broaden the value of a child. For instance in the poem, a child is mentioned that he is like a rare bird and that a child is precious like brass.
- iii. Hyperbole or exaggeration in the poem has been used, for example weird images such as "... watery head..." "... square head..." have been used to mean that a child's physical or mental shortcomings do not diminish its value.
- iv. There has been use of African or Yoruba English, for example "one's child is one's child." This kind of English makes the poem relevant to an African reader or listener.
- v. The use of straight forward simple English makes the poem accessible to a pedestrian reader and critic.
- vi. There is rhythm in the poem that is continuous or spontaneous which heightens one's emotions. There is a musicality produced as a result of this rhythm, which sounds nice to one's ears.
- vii. The poem is just one whole stanza to maintain the spontaneity or oneness of ideas.

- viii. Free verse has been used in the poem. There is free expression of ideas in the poem without any prescribed regular pattern.

### **SOME POETIC DEVICES AND EFFECTIVENESS**

Poetic devices in simple terms help the writer/poet to achieve his goals of either informing/educating, warning, satirizing, appreciating, reminiscing, among others.

However, the effectiveness of a certain device may depend on a given passage or poem; the effectiveness can never be constant in every piece of writing.

The devices/styles used in poems, prose writings and passages among others include;

#### **Similes.**

Similes are elements of poetry that are based on comparison between two different object. Direct words such as; “like”, “as”, “so”, “resemble”, “than”, etc are used . for example;

Her words are **like** music to me

Her teeth are **as** white **as** snow

Similes broaden, extend, illuminate and deepen meaning.

#### **Metaphors.**

Metaphors are patterns of comparison that also illuminate, broaden, extend and deepen meaning of a text. They bring together two different things and create some similarity between them. For example;

He is a dog

Her words are music to me

Metaphors enable writers to magnify their ideas using few words.

### **personification**

This is a poetic device where none-human objects or abstract things are given human qualities. This element of poetry is also regarded as a subtype of metaphor because it is an implied comparison in which the figurative term is always a human being. Abstract ideas, inanimate object or aspects of nature are described as if they were human, for example;

“Time intrudes and steals my days.” This line refers to time as a human being and that it is a thief.

### **Analogy.**

It is a comparison of similarities in two or more things or situations. It tells of the relationship between things that are usually considered rather different.

### **Epigram.**

Is an element of poetry that is witty and brief. It is closely related to a proverb and is frequently used to introduce attitude. for example;

Familiarity breeds contempt.

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

### **Paradox.**

It is an element of poetry that is usually a phrase or a statement which seems absurd or self contradictory and therefore impossible but has an idea to put across. It seems contrary to common sense.

It conveys truth under the form of absurdity. Paradox is an assertion seemingly opposed to common sense, but may yet have truth in it. For example;

There is no one as poor as a wealth miser.

She uses her foolish wisdom to advise.

Death, be not proud.

### **Irony.**

Iron is a contrast between reality and what seems to be real. It is also a form of understatement or overstatement in which the intended meaning is often the opposite of the parent meaning. What is meant is usually the opposite of the surface



meaning. It is the gap between what is said and what is meant.

Irony can be used to amuse, surprise, shock, censure one's behavior and to create ambiguity among pedestrian critics.

### **I speak for the bush.**

When my friend sees me  
He swells and parts like a frog  
Because I talk the wisdom of the bush!  
He says we from the bush  
Don't know how to enjoy  
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 night clubs  
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 stomach  
Wonder about the streets  
Of this civilized world?

Teach me, my friend, the trick,  
So that my eyes may not  
See those whose 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 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.

Irony in the above poem is employed in the third stanza where the speaker ironically asks his friend to teach him the trick as to how they can live with hungry and homeless people whose plight is ignored.

He also asks his friend to tell him how (why) the city people are only concerned about money even in love affairs.

### **Vivid description.**

To paint a vivid picture for easy understanding of the subject matter

.

### **Rhetorical questions.**

This is a question that is posed to make a point or emphasize one but not to obtain an answer. The answer is always obvious.

Rhetorical questions are to convince the listener to accept the speaker's view;

They also tickles the reader's interest.

### **Alliteration**

Is the repetition of similar or identical consonant sounds that begin syllables. For example;

“She was a busy, bold beautiful girl”

Precisely it is the use of the same letter to begin a series of words relating to the same topic. It is a means of highlighting ideas by words containing the same consonant sound for example the repeated “m” in murmuring.

### **Enjambment/ run on is used to;**

- i. Emphasize the subject matter, theme or idea
- ii. Draw the reader’s attention
- iii. Create pause.

### **PROSE.**

Prose is the literature that is written in sentences and paragraph form.

The term “prose” refers to any writing or written language without metrical structure, as distinguished from poetry. It is the type of writing which uses paragraphs, clauses, sentences and punctuation marks. Thus, the word prose refers to all writing that are not in verse form.

Prose is majorly dominated by narratives whether fiction or nonfiction, drama or poetry, all have purpose that readers must figure out or find. People while writing literary work do it for a purpose and perspective.

### **Prose purpose.**

A writer usually writes for one or more than these purposes

- a. To express him/herself.
- b. To inform or explain.
- c. To entertain.
- d. To persuade.
- e. To mock or ridicule.
- f. To express an opinion.
- g. To tell a story.

Read the following poems below

#### *Poem 1*

#### **Crazy Peter Prattles**

So what is the hullabaloo  
about the minister's ailing son  
that he makes boiling news?

How come it was not even whispered

when Tina's hospital bed crawled with  
maggots  
and her eyes oozed pus  
because the doctors lacked gloves?

What about Kassajja's only child  
who died because the man with the key  
to the oxygen room was away?

I have seen the queues  
of emaciated mothers clinging to  
babies with translucent skins  
faint in line  
and the lioness of a nurse  
commanding tersely  
"get up or leave the line"

Didn't I hear it rumoured that  
the man with the white mane  
and black robe  
whose mouth stores the justice of the land  
ushered a rape case out of court  
because the seven year old  
failed to testify?

Suzan Kiguli

## Questions

- a. What is the poem about?
- b. How appropriate is the title of the poem?
- c. Describe the dominant atmosphere in the poem.
- d. What is the quality of the speaking voice in the poem?
- e. Comment on the intention of the poet.
- f. How is the message portrayed in the poem?
- g. What feelings does the poem evoke in you?

## Poem 2

### **DRY YOUR TEARS, AFRICA!**

Dry your tears, Africa!

Your children come back to you

Out of the storm and squalls of fruitless  
journeys

Thr' the crest of the wave and the

Bliss

Over the gold of the east

And the purple of the setting sun  
The peaks of the proud mountains  
And the grasslands drenched with light  
They return to you  
Out of the storm and squalls of fruitless  
journeys.

Dry your tears , Africa!  
We have drunk  
From all the springs  
Of ill-fortune  
And of glory.  
And our senses are now open  
To the splendor of your beauty  
To the smell of your forests  
To the charm of your waters  
To the cares of your sun.

Dry your tears, Africa!  
Your children come back to you  
Their hands full of playthings  
And their hearts full of love  
They return to clothe you in their dreams.

Bernard Dadie

Questions:

- a. Discuss the main subject of the poem



- b. Identify the speaker in the poem
- c. Comment on the following aspects of the poem
  - i. Tone
  - ii. mood
  - iii .Form
- d. What other poetic qualities does the poet use to convey his message?
- e. What lessons do you draw from the poem?

### **Prose and Author's perspective.**

The writer's perspectives are beliefs and attitudes as expressed in his writing. Such beliefs may be influenced by the writer's political views, social status, ethnic background, education, religion or economic position. Writer's perspective is closely related to the tone.

### **Characteristics of prose works.**

A student of literature should know and understand the characteristics of prose works before understanding and grasping the techniques used. Each kind of literature has particular

characteristics that identify and distinguish it from the rest of the types.

The following below are the characteristics of prose works of literature.

- I. Prose is written in continuous form, with sentences and paragraphs. Prose work is the use of language in an imaginative way. Thus prose work involves using language in an imaginative way.
- II. Prose work is dramatic. The writer creates a real or imaginative/imaginary world, and presents actions and reactions to this world in form of dialogues, conversations, symbols, images and vivid descriptions.
- III. Prose works are centered on narration. They are narratives.
- IV. Prose work are largely to render a message or messages. Messages or central ideas of prose are called themes.
- V. Prose work combine description, argumentation, exposition, compare and contrast, cause and effect, classification and other rhetorical forms to make the story line vivid and the message to come out as clearly as possible.

