

THE UGANDA LITERATURE TEACHERS' FRATERNITY  
LITERATURE TEACHERS' WORKSHOP ON NEW SYLLABUS (2021-2025)  
Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> Feb, 2020 – Nabisunsa Girls' Secondary School

**1. Preamble**

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Text and Author of focus: *The Return of Mgofu* by Francis Imbuga

**2. A synopsis**

A conflict arises between two formerly friendly communities in Mndika, an imaginary African state. It's the second conflict of its kind. Just like in the first conflict, the losing community is forced to take refuge in a neighboring country, Nderema, where they find a second home. Among the many that flee is a great elderly seer, Mgofu Ngoda who leaves with a young pregnant wife. He dies soon after crossing the border. His heavy wife is helped to find her way to Kadesa's shrine where there is also a camp for those who fled Mndika in the first conflict. She gives birth soon after arrival to a son who is named after his late father, Mgofu Ngoda.

Mgofu becomes a very useful person both in Kadesa's shrine and in Nderema. His counsel is sought and he is such a strong pillar in Nderema's development. His son becomes the personal assistant to the Prime Minister of Nderema and the persona doctor of the leader there. His daughter is also a well respected figure who is studying international relations at the University of Southampton.

The new progressive leader in Mndika, the country where Mgofu has his roots learns of Mgofu's existence. He embarks on efforts to bring back Mgofu Ngoda to Mndika, where he belongs. He sends emissaries who convince Mgofu to be the chief guest at the forthcoming National Remembrance Day.

Mgofu graces the occasion with his daughter, only for his health situation to deteriorate as he makes his speech.

**3. The title**

Mgofu Ngoda, is a Mndikan great seer who flees his country and dies in a foreign country. He leaves behind a pregnant wife who soon bears a son, Mgofu Ngoda. The son grows up in a foreign land and becomes very useful to the people of that land and as well as his own people who are also refugees in the same land. The new peace loving leader embarks on effort to bring Mgofu Ngoda home.

The title hence shows two forms of return; the old Mgofu returns to earth through his son and this son returns to Mndika, his homeland on the request of Mwami Mhando to be the chief guest at the national remembrance day celebrations.

**4. Setting**

The action happens in Nderema and in Mndika, two neighbor countries. The conflicts in Mndika force some citizens to flee the country and settle in Nderema where they are received well. They set up camp, Kadesa's camp.

The first scene happens in an open market place where we have people from all walks of life to show that the story in this play is meant to appeal to all of us.

Socially, Imbuga mainly shows two communities in Mndika who fight leading to some to take refuge in Nderema, the neighboring country.

The time shows both contemporary and traditional activities.

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## 5. Plot

### 1.1

In an open market place, Thori and Thoriwa his wife arrive with Thori pushing his wife in a wheelchair. They are messengers from the ancestors. Their dialogue reveals a conflict between two communities that had once lived in harmony. Suddenly there is aggression from one side towards another leading to loss of life, property and many flee land to take refuge in a neighboring country. Among those that flee is the great old half blind seer, Mgofu Ngoda. He leaves only with his heavily pregnant young wife to Nderema. Mgofu dies soon after crossing the border and his wife is helped to Kadesa's shrine where she gives birth soon after arrival.

This brief part acts as a prologue that helps us understand the source of the conflict and prepares us for what is to happen in the next scene.

### 1.2

Mude, a messenger from Mwami Rucho, the head of Nderema has been sent to Kadesa to warn her that a new conflict is brewing in Mndika. There is a lot of killings with the killers claiming to have been trained in Kadesa's camp to avenge their original suffering that led to their being refugees in Nderema. However, Mwami Rucho knows this is not true.

Bizia urgently brings information of a heavily pregnant woman and a man who are being led to the shrine. They are victims of the fighting in Mndika, seeking refuge just like their forefathers were forced to do in the first madness (first conflict). Kadesa instructs that the strangers are admitted and given hospitality. The heavy woman soon gives birth.

From the man, who is taken to be mad, we learn that the woman is the wife of the late seer, Mgofu Ngoda and that it is his son that has therefore been born to be his father's heir.

### 1.3

From Thori and Thorwa, we learn that the child grows up to follow in the footsteps of his late father. He becomes a very respected person whose counsel is sought in many respects. Like his father, he is a seer. He is a symbol of unity and Nderema gains much from his wisdom. They also confirm that Nderema is now his home.

We also learn that Mndika now has a very good leader, Mwami Mhando, an intelligent leader who is peace loving.

### 2.1

Mwami Mhando sends scouts to gather information about the existence of Mgofu in Nderema. The scouts have now returned and their revelations confirm that indeed, Mgofu Ngoda, the son of Mgofu Ngoda indeed exists. He is a great seer like his father, has lost his wife, has a son who is a personal doctor to the leader at Nderema, has a daughter studying in Europe and that he is now aged. Mwami Mhando resolves that Mgofu should be invited to grace the next national Remembrance Day celebrations.

### 2.2

Mhando has summoned two elders to whom he reveals his findings much to their shock. He stresses the need to bring Mgofu back home to where he belongs so that Mndika can gain from their own whom Nderema is currently gaining from. He also wants their advice on the people's demand that he should remain their leader.

He reveals that his wife, Mama Enos has advised him to listen to the people and remain leader on condition that he brings back Mgofu and that he marries another wife. The elders leave to go and give thought to these conditions.

### 2.1

The emissaries sent to talk to Mgofu to be the chief guest at the national remembrance day celebrations in Mndika arrived. They have already delivered the leader's invitation and Mgofu has discussed it with his just returned daughter, Nora. Mgofu promises to give his answer after fourteen days. He also reveals the reason for having chosen

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to wait for such a number of days, to the emissaries' shock, Mama Enos has died, and according to tradition, there must be fourteen days of mourning.

### 3.2

It's Remembrance Day in Mndika and Mgofu is the chief guest at the celebrations. He is flanked by his daughter Nora who is also given an opportunity to address the gathering. Mgofu is introduced by Mwami Mhando and is invited to make his speech. His speech has undertones of unity and peaceful coexistence. It's not long before he is caught by a fit of cough which persists that he must be carried off the dais amidst worry among the people present.

Thori and Thoriwa once again appear to give a befitting conclusion to the play.

## 6. Themes and ideas

Change

Good leadership vs Bad leadership

Peace and unity

Suffering

Violence

Enmity

Animosity between neighbors

## 7. Characters

Mwami Mhando: intelligent, peace loving, determined, firm, eloquent,

Mgofu Ngoda: intelligent, peace loving, loving

Kedesa: intelligent, peace loving, kind, hospitable, empathetic, respectful

Mwami Rucho: kind, intelligent, peace loving, sacrificial, respectful

## 8. Dramatic Techniques

Symbolism

Irony

Contrast

Music

Dreams

Monologue

## 9. Lessons

It's better to live in peace than in conflict

Good always triumphs over evil

War causes suffering

Change is a factor of life

Backward culture should be dealt away with

## 10. Relevance to society

Conflicts between communities/societal conflicts

Reconciliation

Refugees

Leaders blaming colonialism for present challenges

Leaders prolonging their stay in power claiming it's the will of the people

Strange traditions and culture.

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Text and Author of focus: ***Shadows of Time* by Victor Byamazima**

**2. A synopsis**

Flora is a secondary school student who will soon be sitting for her final exams. She lives with her elder sister Jane. Flora's craving for a job leads her into being sexually abused. She is also unknowingly used by Tom and Kit, car robbers who see her as the bait for their unsuspecting victims from whom they steal cars. However, she finds true love and starts living a life only dreamt of by other girls. Her husband, Steve loves her, has the money, is educated and is a director in the government after serving as an ambassador to Zaire. However, her past only temporarily recede for Tom, her first boyfriend, having found his way into a position of influence, places demands on her as he seeks to revenge against Steve who earlier causes him to be jailed for two years. Steve is killed by Tom and Flora is found guilty of treason.

**3. The title**

*Shadows of Time* is probably chosen to stress the idea that the things we do today have consequences in the future. Flora's original life is filled with recklessness and her mistakes create shadows that come to haunt her in the future.

**4. Setting**

**Time:** The time is today (contemporary). The issues the writer stresses as the same that we live with. Issues such as sex for money, greed, materialism, love, injustice, political strife, abuse of human rights, climate change, male chauvinism, immorality and crime among others.

**Physical:** The events happen in an imaginary African country. Like some African countries that we are aware of, the government is overthrown and replaced with a greedy self seeking leadership that does whatever it takes to keep itself in power. Extrajudicial killings, blackmail of potential opposition members are all witnessed in the novel.

Jane's house, hotels, the whiteman's house, university party, Steve and Flora's home, the university, the Datsun car etc.

**Social:** Socially the writer creates the social setting on a gender landscape. The men shamelessly exploit the women (symbolized in Flora). Flora is used by Tom, the white man, Mr. Lupoi and Mike to satisfy their sexual desires. Flora is raped by Tom and the strange man in the Datsun car. The police officers rape women at the different roadblocks. Jennifer commits suicide.

**5. Plot**

Flora meets Tom

Flora meets other men

Flora becomes pregnant aborts

Flora is married and is at the university

Tom resurfaces in Flora's life demanding that she becomes his mistress

Tom kills Steve

Flora is jailed, tried, found guilty and is to be executed.

**6. Themes and ideas**

Greed and materialism

Injustice

Climate change

Male chauvinism

Immorality

The plight of women

Bad leadership

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Love  
Absurdity of life  
Suffering

#### **7. Characters**

Flora – a character in transition: ambitious, materialistic, selfish, immoral, reckless, daring, loving, sacrificial, intelligent, determined, outspoken, sociable  
Tom – selfish, secretive, calculative, deceptive, greedy, immoral, cruel, vengeful, ambitious  
Steve – loving, hardworking, humble, sacrificial,  
Dr. Ruhu – intelligent, loving, trustworthy, friendly, hospitable

#### **8. Dramatic Techniques**

First person narrator  
Letters  
Dreams  
Dialogue  
Irony  
Contrast  
Description  
Symbolism (the storm, Flora's quest for a job, the draught, Tom)

#### **9. Lessons**

Our actions have consequences  
Appearances are deceptive  
Love should be based on marriage

#### **10. Relevance to society**

Sexual abuse  
Dictatorial rule  
Male chauvinism  
Unwanted pregnancies and abortion  
Education  
Organized crime

### **Chapter Summaries**

#### **Part 1**

This part shows the young Flora who blindly makes mistakes in the quest for a job putting herself in situations that later destroy her.

**Chapter 1:** The narrator, Flora is going to be executed having been found guilty of treason. She is asked if she has something to say by the executioner. She embraces the opportunity and decides to tell her life story. She starts at a point in her life when she was forced to take shelter from an evening storm as she made her way home from school. As she, with many others wait for the storm to subside, she unknowingly attracts a man, Tom. The events that follow see her spending that very night with Tom in a hotel. She places her need before Tom; she wants to get a job, much as she is not sure what job she wants. The following day, she makes it to school but feels very strange, perhaps because she feels she is no longer a girl, having lost her virginity. This night, marks her entry into a life that she narrates until the present as she faces execution.

**Chapter 2:** In the subsequent three months, Flora and Tom have become so close and she has also been introduced to Kit, a very close friend of Tom. Life changes significantly for Flora; she gains access to almost all her material

needs through Tom's generous provision and she begins to hate school much as she should be preparing for her School Certificate Examination. Her school mates admire and envy her. The sister, Jane, with whom she lives also notices the transformation her sister has gone through but she seems powerless to control Flora.

Mike, Jane's man, finds Flora attractive now. When he comes home and only finds her, he shows his interest in her. Flora cleverly seduces him and taking advantage of Jane's being away in the village, they have sex. Mike takes her out to a party at the university where he introduces her to his colleagues as his niece. The men she meets promise to help her get a job.

Later in the night, she is warned by a stranger, Steve, about two men who are trailing her and intend to harm her. She gathers that it's Tom and Steve, who she suspects have been driven by jealousy. Mike later takes her home but she can't keep her mind off Steve.

**Chapter 3:** Flora meets Tom and Kit six days after the university party having received a note from Tom promising good news. At the bar where they meet, she is interrogated on her connections with the men she was with at the university party. Tom then informs her that she will have to sleep with a certain white man who will then help her secure a job in the Airways. She is later handed over to two men in a Datsun, who are to drive her to the whiteman's house. They are complete strangers to her and her fear begins to set in. Before they reach their destination, one of the men rapes her in the back of the car as the other drives on unmoved. They deliver her to an elderly whiteman who also uses her. Later in the night, she and the whiteman are awakened to the shock that his car has been stolen.

**Chapter 4:** Flora has sat for her exams. Her life seems to be boring now. She has also learned to hate men. However, Mr. Lupoi, one of the men to whom she was introduced at the university party tricks her into sleeping with him. He uses the bait of wanting to give her a job. They spend the night at a hotel and in the morning, he finds his car stolen from the hotel parking.

Flora's seems to be getting harsh towards her sister.

Without planning, she again meets Steve who takes her to Dr. Ruhu, another man she met at the university party. Dr. Ruhu gives her a job.

**Chapter 5:** Now employed, Flora easily gets along with her workmates. They are a very happy lot and make Flora feel comfortable.

One day after work, she notices a car following her and discovers that it is Tom and Kit. They haven't met in a while and they agree to pick her later so that they go out. She is pregnant and it's almost visible.

At home, she gets into argument with her sister who thinks that Flora should stay away from Tom and Kit and instead concentrate on her love with Steve. Flora is confused for she feels she owes Tom loyalty. However, when Tom later comes to pick her, she decides to remain mute to his knocking and calling. She decides to stay home. When Jane later returns home, she is very happy to find that Flora is at home, having not gone out.

**Chapter 6:** Steve shows up at Flora's workplace on a Saturday to inform her that he will be off to Zaire soon. He suggests they should go to a national park for the weekend and soon they are on their journey. They spend the night at the National park and in the morning, Steve finds his car stolen. He appeals to different people to give them a lift to town but none helps. They are able to hitch a ride on a charcoal truck. Their journey is rough and the turnboy offers

Flora his 'bed'. Steve gets into conversation with the turnboy and he is able to gather some information about his stolen car. They come to an agreement that the turnboy, Komposita, should find him a taxi driver, Steve now pretending to be interested in starting a taxi business. In town, Steve and Flora go to his brother's place where they sleep off their fatigue.

**Chapter 7:** Flora is more worried that she is visibly pregnant and that she does not know who is responsible for her pregnancy. She talks matters with her sister and they come to the agreement that she should abort. Steve shows up with policemen who are helping him recover his lost car. Flora is interrogated in the presence of Steve and Jane and she has to reveal secrets she has kept from Steve. The detectives having left, Flora bluntly reveals to Steve that she is pregnant and agreement is reached that she should abort the next day. Steve arranges for everything.

## Part 2

This part shows a grown up Flora who is living the life she always dreamt of. However, her actions of the past emerge to destroy her completely.

**Chapter 8:** Five years have passed since Flora's abortion. She is now at the university and is married to Steve with whom they have a child, Peter. In this chapter, the narrator recounts the events surrounding her marriage ceremony. We are given a glimpse at her relationship with her mother.

At the university, Flora meets Jenifer, one of the girls she worked with at Dr. Ruhu's. Their friendship is immediately rekindled. Jenifer introduces to Flora another friend, Ruth.

**Chapter 9:** Steve and Flora go to check on Dr. Ruhu but they find that he is out. He later shows up and explains the difficult process one must go through to get beer. He also informs them about Dr. Kungu's death. They drive to the place and Steve gives five cases of beer.

Jenifer jumps to her death leaving a suicide note for her friend Flora. By coincidence, Flora meets Komposita who seems to be one of the assigned officers to investigate Jenifer's suicide. Komposita invites her to his office the following day where he delivers a message to her from Tom. Tom demands that she should be his mistress or else he will kill her husband. This is in vengeance for Steve having led to his two year imprisonment having been found guilty of stealing his car.

**Chapter 10:** Jenifer is buried. Flora decides to leave early. On the way home, they find a roadblock on the highway. At the roadblock, she is nearly assaulted by a policeman. When she is identified, she is given VIP treatment. However she witnesses acts of abuse by the police to different travelers, especially women.

At home, she finds Dr. Ruhu, Mr. Kungu and Mr. Macai who have come to visit. They discuss the deteriorating political situation and want Steve to take over as president, something which Steve isn't ambitious of.

She finds a note from Komposita requesting her to fulfill Tom's demands.

After the visitors have gone, Steve reveals to his wife a strange dream he had in the night. In the dream, she is kidnapped and Peter is thrown into a bottomless pit. She contemplates telling him about Tom but when she decided she should, she finds him sleeping.

Before she can go to bed, she spends some time with her son, who for no apparent reason is very clingy.

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**Chapter 11:** Special prayers are offered so that the country that has experienced a prolonged drought gets rain. Steve and Flora attend the church service presided over by the Archbishop. When they get home, Steve breaks the news of the shooting of Mr. Kungu who is shot after accusations of treason. Other ten people are reported to have been arrested on charges of planning to overthrow the government later in the evening news but Mr. Kungu's death isn't mentioned.

Days later, we learn that Flora has informed her husband about Tom following him and his plan to kill him (Steve). However, she does not reveal that three days earlier, she had been kidnapped and taken to Tom who also rapes her on the occasion. In the incident, Kit takes pictures of Tom and Flora naked in bed which they plan to use to frame her and wreck her marriage completely.

The writer paints a picture on a family that is close since we see father, mother and child engaging in play together.

Jane comes to visit Flora at the latter's request. Flora wishes to share her problems with her sister. Jane decides that the best thing to do is to get rid of Tom before he can destroy Flora's marriage.

Steve comes home suddenly to inform his wife that he has been selected to lead a delegation to Japan. Her intuition tells her there's something fishy and for the first time she protests his going, though she soon realizes that she is powerless and hence cannot do much. He leaves.

Flora embarks on looking for her driver, who she has not seen in days. In Komposita's office, she learns that her husband is in custody on charges of treason. She is made to understand that her husband will be killed. She passes out and when she wakes up, she finds herself home.

She is playing with her son in the night when Tom comes to her home. He rapes her. She decides to commit suicide. She is stopped just after the noose tightens on her neck. She wakes up in a cell and a week later she is found guilty of treason for conspiring with Steve, Prof. Ruhu, the late Mr. Kungu and others to overthrow the government.



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1. Preamble

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Text and Author of focus: *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe

The focus of this presentation is to highlight some of the literary elements that a learner reading the novel needs to know.

2. The story

*Things Fall Apart* is the story of Okonkwo who struggles to escape poverty and the fear of becoming like his father Unoka. Okonkwo is able to 'crack his own palm kernels' and becomes a famous wrestler, a prosperous farmer and respected leader in Umuofia. *Things Fall Apart* is also the tragedy of Okonkwo who is exiled from his tribe after his gun goes off and accidentally kills Ezeudu's young son. When Okonkwo returns from exile things in Umuofia have changed. The courage and violence of the tribe is no more with the coming of the white man. In a moment of rash courage against the white man, Okonkwo kills the white man's messenger and instead of joining him the men of Umuofia wonder why he did it. To escape, Okonkwo commits suicide a shameful death among the Ibo. He is buried in the evil forest. It is also the story of a community whose way of life is threatened by the coming of the whiteman (colonialism) and how this society responds to this threat

3. Plot

The novel is divided into three parts. **Part one** follows Okonkwo and his struggle to become a man of importance, his fear of becoming an *efulefu* like his father, his interaction with his family (which he rules with an iron hand) and community.

In this part *Ikemefuna* is introduced. He is brought to Umuofia as compensation for the killing of a daughter of Umuofia and is adopted by Okonkwo until the gods decide he should be killed. Okonkwo participates in the killing despite the warning from Ezeudu who reminds him that Ikemefuna calls Okonkwo father. Part one ends with the exile of Okonkwo after the accidental killing of Ezeudu's young son.

**Part two** focuses on Okonkwo in exile in Mbanta and the changes taking place in Ibo society like the coming of the whiteman and his religion. In this part Okonkwo faces another tragedy when Nwoye his son converts to Christianity and consequently Okonkwo disowns him.

**Part three** focuses on Okonkwo's return to Umuofia after seven years in exile. Umuofia has changed but Okonkwo hasn't changed. He is a man of action and believes the tribe should not act like women in dealing with the whiteman. There is confrontation between the men of Umuofia and the church. Enoch unmasks an *egwugu*, Umuofia retaliates by destroying the church, its leaders are arrested and suffer humiliation at the hands of the *kotma*. Okonkwo vows to avenge this humiliation. The men of Umuofia gather to discuss their response to the whiteman's presence. A court messenger arrives and orders the men to stop the meeting. Okonkwo kills the messenger and later commits suicide when he realises no one is ready to support him.

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The story is interspersed with flashbacks.

#### 4. Characters

- **Okonkwo**: protagonist of the novel who is afraid of failing like his father. Okonkwo is depicted as:

hardworking/industrious, ambitious, brave, violent, short tempered, proud/arrogant, adamant, impatient, resilient and rash. etc He is the symbol of Ibo masculinity.

- **Unoka**: Okonkwo's father, loves music, lazy, irresponsible, miserly in a nutshell a failure.

- **Obierika**: Okonkwo's best friend. He is wealthy, powerful, trustworthy, responsible,

rational and wise. He is the voice of reason who understands the clan can never be the same with the coming of the white man and also questions some of the Ibo customs like Okonkwo's exile.

- **Ekwefi**: Okonkwo's second wife, runs away from her husband to become Okonkwo's wife after he becomes a famous wrestler. She is devoted, protective of her only child Ezinma, audacious/bold speaks back at Okonkwo

- **Nwoye**:

Okonkwo's first son. considered weak by his father, sensitive, gentle, courageous when he defies the father and converts to Christianity.

- **Ezinma**: Okonkwo's beloved daughter. Sickly, resilient, mature, stubborn, bold-challenges and contradicts Okonkwo. No wonder he wishes she had been a boy.

- **Mr Brown**: a white missionary, kind, liberal and openminded, non confrontational in dealing with the religion of Umuofia, wise.

- **Reverend James Smith**: Mr Brown's successor. Confrontational, rigid, zealous and uncompromising. It is during his time that the conflict between the church and the tribe reaches boiling point.

#### 5. Themes and ideas

*Things Fall Apart* examines the following issues:

- **Colonialism and its impact**-consider how the new religion has an impact on the way of life in Umuofia. Consider the new government which is brutal.

- **Tradition and custom**: Achebe presents a society with lots of traditions both good and bad. The customs are meant to ensure social cohesion. Some traditions however don't make sense like the throwing away of twins. These customs are threatened by the white man's religion that regards these customs as savage.

- **Change vs Tradition**: This battle between the old way and the new way is evident in part two and three of the novel. The climax of this conflict is when Enoch unmasks an *egwugwu* leading to the destruction of the church and arrest of the elders of Umuofia.

- **Freewill and Fate**: In the novel Achebe depicts the idea that a person can control his destiny. (role of one's *chi*) Consider the proverb 'When a man says yes his *chi* says yes also.' *Fate* however is shown as a more powerful

force when we consider Okonkwo's end. Okonkwo is exiled for the accidental shooting of Ezeudu's son. The gun that has never shot a rat kills a man. Okonkwo fears ending up like his father but as fate would have it Okonkwo is buried in the evil forest after committing suicide thereby desecrating the land just like Unoka who dies of the swelling of the stomach and is left to die in the evil forest.

●Ambition, Masculinity, Justice (traditional justice & white man's justice), Betrayal etc

## 6. Setting

*Time setting.*

The novel is set just before and after the coming of the whiteman and the impact this has on Ibo society. In part one the tribe is strong, powerful and united, held together by tradition. The arrival of the white man in part two and three threatens the unity leading to chaos.

*Social setting*

The society in the novel is characterised by a number of traditions and norms that identify one as a member of society. In Ibo society for example a man is respected because of his achievements, his wealth and valour. Failure, laziness are frowned upon. There is also a strong belief in the supernatural seen in the respect for the gods and the spirit world.

*Physical setting*

The action takes place primarily in Umuofia then Mbanta. References are however made of places like Mbaino and Abame.

## 7. Title

The title is drawn from a section of W.B Yeats's poem 'The Second Coming'. The lines in the poem describe a world where things fall apart and anarchy is loosed on the world. In the novel this is seen in the disintegration that Umuofia as a society experiences and Okonkwo as an individual. The chaos stems from the invasion of the white man.

## 8. Relevance

The relevance of *Things Fall Apart* can be drawn from the events, the characters, the issues/themes, the lessons drawn. Help the learners discover this relevance.

## 9. Style/Literary Devices

Consider the use of Irony, symbolism, use of the omniscient narrator, use of orature (Ibo sayings and folktales), contrast, description etc

Conclusion: In teaching *Things Fall Apart* it is important to note that the experience in the novel is not alien given that most students are familiar with Nigerian life.

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1. Preamble

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Text and Author of focus: *Grief Child* by Lawrence Darmani

2. The kind of novel

It's an experimental African novel.

What qualifies it to be African?

- The setting – Ghanaian – typically rural, in the thick of African traditional lifestyle
- African language: expressions, idioms, proverbs, anecdotes, folktales eg: 'the left hand washes the right and the right washes the left', 'for giving my son's hand back to him'
- African medicine: herbs, roots
- Characteristic weather: African thunder/wind storms, mad storm, unpredictable
- Birago's premonition, Adu's dream, totems
- Communal life: in sad moments – Nimo felt grateful to the people of the small village for their help and support
- African extended family pattern – parents, children, aunt
- Communal workforce
- Social roles: chores are done based on gender
- Natural hazards believed to be occasioned by the invisible hand of fate or malevolence of humans eg Goma's feared ill-will to the Nimo's family hence the tragedy that has swept nearly and entire family.

3. Setting

- It is set in Ghana – in the heart of the forest farms, the tall mahogany trees and sapeles casting thick canopies – the tropical forest.
- The action oscillates between the little village of Susa and Buama, an old town west of Susa.
- It is describes as the living, breathing landscape of forest farm and village which is prone to sudden African thunderstorms especially during the rainy season.
- This Ghanaian setting is akin to that in *Things Fall Apart* and *The Concubine*.
- Some events happen at midnight – a dangerous time the ominous birds and animals cry, howl, bark, hoof, and croak, a time when Adu experiences a nightmare that sets the tragic mood in the novel. Yaa sleep-talks.
- In the epilogue, it is urban – Abenase – friendly, homely, love, marriage ....

4. Storyline

- The story is easily told, it is tense, it grips, affects and infects.
- The story of the grief child, of once poor but happy family and of a little village community that breathed and lived a simple contented life until disaster strikes and lays it desolate and hopeless.
- The story is told simply of a simple people whose communal rhythm of life pulls the together; they laugh with each other, they hurt when tragedy strikes, they cry together and help and support one another except one lone Goma whose vendetta or grudge against a brother and his family lasts beyond death.

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- Darmani writes and vividly describes to reach the hearts of the ordinary reader. He lays bare the feelings of the young children and the village folks just like Achebe does in *Things Fall apart* and Amadi in *The Concubine*.
- Adu, the hero, the grief child gets a terrible dream, a nightmare which scares the father who seeks an interpretation of the ominous dream.
- Yaro says his dream needs prayers.
- The family continues to do their farming activities
- Goma, visits Nimo's family. The family notices Goma's hatred for her brother and later Adu is deeply affected by this strained relationship.
- Nimo's inherited skill in herbal medicine is revealed.
- The rainstorm kills Birago and Yaa. The village mourns them. Shortly after the raging river takes away Nimo leaving alone Adu who is taken up by the hateful aunt.
- Adu gets friends in Buama and joins school.
- Adu falls sick but the aunt continues to torture him which affects his performance at school.
- Adu is later adopted by teacher Ogori and his wife Beckie
- It is discovered that Ama is not Goma's child but is Yeboah's child with his late wife
- Adu is taken back to Susa by Appiah but too much grief for his dead parents makes him return to Buama
- Adu is persuaded to forgive his aunt
- Finally Adu and Ama grow and accept each other's love vows and promise to get married.

## 5. Themes and ideas

- Optimism/Hope: Adu is encouraged by Yaro to leave everything to God. Better things are yet to come. After twists and turns in his life he finds a life partner in Ama with whom he has been friends for a long time. The once grief child attains happiness and fulfillment.
- Perseverance/endurance: Nono saves his son from drowning. At one point, Adu wants to kill himself.
- Parenting: Adu's mother loves and keeps watch over her growing children. Nimo is shaken by his son's dream.
- Poverty/suffering: Adu's schoolmates are poorly dressed and they look pathetic. There's drought and hunger in the north. Most families do share cropping.
- Good vs evil: (Light vs Darkness)
- Betrayal
- The supernatural: Adu's dream, Yaa's sleep-talking. Superstition. Spiritism (Nimo's father insisted he embraces it). Foreboding, Birago's dream which causes a sad mood. An invisible hand is suspected as the cause of the double tragedy (the death of a mother and a daughter and shortly after the death of a father/husband which death is described as a sorrow, a menacing omen ancestry, spirits)
- Retribution: evil is punished and good is rewarded.
- Child abuse: Goma is not motherly
- Traditional culture: herbs, roots, inheritance
- Love: filial, friendly, romantic, agape, humanity
- Modernity/Christianity: represented by the young farmer preacher Yaa

## 6. Characters

The characters are round, life-like, they transform, they learn...

They are socially close, intimate and geographically in proximity – family members, schoolmates, age mates etc. The principal characters grow out of their childhood experiences; they mature, love and marry. They move out their narrow experiences. Adu and Ama outgrow their grief.

The flat Goma shows a change of heart.

## 7. Literary devices

- Imagery of death
- Omniscient narration

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- Symbolism (rainfall, the storm, Yaro...)
- Description

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**Preamble**

Name: **AMATRE James**

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Area of focus: **Poetry**

Form

Sound

Meaning

Devices

NB:

- The scope of what is taught should be taught wider than what is tested
- Do not merely teach what meets the demands of the examination. That will be cheating not learning the learners.

The prescribes anthologies are two (one being the alternative to the other)

- Growing up with Poetry
- And East African Poetry Anthology

The older and more popular is Growing up with Poetry covering questions 23 and 24.

The poems are categorized under seven themes; love, identity, death and the ancestors, village life, separation, power, freedom

What to teach (teaching points/aspects of the poem):

- The title: (attention should be drawn to the meaning and appropriateness of the title)
- The persona/speaker: (identify the persona by the role he plays in the poem eg he addresses himself as a professional (teacher), of a certain age group (youth), of a particular gender (woman activist) of a particular social or biological relation (mother) etc. Establish persona's feeling/attitude towards the subject he is addressing (approves, disapproves, criticizes, contemptible etc.)
- Theme(s): the topic, the main idea, subject being described,, presented or addressed in the poem e.g freedom, love, democracy, religious hypocrisy. Be able to identify, state and explain the theme.
- Poetic devices:
  - (i) Language use: diction (descriptive, emotive, action words) purpose to paint a vivid picture, arouse certain feeling and to dramatize a situation
  - (ii) Figures of speech e.g imagery, irony, symbolism, metaphor, personification. Identify them and explain their effectiveness or contribution to helping the reader to fully appreciate the poem or make the poem rich and enjoyable.
  - (iii) Sound: repetition, rhyme (for musicality and emphasis)
  - (iv) Form: line, stanza, verse or free verse
- Meaning of: words, expressions, lines and the entire poem
- Intention: why the poem has been written i.e to inform, entertain, share experience, warn, arouse feelings, persuade, inspire, incite, dissuade, reform (change) positively etc
- Lessons: value statements or facts that have been tested over a period of time; the ideals or virtues society must embrace, advocate, stand by, emulate; morals or moral teachings; vices we have been made aware of

and must avoid or drop. NB: do not state them negatively e.g I learn not to...; can be stated as idioms or proverbs... never judge a book by its cover, appearances can be deceptive...

#### Assessment

1. Ideally the themes alternate yearly
2. Questions are structured but can sometimes be interdependent. i.e a wrong answer in one may render the subsequent ones wrong too
3. Full name of poet and correct title must be given when asked for

#### Teaching the anthology:

- Teach all the poems. The anthology is considered as a set book, the reason why several and different poems are given as samples.
- Poems of love give illustrations of different aspects of the theme of love.
- Teach from simple to complex
- Teach from known to unknown or from familiar to unfamiliar.
- Give elaborate background to each of the themes at the start of studying the poems selected to illustrate the theme. i.e the concept of the theme must be defined, interpreted, and understood e.g what is love? It is a tender feeling, it is sacrifice etc.; how do different people or communities look at love, death....? What do you think is a love?
- Select particular poems to illustrate as aspect of the theme eg, filial love is illustrated by *Lullaby*, *The Zulu Girl*



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**Preamble**

Name: **BICHACHI Francis**

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Text and Author of focus: *The Heart Soothers* by **Silvester Onzivua**

**The Text**

*The Heart Soothers* is a play that explores the all too common clash between tradition and modern civilisation. This clash is manifested in the institution of marriage and love relationships. A lot of questions are raised. Must parents choose for their children marriage partners? Can educated women fit in or adjust to rural life? Is church marriage superior to traditional marriage? Does infidelity solve marital challenges? All these questions come to life as the protagonists in the play struggle to make personal decisions and ensure personal happiness, as their relationship takes a nose dive.

The playwright echoes the need for the preservation of the traditional values, culture and heritage, while embracing the positive aspects of western civilisation.

**Overview of the Plot**

**Act One**

Jimmy takes his fiancée Mini to the village to meet his mother. His mother, Iyaa, is not impressed by Mini's sophisticated lifestyle. She has the local catechist's wife in mind as the best wife for her son. Iyaa's negative attitude towards Mini is further compounded when the latter breaks the family pot, which has been handed down from generations.

**Act Two**

Jimmy's and Mini's relationship seems to be thriving. Jimmy wants Mini to permanently move in with him. But she is reluctant and wants Jimmy to first formerly visit her parents. Jimmy considers this an expensive venture.

Several months later, all is not well. When Mini's friend Florence pays her a visit, she pours out her heart about how Jimmy has changed and does not love her anymore. Florence suggests that Mini either visits a native doctor to fix the problem, or she gets another man on the side (a 'heart soother'), to get even with Jimmy. Mini rejects these suggestions. She stumbles on a letter that seems to prove Jimmy's infidelity. But in her naiveté, Jimmy convinces her that it is the other woman who is after him.

Jimmy however continues with his waywardness, under the influence of his friend Patrick. Mini gets agitated and confronts him. Jimmy assaults her.

**Act Three**

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Jimmy visits his lover, Jez. She reveals that she is pregnant. Jimmy is excited but Jez feels she is not ready to be a mother and wants to abort the baby. Jimmy threatens her and warns her not to try it, promising to look after her.

Meanwhile, Mini has succumbed to Florence's temptations and has got a 'heart soother' for herself. She gets a taxi driver, Jogo, as a lover who seems to light up her life.

## **Act Four**

Jimmy seems to have come to his senses and now wants to formally visit Mini's parents. He prefers a traditional marriage to a church wedding. This conversation is however cut short when he receives a message that his mother is very ill. He prepares to leave for the village.

In his absence, Mini invites her lover Jogo into the house. She reveals that she is pregnant for him. Later in the night, Jimmy and Patrick return. Apparently, Jimmy has had an accident on his way to see his mother. Jogo disguises himself as a female friend of Mini. However this disguise is blown when Jimmy discovers Jogo's clothes. Both Mini and Jogo flee the house.

Jimmy now decides to bring in Jez to replace Mini. He is supported in this by Patrick. Jez comes to clean the house in preparation for her moving in, as Jimmy and Patrick go to the hospital. Florence brings a native doctor to help cleanse the house. The doctor gives Jez a concoction that upsets her stomach and sends her into early labour. She confides in Jez that she is not sure if Jimmy is the father of her child, suggesting that it could be Jogo, who happens to be Florence's brother.

Jogo is called to help take Jez to hospital. Jimmy returns to find Jogo again in his house. Florence reveals the truth to him. He attacks Jogo and strangles him to death. His sister, Recho, bursts in to announce the death of their mother. His mother's ghost drifts in lamenting about the broken pot.

## **Character Analysis**

### **Jimmy**

He is a graduate and a company executive. He is elitist and very dismissive of traditional norms. He ignores his mother's pleas to uphold the family name. He is also very chauvinistic. He does not have genuine love for either Mini or Jez. He simply uses them to satisfy his male ego. He is however exposed in the end when it is revealed that he is not responsible for the pregnancies of Mini and Jez.

### **Mini**

She is a school teacher who falls in love with Jimmy. She seems to want to live a straight life. She embraces the traditional norms, even though she is educated. Her loyalty to Jimmy is tested to the limit when he betrays her. She has no option but to fall into the trap of infidelity, which she hopes will secure her personal happiness.

### **Iyaa**

She is the mother of Jimmy. A traditional woman who has dedicated her life to educating her son. Her efforts are however wasted when her son neglects the family and fails to uphold the family's name. She considers it tragic when

the daughter-in-law, whom she does not approve of, breaks the symbolic family pot. Her illness and death at the end of the play are a result of the curse that has befallen the family.

## **Recho**

He is the sister to Jimmy. She is portrayed as a lazy girl who lacks a sense of direction in life. Her mother compares her to her brother's fiancée who is equally detestable.

## **Florence**

She is an acquaintance of both Jimmy and Mini. She is particularly close to Mini. She is portrayed as a typical modern woman who has no sense of humility. She will do anything to get what she wants, including witchcraft. She is a bad influence on both Mini and Jez.

## **Patrick**

He is a friend and close associate of Jimmy. He too is chauvinistic. He clearly responsible for Jimmy's waywardness and encourages him never to let women rule him.

## **Jez**

She is Jimmy's lover. She is portrayed as a victim of the chauvinistic Jimmy. However, her apparent innocence is tainted by the fact that she is running two men at the same time. She is clearly a protégé of the sly and no nonsense Florence.

## **Jogo**

He is a taxi driver. He is a lover to both Mini and Jez. He is one of the 'heart soothers'. Jogo reflects the male chauvinism that is out to strangle the feminist struggle of women like Mini and Florence.

## **Jaja**

He is a native doctor. His presence in the play depicts the desperateness of women in the face of a harsh male dominated society.

## **THEMATIC CONCERNS**

### **Tradition versus Modernity**

This is the principle concern of the play. The play depicts the struggle between tradition and western civilisation. Western civilisation (modernity), is out to destroy tradition. This is clearly symbolised in the breaking of the pot by Mini.

### **Marriage and its challenges**

Marital strife is one of the common challenges we face in society. The relationship between Jimmy and Mini breaks down because of failure to appreciate the values of marriage.

### **Loyalty, Betrayal and Loss of Trust**

The relationship between Jimmy, Mini and Jez, brings out an interplay of loyalty and betrayal. Mini comes to Jimmy's home committed to start a new life with him. She endures the scorn of her parents because she is committed to him. But he betrays her. She loses trust in him and revenges by bringing another man into his house. Just as Jimmy betrays Mini, he too is betrayed by Jez who conceives for Jogo.

### **Peer Influence**

Peer influence is something that usually has more negative consequences than positive. Patrick's influence on Jimmy leads him to falter in his relationship with Mini and leads to tragic actions in the end. Similarly, Florence is a bad influence on both Mini and Jez.

### **Male Chauvinism versus Feminism**

Jimmy and Patrick's male act is up against the effort by Mini, Florence and Jez to defend their female values. Jimmy and Patrick see themselves as conquerors of the feminine domain. The women see themselves as victims of a male dominated society which they must fight against or get even with.

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**Preamble**

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Area of focus: **BEST PRACTICES IN TEACHING LITERATURE 208/1**

At ordinary level, the aspects of Literature that are taught are largely elementary. They focus on the foundational analysis of the texts and include: textual/authorial background, the title, setting and plot/story, character and characterisation, themes and ideas, elementary style, application (relevance, lessons and attitude or reader response).

**Author/Textual Background**

This aspect may not be examinable, but is a necessary precursor to studying a text. It is always important to look at the author and his/her writing, style or focus. This can be through a quick look at some of the author's other works. Many authors tend to focus on particular issues. For instance, Francis Imbuga is known to focus on political/revolutionary Literature, Ngugi wa Thion'go writes about colonialism and the post independence African societies, Wole Soyinka often satirises African elitism and political leadership.

It is also a good idea to have an insight into the social context of the text. For instance, before studying *A Cowrie of Hope*, one would do well to explore the political history of Zambia before and after the nineties. It is this history/politics that provides the author with the story.

**The Title: Relevance and Meaning**

The title is the entry point of the text. We cannot effectively engage and appreciate a text if we have not fully comprehended or understood the title. Understanding a title requires us to interpret it in relation to the text/story. Titles are generally a summary of the text. In other words, they give us a general overview of the text.

There are three types of titles:

1. **Thematic titles:** These are based on the key themes or issues in the text. For example: *Betrayal in the City*, *Things Fall Apart*, *The Return of Mgofu*. Thematic titles remind us about the major focus of the text.
2. **Symbolic titles:** These are based on a deeper interpretation of individuals or situations in a text. Examples include: *The Pearl*, *The Heart Soother*, *Voice of the People*, *Shadows of Time*. Symbolic titles attempt to project and underscore the importance of particular individuals, aspects or objects in the text.
3. **Character titles:** These are based on the major character/characters in the text. Examples include: *Grief Child*, *Mema*, *The Merchant of Venice*. Character titles may involve a name, title, or status of the major character. They usually show the fact that the story revolves around that particular character.

Therefore, when analysing the relevance of the title, we should explore the meaning of the title in relation to what happens in the text.

### Setting and Plot/Story

Setting basically refers to 'time' (temporal or historical), and 'place' (physical location) of the action in the text. In other words, we look at 'where' and 'in what circumstances' is the story unfolding. We can say for instance that Grief Child is set in Ghana, in places like Susa, Buama and Abenase.

On the other hand, 'plot' refers to the chronological and/or logical sequence of events in a text, or how the story in the text unfolds.

### Character and Characterisation

Under character and characterisation, we look at four aspects, namely: character traits, character role, character relationship and character appeal.

1. **Character traits** – This looks at a character's conductor behaviour in the text. We can talk of a character kind, arrogant, proud, patient, aggressive, courageous, etc.
2. **Character role**(*importance, contribution, usefulness, significance*) – This looks at how a writer uses a character to achieve his/her intention. Characters play a role of: enhancing plot, development of themes, character portrayal/development, symbolic role, a source of humour/comic relief/inspiration or a mouthpiece of the author.
3. **Character relationship** – This looks at the rapport between two or more characters, and can be described as being friendly, intimate, confrontational, suspicious, warm, full of animosity, etc.
4. **Character appeal** – This may take two forms: 'moral appeal' or 'dramatic appeal'. Under moral appeal, we look at how good or bad a character is. When dealing with moral appeal, we should always consider the author's intention. In other words, we should be in agreement with the author. Do not glorify a character that has been portrayed as evil by the author. With dramatic appeal, it does not matter if the character is good or bad. Here, we are interested in the dramatic qualities of the character. This usually applies to drama.

**NB:** Role, contribution, importance, usefulness or significance may also refer to non-human aspects of the text such as objects, setting, events, etc.

### Themes and Ideas

Themes and ideas are the key message that the author presents in the text. Our understanding of the text cannot be complete if we cannot identify and explain the themes or major issues therein. Each text may have themes that are exclusive to it, though some may cut across different texts. Themes like 'corruption' are usually found in many texts.

### Elementary Style

Under elementary style, we look at what makes the text interesting or appealing to the readers. This mostly applies to plays. It may also refer to how satisfactory the ending of a text is and if it achieves the author's intention.

### Relevance

The relevance of a text refers to the comparison of events or situations in a text to what happens in the real world or contemporary society. Therefore, in explaining relevance, we are required to step outside the text and try to apply what we have seen in the text to the society we live in. For this aspect to be effectively handled, one must cite relevant local examples or illustrations to match those in the text.

## **Lessons**

A lesson in Literature can be defined as; *"A collection of wisdom derived from situations, character, themes and events in a text, to be applied to related life situations."*

In summary, a lesson is: a warning or writing on the wall, wisdom, or a factual statement of life. It is not a piece of advice on what should be done or not done.

In analysing lessons, we should avoid using the phrase 'I/we learn'. This is basically because a lesson remains a lesson, whether one learns it or not. We can express lessons by using metaphorical expressions such as idioms, proverbs or sayings, but relating them to situations in the text.

## **CONTEXT QUESTIONS**

Context questions are meant to test our ability to comprehend the plot of a text. They test the following aspects:

### **Context placement**

Here, we may be asked to explain what happens before or after a passage/extract. Two questions usually arise: what happens before and what leads to... If we are looking at what happens before the passage, we should merely take a few steps back and look at the events immediately preceding the passage. But if we are looking at what leads to a passage, we may need to look back at previous episodes which may have a link with the present episode.

Similarly, when looking at what happens after the passage, we should look at the immediate events proceeding from the end of the passage.

### **Character: traits and relationship**

We may also be asked to describe the character of an individual or individuals as revealed in the passage. We should always restrict ourselves to the passage. In other words, only highlight those traits that are evident in the passage; not in the entire text. Also, when asked how characters relate in the passage, we should stick to the relationship as depicted in the passage.

### **Themes and Ideas**

Similarly, when asked to identify or explain certain themes in the passage, we should restrict ourselves to those themes or ideas that are evident in the passage.

### **Interpretation**

Sometimes we may be asked to explain certain statements made by characters in the passage. The statement should be related to what is happening in the passage or text.



## POETRY

### Teaching aspects of poetry

Poetry at ordinary level emphasizes aspects that enable the students to interact with the poem from a mutual and emotional perspective. It allows the student to be a part of the poem or to get absorbed in the poem. The aspects to be emphasized include: speaker, subject matter, character, themes, feelings, lessons, relevance and poetic appeal.

### The Speaker

Also known as the 'persona', the speaker is the voice that speaks to us in a poem. Note that there is a clear difference between the 'speaker' and the 'poet'. The poet is the writer of the poem while the speaker is an individual/voice in the poem who communicates the poet's message.

In the poem 'From the outside' (pg 28), the poet is M.P. Gwala, while the speaker is a mourner or relative of Madaza. In 'A Freedom Song' (pg 79), the poet is Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, while the speaker is Atieno's uncle.

### Subject Matter

Subject matter refers to what is happening in the poem. In explaining the subject matter of a poem, a student is expected to summarise the poem in one paragraph by paraphrasing it.

For instance we can say, the poem 'Building the nation' (pg 63), is about a Permanent Secretary who is driven to a state function at a classic hotel. While the PS enjoys himself at the function with plenty to eat and drink, the driver is left to starve in the car, waiting to drive him back. On the return journey the PS sarcastically asks the driver if he ate anything, to which the latter replies that he is 'slimming'. The PS pretends not to have eaten anything as well and complains of stomach ulcers.

### Character

In analyzing character, we focus on the traits or behaviour of individuals in the poem. Generally, we use adjectives which denote behaviour. Character thus can be identified as; loving, obedient, humble, rude, arrogant, proud, exploitative, hypocritical, insensitive/inhuman, irresponsible, etc.

For instance, we can characterize the PS in 'Building the nation' and Atieno's uncle in 'A Freedom song' as being: exploitative, insensitive/inhuman, hypocritical, irresponsible, etc.

### Themes

Just like in any text, themes in poetry refer to the core concerns of the poet. They are derived from the subject matter of the poem. Sometimes, students tend to confuse subject matter and theme. This is usually when a general question is posed such as; 'What is the poem about?' You will find students saying it is about love, suffering, poverty, etc. Such a question clearly calls for subject matter, not themes.

For instance, after analyzing the subject matter of 'Building the nation' and 'A Freedom song', we can say the themes therein include; exploitation, hypocrisy, child abuse/labour (in a A freedom song), etc.

### Feelings and Attitude

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Poetry is one genre (branch) of Literature that appeals directly to our conscience. We are therefore more inclined to respond to poetry with our emotions rather than our thoughts (reasoning). These emotions may be directed at individuals or situations in the poem.

In expressing feelings or attitude, students should avoid stating; 'I feel...' This creates monotony. Express the feeling by stating: 'I am ...' For instance one can say: I am disgusted, I am disappointed, I hate him, I sympathise with her or I am sympathetic to her, I am proud of him, etc. Sometimes students may be asked to explain the feeling or attitude of an individual in the poem, say the speaker. The response is the same, ie: he is disappointed, he is disgusted, he is sympathetic, etc.

## **Lessons**

As poetry appeals to our emotions, it is imperative we draw moral lessons from the poems that we read. Note here that lessons are not themes. Themes are the poet's message in the poem. Lessons can be defined as: 'A collection of wisdom derived from phenomena, character, themes and events in a text/poem to be applied to related real life situations.'

Just as is the case with feelings, lessons should not be expressed with the monotonous phrase: 'I learn' or 'we learn'. Lessons are best expressed with proverbs, sayings or idioms. One can for instance say: 'A bird in hand is worth two in the bush', and then proceed to relate the saying to an appropriate example/situation in the poem.

Alternatively, one can simply use plain statements for example: 'Children should not be used as house helps, as is the case with Atieno', or 'Bosses should show concern for their employees and not neglect them the way the PS does with his driver'.

## **Relevance**

Just like it is with other texts, poetry draws comparison with society. This is its relevance. In other words, what we see in the poem is also evident in society. Poems, like other texts, reflect on the evils, challenges and other aspects of life in society. They are a reflection of what goes on in society.

Therefore, when analyzing the relevance of a poem, we should relate it to what happens in society. For instance, there are so many employees who are mistreated by their bosses just like the driver in 'Building the nation'. There are also many young girls in society who suffer the fate of Atieno in 'A Freedom song'.

We should not confuse relevance with lessons. Some students, when asked for the relevance of a poem, instead talk about lessons. You will thus find one who says: 'The poem is relevant because it teaches us about the consequences of mistreating children.' This is wrong because it changes the question or response from relevance to lessons.

## **Poetic Appeal**

After analyzing poetry through the various aspects discussed above, we are expected to appreciate it. Poetry is essentially meant to entertain us and humour us, as it educates us in the process. Therefore, we are always expected to find every poem we read appealing or interesting.

What makes a particular poem interesting or appealing depends on you the reader. However, aspects of interest can include:

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- The title being captivating
- The structure of the poem (short stanzas or lines); easy to memorise
- The language (simple/plain)
- Vocabulary/diction/choice of words
- Some poems use local words
- Poetic devices such as; metaphors, similes, repetition, irony, etc
- Lessons learnt
- Relevance to society
- Subject matter (easy to interpret/understand)
- etc

## **Conclusion**

Poetry should therefore be treated as a hands-on experience in which learners interact with poems, appreciate poems and live the poems. The notion that poetry is hard or complicated needs to be demystified to encourage learners to appreciate the beauty of poetry.