***This compilation came as a need to further accelerate the level of preparedness among the UI LL.B22 class towards GES201 test and examination. Special recognition to the compiler, Fabunmi Anuoluwapo Omonose and those who submitted their works. Thank you all for your labours of love. We didn't at any time take them for granted.***

***Signed:***

***THE UI LL.B22 CLASS GOVERNORS***

***15/08/19***

**COMPILATION OF GES 201 POEMS AND TEXTS (GROUPS 29 AND 30)**

**GROUP 2**

**The Spectacle of Youth**

I loved the children of the lion

When their manes were beginning to grow,

Simulating the ancient heroes.

I knew the greatness of their future

When they leapt on the tender necks of antelopes

Which so long prided themselves on their fleetness.

I praised the skillfulness of their power,

Knowing how soon they will be killing buffaloes.

**Mazisi Kunene**

**Introduction**

Mazisi Raymond Kunene was born on the 12th of may, 1930, in Durban, South Africa, he spent his childhood in Amahlongwa on the Kwa-Zulu Natal South Coast, where he had his early education. His father, Mdabuli Albert Kunene, came from the Royal Swazi clan and his mother, Eva, was a gospel singer. As a boy, he struggled to reconcile the history of his Zulu Nation with the oppressed state of black people in South Africa under Apartheid. Kunene began writing in the Zulu language when he was still a child and by age 11 he had published a number of his poems in newspapers and magazines. He criticised several tendencies in mordern Zulu literature; its reliance on European stylistic techniques rather than adaptation of traditional ones; its unanalytical documentary writing; and a slide toward sentimentality and escapism that he saw as an influence of the Christian and Romantic traditions.

Kunene's Zulu poems (1970), a collection of his poetry translated from Zulu into English, was praised by critics for the freshness of the English translations, with patterns and imagery successfully carried over from Zulu vernacular traditions. His books were recipient of numberous honours, Kunene was named **Poet Laureate** of Africa by UNESCO (1993) and the first Poet Laureate of South Africa (2005). The Mazisi Kunene Foundation was established in 2006,to promote Kunene's work and other indigenous African literature. He died August 11,2006, in Durban, South- Africa.

Kunene's achievement as a poet is paralleled by his extensive academic, cultural and political accomplishments. Kunene left South Africa for Britain in 1959, having obtained a B.A., B.A. Honors and M.A. from the University of Natal. His M.A. thesis was **An Analytical Survey of Zulu poetry both Traditional and Modern.** His aim was to conduct research in comparative literature and to complete a doctoral dissertation of Zulu literature through the school of Oriental and African studies at London University. But he got involved in politics, becoming the official United Nations representative of the African National Congress and later its doctor of finance. These activities took him to Europe and the United States where he lectured and travelled widely.

**Analysis**

Kunene's **The Spectacle of Youth** goes back to the very foundations of Zulu traditional literature, the poem was written in Zulu,which demonstrates Kunene's indebtedness to the Zulu traditional literature. **The Spectacle of Youth** directly evolved from a Zulu literary tradition, of this tradition, Kunene maintains that Zulu literature, like most African literature is communal. The common organization in Africa is not just a matter of individuals clinging together to eke out an existence, it is a communal structure which has evolved its own ethic, its own philosophical system, its own forms of projecting its realities and experiences, this poem, reveals to us realities, experiences and philosophical system of Africa and the Zulu society as a whole.

A Lyrical poem, is a formal type of poetry which expresses personal emotions or feelings, typically spoken in the first person. **The Spectacle of Youth** falls under this genre of poetry, written in the first person point of view, it is a comparatively short, non-narrative poem, in which Mazisi, a single speaker expresses his state of mind.

Kunene has made it clear that the function of literature is "not entertainment but primarily to teach social values and serious philosophical concepts." He believes that the black man, must find a new definition of man i.e he must redefine reality in his own terms rather than in the role allocated to him by the White man. And to redefine reality in his own African terms is exactly what Kunene is doing in the poem, he writes about the African (Zulu) youths and what their outcome should be. The youths of a society are the leaders of tomorrow who will determine what befalls such society. In other words, Kunene tries to reveal that the youths of a society are the pillars of such society and he also writes hoping that the youths (the future), will remain steadfast and not be moved by the influence of white men and their civilization.

In Lines 3 (stimulating the ancient heroes), Kunene writes that as a bid to bring the youths back to the steps of their forefathers, through that he is saying, though the youthful age displays strength, however, this strength can only be effective, if they are guided by the tenets of their own culture, civilization. Kunene in Lines 4 (I know the greatness of their future) further states that greatness will only come if they stimulate the ancient heroes and not be moved or influenced by external civilizations, and as at that time the prevailing **Apartheid policy** all over South Africa.

**Themes**

* **Value for the civilization of the Ancestors**

Kunene, through the poem maintains that Art cannot ignore the goals and the directions of the present society, but it must draw its deepest meanings from the ethical ideals that have guided all past generations (Ancestors). It would seem that African society which traditionally separates clearly social and material progress is in danger of losing its ethical grounds, if it forgets the role of the past in the evolution of its social and material philosophies. It is essential, Kunene maintains, that the present African society recognizes the importance of continuity in which the present is linked with the past and both guide decisions affecting the future.

The Poet sees the Ancestors who have made their contribution to human welfare and progress, as having a key role in the survival and continuity. This is essentially his focus in the poem. The present generation and all subsequent generations must revere the Ancestors for the alternative is reverence of the tool as the measurement of human progress. Achievements of the Ancestors are not isolated acts of individual heroism, but describe the collective effort of all those who make up of our history. Collectively, they are the heroes and heroines of the human race. It is these assumptions that makes African society unique.

* **Individualism versus Collectivism**

From the poem, it is evidently seen that, the African system structure is peculiar, and it believes that the highest virtue, is heroism, i.e, self sacrifice on behalf of the community, where individualistic society reads "I", the African "I" is "I on behalf of", making it collective with one sense of purpose, this is the difference between Western societies and African societies in which the Youth in African societies should maintain and live for, not influenced by Western Civilization. In other words, the African philosophy is strictly collective, which is evidently seen as the Poet addresses the youths collectively in plural, this is what makes their youthfulness spectacular.

* **The youth and virtue**

As it is generally known, the youthful age, is the period of strength and innovation, the poem, starting from the title, down to the lines, reteirates how valuable the youthful age is and how the youths in African societies will determine how the society will be structured. He commends the youth for spending their time to be drilled by African civilization and also aspiring to grow more, he says in Lines 4 (I know the greatness of their Future). In short, the virtues in youths are always revealed, because they are the determinants of future events in a generation, and he says these virtues are the projections of African civilization that has made them. In other words, being distracted by another civilization, automatically makes them worthless because only African civilization can build African societies.

**Poetic devices**

1. **Symbolism :**  In the poem, Kunene symbolised the youths of Africa as **the Children of the Lion,** while the alien civilization which he sees as an enemy, he equated as **Antelopes with tender necks and buffaloes.**
2. **Imagery :** Most of the lines in the poem, paints a picture and idea to the reader and also appeals to the senses. For example, lines 5 (when they leapt on the tenderness of antelopes), paints a picture in the mind of the reader.
3. **Metaphor :** In line 1, "the children of the lion" is a direct comparison.
4. **Free Verse**
5. **First person point of view**
6. **Repetition:** Repitition **of I** and **their** across the lines.

**(GROUP 3 of 30)**

**A LITERARY APPRECIATION OF THE POEM, “FACE OF HUNGER” BY OSWALD MBUYISENI MTSHALI**

The poem, ‘The Face of Hunger’ by Mtshali vastly explores into the banality and extremity of the apartheid system but through the device of hunger. The conditions of living in South Africa then inspired the poet as he furnishes hunger with a greater and deeper meaning than it seems at the initial reading thereby giving the poem a connotative meaning to the understanding of readers. The motive of the poem is to enunciate on the issues if hunger and famine which are orchestrated by the socioeconomic reality of independent African counties: South Africa as is the case of the poet.

The poet demonstrates or portrays hunger as something though mutual but still peculiar to a particular object/ person the persona focuses on to expound his definition of hunger. He states this with simple short sentences reverberating more meanings than the eye can decipher. He makes us understand that hunger is not just what we all think it is but it is more than we think. It is unwavering until it gets satisfied.

He weaves the title of the poem well with the words of the poem so well that his choice of diction indeed gives us ‘the face of hunger’. He gives us the surface feel of hunger which makes the reader think that if the face of hunger could be this battered, how about its body? The title of the poem, “The Face of Hunger” is symbolic in nature, as it can be gleaned that it aims to provide the description of poverty and its attendants; hunger, misery, etc.

The main ideas which run through the poem creates an imagery of this subject matter. The poet employs certain poetic devices to drive home these ideas. The structure of the poem gives the readers a particular reason to pay extreme attention to the form of the poem. The usage of short descriptive sentences, creating a harsh and poignant tone which can be seen in lines like; “The skin was pale and taut like a glove on a doctor’s hand”.

In the initial lines, the poet described the physical nature of the persona that he articulates; “ribs on his concertina chest”. The resonating usage of both direct and indirect comparison can be seen in these lines respectively; “concertina chest”, “your stomach is a den of lions”- Metaphors; “Bones protruding as if…”, “…taut like a glove…”, “like a chameleon’s” – Similes. These comparisons point out the in-depth meanings of the simple short sentence that make up these verses.

“He looked with glazed pupils”, drives home the idea of the ills that come with hunger as the persona’s eyes is clouded and cannot function efficaciously, when it is analyzed on face value, however, on a critical look it can be said that the poet aims at portraying the disillusionment that accompanies hunger. In stanza 3, the poem goes on to describe the physical state of the persona. He says, his “tongue darted in and out like a chameleon’s…” This shows a high level of malnutrition which accompanies poverty and hunger.

In the last stanza, there is a use of apostrophe in “O! Child” as it refers to a child who is not physically present but his presence is still felt everywhere due to his unsatisfactory nature. This is symbolic in nature, as the singular child referred to, is representing every single one of the hungry children in the poet’s country, South Africa. It also directly compares the stomach of a child which is supposed to be small and easy to satisfy as a ‘roaring lion’. This comparison is an example of onomatopoeia and a symbol for the grave hunger that is experienced by the persona.

The usage of alliteration in line1, “concertina chest” gives the poem a rhythmic yet symbolic effect, evokes the image of malnutrition as the concertina gives me the image of a string family instrument which gives rhythm to the ears when struck. In accentuation to the chest, it gives the reader the idea that if this chest is put in between string musical instruments, it could be mistaken for one as it shares so much likeness with them due to the extreme state of hunger and malnutrition in the state.

The resonating usage of imagery maps out the poem. “Glazed pupils” gives the image of thirst and the effects. The persona yearns for something beyond his ability and capability; “a bun on some sky-high shelf.” The ‘bun’ signifies (food) the solution to the persona’s problem while, “on some sky-high shelf” paints the picture of a solution out of reach, a barrier. The background of the poem suggests the barrier was severely tied to the apartheid period in South Africa. The image of sickness was also painted in lines 6 and 7, “The skin was pale and taut like a glove on a doctor’s hand”. These lines give the image of dehydration and lack of fresh air which could be effectively termed sickness.

Lines 8-10 pictures a thirsty and hungry persona who can possibly eat anything available just to satisfy his thirst and hunger. The last stanza gives the image of dissatisfaction. “Your stomach is a den of lions roaring day and night”, reverberates determination in getting his thirst and hunger satisfied as he is in the highest state of hunger.

The use of a third-person omniscient point of view gives us a detailed reality of the persona’s circumstances which makes it easier to relate with. The poet successfully interweaves the first person point of view with the third-person omniscient as its seen lace the poem; “I counted…” and “O! Child, your stomach…” highlights this. The weave adorns the poem through not just its diction but its effects.

The usage of various literary devices reinforces the themes of hunger, poverty, famine, war, apartheid and the realities of life. Although, the prevailing theme is hunger which in the description of just its face touches many themes just to let its readers have a perfect description, an understanding of what the theme of hunger is. The poem suggests it was written during a period of struggle in South Africa, the Apartheid period which was characterized by racial segregation, famine, war and various other trying conditions. The poem majorly pictures the realities of life from the eye of hunger.

Conclusively, the poem expatiates on the state of hunger experienced in South Africa during the period of national struggle. Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali has successfully delved into the arena of the society to point out a social problem that should be looked into thereby not just creating poetry but also clamoring and creating a new society.

**GROUP 5**

**GROUP QUESTION: Analysis of "The Harvest of our Life" by Kwesi Brew.**

**BACKGROUND OF THE POET**

The poet Kwesi Brew was born in 1928 in Cape Coast Ghans but was brought up by a British guardian (K.J Dickens) after the death of his parents. He was born in a period when Ghana was under the rule of the colonialists, and raised by a foreigner, it can be said that Brew was largely exposed to foreign culture and not well intimated with African values which could have brought about the development of a soft spot for the European ways of life, because in later years in subsequent poems, he pays tribute to American writer, Maya Angelou and Ghanaians who might have helped reshaped his eurocentric view into Afrocentric ones.

Kwesi Brew's works have often been described as a poetry of statement and situation of which "The Harvest of our Life" is not an exception.

**SUBJECT MATTER**

Two interpretations can be inferred from the title of the poem. It could be said that this literary piece was written to reminisce on what traditional Ghana was before the contact with the Europeans and its attending damage to the Ghana culture and African at large,that is the time before the whites took over and harvested their life and culture and tossed it aside. On the other hand, and no so far fetched, the poem is a call to Ghanaians and Africans that it is time to take back what is theirs and harvest whatever is left of their culture and make something out of it "... the time to do so is now!" (Stanza 1).

The poem "The Harvest of our Life" is largely borne out of the spirit of Africanism.

**THEMES**

The central theme in Brew's "The Harvest of our Life" is the theme of Africanism. There is in the poem, a depth of intention in the way the poet brings to fore the past, the intensity, the primal nature and the beauty of Ghana, in other words, there is a deep drive to capture the essence of Africa and present it to the whole world particularly the Europeans, to make it known and to spell it out that contrary to the thoughts and beliefs of the whites that the Africans lived like animals with no sense of order or society, the Ghanaians society had a way of life, they had an heritage, though it was not the most perfect as couched in lines 38-39 in stanza 5, which presupposes that it was not all bliss in the traditional arena of living but it was serene, safe, beautiful and most of all, it was home, lines 49-57 " I saw a sheet of light// on the soft belly of the leaves//...bright as the light//defending day from night//...as the path of a spirit as water//and her hair like the dark eyes of an eagle//over the affairs of men." By painting in few words this picture of the pre-colonial Ghana society, Brew attempts to establish some sort of equality with the whites and in the same breath, superiority, in the motherly and protective nature of the African culture.

The last stanza presents the unfortunate event of the erosion of this heritage with the Advent of the colonialists "and yet the river rolled on//...twigs, grass...a flower...the breath//of the soil and the bones of thousands//who should have lived//...to deceive the mover of the move// and the mover of the move//always moved by an uncertainty." The coming of the Europeans brought to the Ghanaians unending deceit and uncertainty, as a result of which is the intensity of sentiment expressed in the first four lines of the poem which is a call to action, to rise and take back the heart of Ghana, to master the heart of the African culture.

Another theme present in the poem is the influence of colonialism that is it's I'll. Kwesi Brew dedicates an entire stanza to bring to light this issue. Stanza 7 in so subtle, so soft and yet so painful it is also characterized with tragic words, this stanza discusses the evils of the influence of the whites on Africans most especially the Ghanaians.

The whites and their influence is presented to have come "bearing the burden of rotten wood" to destroy and crush the soft "flower", the tender 'twigs and grass' and gentle breath of Africa, represented with the word 'soil' lines 61-63. The whites came as "White sand in the bed" depicting the very gentle and possibly persuasive approach of the Europeans before they took over all of Ghana, which was all a "ruse to deceive the mover" and "kill the bones of thousands who should have lived..."

The Europeans not only eroded the indigenous ways of life of the people of Ghana, enslaving them and taking their resources, but also took away their children, their hope for the future, and shattered that hope.

This poem not only bemoans the evils of European’s culture, it also mourns the loss of hope for the Ghanaians future and her traditions, which is another theme presented in the poem. The older ones who are to guide the young ones in the ways of African’s culture are dying quickly, some due to age, others due to pressure of labour. Sadly, the young ones who are supposed to learn about the culture, inherit it and carry on the traditions and customs are being taught in the ways of the white and not only that, but also led to believe that the lifestyle of the white man is best all in the name of civilization. Thus, moving them to a decided uncertainty. At this juncture, Brew is slightly envisioning the culture clash and confusion that is bound to break out in the future, (Lines 62-69).

Apart from the spirit of Africanism as earlier discussed, another important issue of life presented in the poem is the theme of the African life and Heritage and what it meant to live in such settings.

Stanzas 3-5 depicts in a clear manner the African life. A lucid picture of the African life is painted using entertainment words in lines 23-27& 36, the play of romance lines 31-35, the religious sacrifices and mode of worship, the games in lines 42-43, their physical environment which was enveloped in the beauty of nature lines 44-48, and how content life was in that setting, how safe, protected and at home it felt to live in time and space that was theirs, that truly felt like their own lines 49-57.

The reader cannot but notice the subtle pictures of conflict being painted by the persona between this native life and the foreign way of life that they are now living in.

**CONTENT ANALYSIS (Stanza by stanza)**

**Stanza 1**:

The poem opens with a sharp call, a resolution and determination to take action "if this is the time//to master my heart//do so now!". The persona is giving out an open invitation to whoever is ready to bring back the lost knowledge of the 'heart'; the heart of Ghana which is the way of life indigenous to them. The persona is not only calling out but also starting the urgency behind the call, saying the time to act is now, when the 'clouds' that have darkened the sky of the knowledge of their hearts floats back to their home. This line is open to be interpreted that as at the time of this writing, the Ghanaians were newly independent or on the verge of gaining Independence, thus making it a double call to Nationalism.

**Stanza 2**:

In this stanza, the persona goes on to explain his call and also state the readiness and eagerness to go back to a time where there was the freedom of living in their cultural heritage, and celebrate the wonders that came with it. He is anxious to go back to the life where they were bound to their own ideals and not that if a foreign stranger.

**Stanza 3-5:**

Stanza three, four, and five take the reader back to the days of culture through the persona's memory lane, when traditions and customs were celebrated. In stanza 3, the persona's goes back in time and reveals in the pleasures earlier mentioned in the second stanza.

**Stanza 6**

Through the persona's memory lane, the reader can see why the persona's would be partial to the African culture. The African culture is ascribed a goddess like nature, putting forward the idea that there was home and safety in the certainty and clarity of indigenous ways. Lines 4-9, Stanza 6

**Stanza 7**

The last stanza finally reveals the reasons behind the emotions earlier presented and the reservations of the persona towards the white man's culture. The erosion of the Ghanaian culture by the European ways of life, birth a sad presentation and also the likelihood of a sad future in terms of the confusion and uncertainty it has caused and will still bring if nothing is done to change things. Thus the Clarion call at the beginning.

**POETIC TECHNIQUES**

**Style, diction and tone**

The poem "The Harvest of Our Life" is a metaphorical poem. Through the run of the poem, the style of the poet is embedded in an intense use of imagery, beginning from the fifth line to the very last line. There is no single mention of words such as customs or foreign, but with the use of direct comparisons in words such as 'raffia skirts', and 'libations', the reader is able to deduce the idea of traditions and culture relating to Africa, and phrases such as 'White sand', is used to represent the foreigners.

The diction, that is the choice of words is simple. The poem is written with the use of little or no use of elevated language. The words used are mainly figurative in nature, majorly metaphors and similes which are used to complement the style in which the poem has been written, to paint natural imageries.

The poet in order to accurately present the poem not only as a call for the present, but also an introspection into the past, noticeably writes in the past tense.

The tone of the poem is sombre and nostalgic, laced with a bit of sadness and urgency.

**FIGURATIVE DEVICES**

A figure of speech or rhetorical device is a distinctive use of words to achieve a special effect in a piece of writing (figurative language is often associated with the use of word in an unusual manner to achieve special effect.

**Assonance**: - This is the repetition of vowel sounds in a sequence of nearby words Examples are:

“If this is the time” line 1 repetition of “I” sound

“Unnoticed on the sinews of the leaf “line 17 “repetition of “I” sound

“Flirting with sportive spirits” line 33 repletion of ‘I’ sound

“with the soft light of fear in its eyes” line 48 repetition of ‘I” sound.

**Dramatic monologue:**  this is also known as persona poem. it is a type of poem written in the form of a speech of an individual character. It is a poetic form that presents the speech or conversation of a person in a dramatic manner. Examples are; “If this is the time to master my heart Do so! Do so now!” line 1-4

“If this is the time

To master my heart

Let me fall an easy victim

To the pleasures that you hold to my lips”

**Simile: This is** a stated comparison (usually formed with ‘like’ or ‘as’) between two fundamentally dissimilar things that have certain qualities in common. Example are “Bright as the light” line 52

“And palm-wine as clear” Line 54

“As the path a spirit as water” line 55

“And her hair like the dark eyes of an eagle “ 56

**Refrain:**  This is the repetition of a phrase, lines of poem or set of words in a poem. Refrain is meant to draw readers attention and contributing to its meter and rhythm, it also makes a poem catchy and easy to remember. Examples are

“Do so!

Do so now!” line 3-4

“Of sacrificial sheep

Of acceptance and refusal of gifts

Of good men and their lot;

Of good name and its loss; of the die cast

And the loading of the dice” line 38-43

**Repetition:** This is the figure of speech that deals with the recurrence of a word, phrase or sentence within a poetic work. This is used to ensure emphasis

Examples are “If this is the time “ line 1 and 8, “Oh i remember the songs line 23 and 27 The repetition of “And” in line 14, 18, 25,29,43, 46, 54, 56, 58, 59, 63, 68.

**Enjambment: This** is also known as run on lines, It is the literary device in which the meaning of a poetic lines runs through the other lines i.e it is not completed until the subsequent lines. Examples are

line 1-2 “If this is the time”

“To master my heart”

Line 1 “If this is the time “is meaningless because we do not know what to do with the time until line 2 where we know that the time is meant to master my heart.

line 5-7 “As the clouds float

Home to their rain-drenched

Caverns behind the hills “

Line 64-65

“who should have lived

To fight a war for this or that”

Line 44-45 “Why the barn dog barked

At the moon as she sang”

Line 46-48 “And why the mouse dropped the pearl-corn

From its teeth and stood forced-humble

With the soft light of fear in it eyes”

Line 49-50 “I saw a sheen of light

On the soft belly of the leaves”

**Metaphor**: This involves an implied comparison between two unlike things that actually have something important in common. It is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison. Example of metaphor in the poem

Line 14 “And the hailing leopard”

**Alliteration:**  This is the repetition of an initial consonant sounds in a sequence of nearby words

Line16 “dew-drops dry” “d” sound is repeated

Line34 “Red-eyed, with red-lips, hoary-red” repetition of “r” sound

Line38” Sacrificial sheep “S” sound is repeated

Line 44 “barndog barked

Line63” Of the soil and the bones of thousands” repetition of “T” sound

**Oxymoron: This** is the figure of speech in which incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side. It is a contradictory term to highlight an ambiguous condition. Examples are “Living bones” line 26

**Pun: pun** is a play on words, sometimes on different senses of the same word and sentences on the similar sense or sound of different words

Examples are “Web its way

Through the subtle

Entanglement of weeds” 19-21

“To deceive the mover of the move

And the mover of the move

Always moved by an uncertainty”.

POEM: MY COUNTRY IS BEREAVED

GROUP: 7

**My country is bereaved**

we have just survived

another lap of war.

the chivalrous killers

are waiting outside

sharing their spoils.

they make jest of my people

the ones who live

from dust to mouth every day.

it is a war

addressed to the wretched

by those we gave our votes freely

forgetting the fears

they will become dictators.

now is the season of blood

children and old women

maimed by fresh bullets

borrowed from foreign lands.

the blood continues to flow

a new smokescreen of vipers

playing the violins for us to dance

by force by force by force.

we who are serial casualties say,

the last drop of the last man

will speak for us

for we are washed beyond

the cabal crookedness in the air.

the tribal marks of war are here

the subterfuge season is here.

we who feed now

from the howling winds

we exhale and say,

we shall survive the tyrant poison.

We shall survive the ammonia of hate.

**Remi Raji**

BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHOR

Aderemi Raji-Oyelade popularly known by his pen name Remi Raji, is a Nigerian poet, scholar, literary organiser and cultural activist. His first collection of poems, "Harvest Of Laughter (1997)" has won national and international recognition. He has read his poems widely in Africa, Europe and America. Remi Raji's other volume of poetry, includes Webs of remembrance, Shuttlesong America, A Poetic Guided Tour and Lovesong For My Wasteland.

Remi Raji currently teaches literature and creative writing in the department of English, University of Ibadan. His poem My Country Is Bereaved was written with a collection of poems.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The topic of the poem already gives the readers an idea of the message the author was trying to pass. The word bereaved means to suffer from death or the death of something, so when Remi Raji says My Country Is Bereaved, he is simply saying my country is dying or my country is suffering from death. Looking at Nigeria, one would know that this is not far fetched from the actual truth and reality of things.

The poem has four stanzas which potrays the heartbreaking nature in Nigeria. The poem talks about the evils in the Nigeria society with more focus on the effects of change of power and election

*"We have just survived/ another lap of war",* these are the fisrt two lines of the first stanza that begins the poem. The word "war" was significantly used as every election and change of power in Nigeria is war. One can suggest that this poem was written after the end of a tenure of government and during election time. The next seven lines talk about how the *"chivalrous killers"* that is the honourable thives, go about sharing the *"spoils",* the stolen money of the people who struggle to earn a living by living from *"dust to mouth every day"*. This politicians *"make jest"* and mockery of the people by all the evils and war they wage on them. This are people who gave their *"votes freely"* in hope that these "*chivalrous killers*" would liberate them from their suffering, but instead they become "*dictators*"

Stanza two and three talks about the horrors that the Nigerians face, especially during election. "*Season of blood"* emphasis the time of election which usually comes with blood shed. Nigeria has history of elections with massive bloodshed as "*vipers*" fight for power. We see "*children and old women"* who represent the weak in the society, wounded and killed, some even used for rituals for this elections. These "*chivalrous killers*" borrow arms from "*foreign lands*" to terrorize and terminate the lives of innocent people and even their opponents. As a result of this "the blood continues to flow". "A new smokescreen of vipers" represent the new government who came after the election and have come to control the people by "force".

In stanza three, the poet tells us how we Nigerians are "*serial casualties"* in the hands of this crooked "*cabals*". Hope then begins to arise as the people believe that one day, *"the last drop of the last man/ will speak"* for them and they shall survive in the end.

MOOD

Mood is the emotional feeling or atmosphere that a work of literature produces in a reader. The mood of this poem is that of anger and frustration and lastly hope. At the beginning of the poem the reader is angry because of the evil our leaders perpetuate and the way they are treating the people, people who struggle and live "*from dust to mouth every day".* Frustration comes in as there seems to be no way out. The people are simply "*serial casualties".* Lastly hope, sets in at the last two stanzas. The readers believe that one day things will change as the author also believes that one day *"the last drop of the last man/will speak for"* them.

TONE

The tone is the poets attitude towards the poem. The tone of the poem suggest the anger, sadness, disappointment, unhappiness, frustration and hope. The title of the poem suggest the sadness of the writer towards his country. The country is bereaved of good leadership and what we have is poverty among the masses and destruction of lives. The poet is simply mourning the state of things in the country.

IMAGERY

The poem is rich in imageries that pictures and gives an understanding of the message the poet is trying to pass across. The strong use of imagery by the poet makes the readers get to picture and feel what the poet felt when writing this poem.

In the first two lines, the word *"war"* creates an image of chaos and disorder. The aftermath of the *"war"* which is the election in this case, creates the image of people coming together and connecting with one another with their remains due to all they have lost to the *"chivalrous killers".* The *"spoils"* in line five creates the image of politicians and leaders gathering and celebrating the looted money they took from the *"ones who live from/dust to mouth everyday",* the *"wretched"* people.

Stanza two begins with the use of a strong visual imagery with words *"season of blood".* Most election and change of power in Nigeria usually comes with bloodshed. The readers can easily picture people dying and the blood of *"children and old women"* who represent the weak in the society being killed by *"bullets"* and thus, the *"blood continues to flow"."A new smokescreen of vipers"* paints the image of a new government who has taken over, a government that is dangerous and evil.

The second line of the third stanza "the last drop of the last man" creates the image of the people being avenged and availed from the hands of the "chivalrous killers". *"Cabal crookedness"* brings to mind the issue of godfatherism in Nigeria. It brings to mind the strong politicians who in their crooked ways would do anything to wage war on the people.

Lastly, *"howling winds"* in the last stanza, line two, is an auditory imagery, in which the howling wind in this sense depicts the strugglings and wars that is howling like a wind to the people. *"Tyrant poison"* and *"ammonia of hate"* just simply reinforce the picture of the wickedness of those in power.

LITERARY DEVICES

In this poem, the poet seems to be more concerned about passing the message in the poem across than actually playing on words. This might be the reason why there isn't actually a lot of figures of speech. But since it is practically impossible for any poem to actually not have any figure of speech embedded in it, the ones obvious in this poem will be discussed.

One of the literary devices employed is Enjambment. Enjambment is the continuation of a sentence without a pause beyond the end of a verse or couplet. It can also be said to be a run in on lines. Enjambment is really evident in this poem and actually occurs throughout the course of the poem. One can see that the sentences are running into the next line and new sentences are starting from the middle of verses.

Another literary device used by the writer is alliteration. Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of two or more words immediately succeeding each other. It also means the recurrence of the same letter in accented parts of words. Alliteration is evident in the thirteenth verse of the second stanza, "cabal crookedness". Cabal crookedness here refers to God fatherism. There is also the use of alliteration in the twelfth verse of the first stanza, "forgetting the fears". The letter F alliterates here. The letter S also alliterates in "subterfuge season".

There's a one time use of synecdoche too. Synecdoche is a figure of speech or literary device that uses the name of a part to represent the whole or uses the name of the whole to represent the part. The usage of this literary device appears in the fifth verse of the second stanza, "the blood continues to flow". This phrase is actually a sad one and would sound even more tragic if it is said ordinarily. That being stated, this verse could actually said to be an euphemism. Euphemism is the use of a word or phrase to replace another with one that is considered less offensive, blunt or vulger than the word or phrase with which it replaces.

There is also the use of repetition in this poem. Repetition is a device that repeats the same words or phrases a few times to make an idea clearer and more memorable. As a rhetorical device,it could be a word, a phrase or a full sentence, or a poetical line repeated to emphasize it's significance in the entire text. Repetition occurs in the last verse of the second stanza,

"By force by force by force"

And also comes up in the second to the last and last stanzas of the poem,

"we shall survive.../we shall survive"

There is also the one time use of irony. Irony refers to the expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite. Verse three of the first stanza is a vivid example of an irony. "The chivalrous killers" which is really true about Nigerian politians can simply mean "honorable killers" because these people are in positions of authorities and respect and they use these positions to exploit the less privileged.

Lastly we have metaphor. Metaphor is a figure of speech or literary device in which a word or a phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable . Metaphor is evident in the sixth line of the second stanza, "smokescreen of vipers". Smokescreen of vipers here refers to hypocritical politicians who mask their true identities until they are elected into power

THEMES

Themes are basically the central topics or main ideas embedded in literary works. There are quite a number of themes that can be derived from this poem. One of such is deception. Deception is evident in the phrase "smokescreen of vipers". Smokescreen here means smoke that is used as a disguise, mask or cover, or anything used metaphorically to conceal or distract. This explanation shows the height of deception being used here.

Another theme is the Nigerian politics. The body of the whole poem really exposes the trickeries and callousness of Nigerian politians. From phrases such as "chivalrous killers", "sharing their spoils" all go to show the nature of these politicians.

Poverty is also another evident theme in the poem is the theme of poverty. "The ones who live from dust to mouth" clearly sheds more light on this theme. This means that the ones being referred to here are the ones who take from the crumbs that fall from the mouths and hands of these "vipers". The theme of hunger can also be drawn from this phrase.

There is also the theme of hopelessness and helplessness. "playing the violins for us to dance by force by force by force" shows that those dancing have no choice but to dance. This is quite insightful because violins are not instruments meant to be danced to but they have to dance mandatorily even if they are tired and/or unwilling. The theme of helplessness comes into play in the verse, "the last drop of the last man" which shows that they have been pushed to accept their faces and leave the situation in the hands of posterity.

All in all, the poem reflects the true nature of the Nigerian state.

**Group 8**

**POEM:THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US**

**About the poet**

On April 7, 1770, William Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth, Cumbria, England. Wordsworth's mother died when he was eight—this experience shapes much of his later work. Wordsworth attended Hawkshead Grammar School, where his love of poetry was firmly established and, it is believed, he made his first attempts at verse. While he was at Hawkshead, Wordsworth's father died leaving him and his four siblings orphans. After Hawkshead, Wordsworth studied at St. John's College in Cambridge and before his final semester, he set out on a walking tour of Europe, an experience that influenced both his poetry and his political sensibilities. While touring Europe, Wordsworth came into contact with the French Revolution. This experience as well as a subsequent period living in France, brought about Wordsworth's interest and sympathy for the life, troubles, and speech of the "common man." These issues proved to be of the utmost importance to Wordsworth's work.

**The World Is Too Much With Us by William Wordsworth: Summary and Analysis**

The World Is Too Much With Us is a sonnet by William Wordsworth is about the loss of nature caused by humankind. People are busy on getting and spending. For the speaker, we waste our powers for nothingness. For us, nature is little and incomplete, People have given their hearts away. This is a sordid boon. As the speaker feels, the sea is in close relation to the moon and the winds will be howling at all hours. But people are out of such tune.

Seeing all these, the speaker desires to be a pagan so that he could stand on the pleasant island and would have a glimpse of the beautiful seashore. It would definitely make him less sad. Similarly, chanting on the sea land he could see Proteus rising from the sea or could hear the blow of Triton.

The sonnet, ‘The World Is Too Much With Us', is ironical in its representation of humans in relation to nature. For the poet, the nature is vast, large and indefinite whereas it is incomplete, little and insignificant to the people. Nature is offering real pleasure and beauty to the people, but people are running behind unseen and artificial pleasure and beauty. It is the real irony of human life that we never care what we have but we always desire for something probable and possible. The same thing is taking place in the life of modem people. They have no time to consider and enjoy the beauty of the sea, the moon and the winds. Easily available and universal natural beauties have been denied by people in the course of getting and spending something artificial, temporary, and inanimate. The relationship between mankind and nature in the present context is only ironical.

The World Is Too Much With Us is a sonnet written in Iambic pentameter. This sonnet is in the pattern of Petrarchan model. This sonnet is divided into two parts. The first part is called octave and the second part is sestet. The octave follows the rhyme scheme of ABBA ABBA and the sestet follows a rhyme scheme of CDCDCD. The first part introduces the problem, whereas the second part provides the solution. In this poem, all the poetic lines are almost equal in their length. The poet heavily depends on the use of allusion and mythology. The word 'Pagan' refers to an ethnic man of Germanic root. Similarly, Proteus and Triton are the names of two gods who are closely associated with the myth of nature. In the middle part of the poem, the phrase “Great God” has been capitalized. It means the speaker feels helpless in the human world and he desires to be supported by the god. The rhyme scheme has definitely supported the poet to make it more persuasive. The title of the poem has been repeated in the very first line. By using the pronoun 'we', the poet is also taking responsibility of such a loss of nature. Most of the words like 'getting and spending' 'little' and 'forlorn' indicate commerce and modernity. At two different places, the poet takes the help of exclamation mark "sordid boon"! and "GREAT GOD"!.

Overall, the poem is well organized with the selection of proper diction.

**Themes**

**THEME OF SADNESS**

The speaker of "The World is too Much with Us" is not happy about the way things are, and he makes no secret of it. He thinks we have given our hearts away and eventually exclaims, "Great God!" The tone of the poem is elegiac (it's like a poem mourning the dead) and near the end the speaker tells us he is "forlorn" – depressed at what he sees – and would rather be a pagan so that he wouldn't feel so sad.

**MAN'S MORTALITY**

Nothing is literally dead in "The World is too Much with Us," but the speaker suggests that humanity's alienation from nature is a kind of double death; because people are obsessed with "getting and spending" they aren't moved by nature, and that makes them dead. And nature, since people no longer acknowledge it, is also sort of "dead." All this death makes the speaker wish he could bring an old religion back to life.

**NATURE**

One of the major theme in the poem " The world is too much with us", is that of "Nature"

The speaker talks about how man has greatly deserted nature, in line 3,"little we see in nature that is ours" tell us this

Today, we can see how we have been killing our world little by little, increasing the chances of natural dangers to man

**Nostalgia**

A lot of Wordsworth's poetry is nostalgic about something; usually it's childhood, but in this poem it's a certain relationship to nature. The poem complains that people aren't moved by nature, and the speaker clearly yearns for a time when they were moved by nature. When he exclaims, "We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!" you can hear him recalling the time when we still had our hearts, when we still saw something in nature that was "ours."

Later in the poem, one feels as though the speaker were nostalgic for a pre-modern world of paganism.

**SETTING**

The World is too Much with Us" takes place near the ocean. Here one feels more closer to ocean, listening to the waves and the wind blow

\***POETIC DEVICES**\*

Poetic and literary devices are the same, but a few are used only in poetry. Here is the analysis of some of the poetic devices used in this poem.

**Sonnet:**A sonnet is a fourteen-line poem in with one idea flow throughout the text. There are many types of sonnets such as Petrarchan or Shakespearean. This one is Petrarchan sonnet.

The whole poem follows ABBA ABBA rhyme pattern in octave and CDCDCD rhyme scheme in the sestet.

**Iambic Pentameter**: It is a type of meterconsisting of five iambs. The poem comprises iambic pentameter such as, “A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn.

**Literary Devices**

Literary devices are used to bring richness and clarity to the texts. The writers use them to make their texts appealing and meaningful. Wordsworth, too, has employed some literary devices to bring uniqueness in this sonnet. The analysis of some of the literary devices used in this poem is given below.

**Enjambment**: It is defined as a thought in a verse that does not come to an end at a line break; rather, it rolls over to the next line. For Example,

“Great God! I’d rather be

A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn.”

**Personification**: Personification is to attribute human characteristics to non-human or even inanimate objects. The poet has used personification at several places in this poem such as, “sea that bears her bosom to the moon”; “The winds that will be howling at all hours” and “sleeping flowers.” All these expressions make nature possess human-like qualities like yearning for love, sleeping and soothing.

**Allusions**: Allusion is an indirect or direct reference to a person, place, thing or idea of historical, cultural, political or literary significance. This poem contains allusions to Greek mythology,

“Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;

Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.”

**Imagery**: The use of imagery makes the readers visualize the writer’s feelings, emotions or ideas. Wordsworth has used images appealing to the sense of hearing such as, “winds that will be howling “to the sense of touch as “sleeping flowers;” and to the sense of sight as “Proteus rising from the sea.”

**Consonance**: Consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line such as the sound of /s/ in “Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea” and /f/ and /t/ sounds in “For this, for everything, we are out of tune.”

**Simile**: Simile a device used to compare something another thing to let the readers know what it is. There is only one simile used in line seven of the poem, “And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;” The poet has linked the howling of the winds with the sleeping flowers.

**Metaphor**: There are two metaphors used in this poem. One of the metaphors is in the tenth line, “Suckle in a creed outworn.” Here creed represents mother that nurses her child.

**Assonance**: Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in the same line such as /o/ sound in “Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn”.

The careful glimpse of this analysis shows that the poet has skillfully projected his ideas using the above devices. The universality of the subject is beautifully discussed under cover of these literary devices.

Historical Background of the Poet

As a Jamaican immigrant to the United States, Claude McKay's writing introduced many complex themes, both from his experiences in Jamaica and his life in the United States. In 1912, McKay arrived in the United States, attended college here, and eventually became a part of the Harlem Renaissance movement, a group of African-American writers who wrote and developed ideas together.

These writers focused on the struggles of African Americans in the United States, particularly prejudices that they encountered.

Festus Claudius "Claude" McKay (September 15, 1889– May 22, 1948) was a Jamaican writer and poet, who was a seminal figure in the Harlem Renaissance. He was a writer, poet and journalist. McKay was attracted to communism in his early life, but he always asserted that he never became an official member of the Communist party,USA. However, some scholars dispute that claim, noting his close ties to active members, his attendance at communist-led events, and his months-long stay in the Soviet Union in 1922–23, which he wrote about very favourably. He gradually became disillusioned with communism, however, and by the mid-1930s had begun to write negatively about it By the late 1930s his anti-Stalinism isolated him from other Harlem intellectuals and by 1942 he converted to Catholicism and left Harlem, and he worked for a Catholic organization until his death.

McKay flourished as a poet during the Harlem Renaissance, a major literary movement in the 1920s. During this time, his poems challenged white authority while celebrating Jamaican culture. He also wrote tales about the trials and tribulations of life as a black man in both Jamaica and America. McKay was not secretive about his hatred for racism and felt that racist people were stupid and could not look past their short-sightedness and hatred In tales such as Home to Harlem, he depicts a culture in Harlem that is full of drug use, prostitution, and a variety of sexual encounters. His depiction was criticized as a negative portrayal of Harlem and its lower-class citizens by prominent figures such as W. E. B. DuBois, but was later applauded as a literary force in the Harlem Renaissance McKay’s poetry brought awareness to the racist treatment that many black individuals faced.

One of his works that challenges racial discrimination in the Harlem Renaissance is his poem If We Must Die. It looks to defend black rights and threatens for prejudice and abuse .He wanted his people to fight with determination and courage to those who would murder them It calls to any race or anyone being discriminated against to fight for their freedom and what's right. What influenced him to write this poem was the clash between white and African Americans McKay was afraid of the dangers that were happening all over the United States. The hangings, the shootings, the murders. Working as a porter on the railways, he would go from town to town not knowing what to expect. Some nights he would stay indoors because of the fear of danger going on outside. The creation of this poem had pushed him to become one of the most influential spokesman that promoted radicalism in America.

McKay divested himself from many aspects and growing prescriptions of modernism. By the beginning of the 20th century, the sonnet form had become an antiquated poetic style, but McKay found it an ideal a medium to convey his ideas. Many modernists, however, rejected and criticized his use of the sonnet. Despite their reaction, he persevered and created a significant number of modern sonnets.

Having spent time among the artists of Paris in the 1920s, he was intimately acquainted with the dynamics between painters and models and the manner in which modernist painters presented African subjects and African culture. In her article "Caribbean Models for Modernism in the Work of Claude McKay and Jean Rhys" Leah Rosenberg writes: "The fascination with African art and its identification with female sexuality was characteristic of modernist and avant-garde primitivism”. The inclination to stereotype and caricature the African physical form created, however inadvertently, a form of hegemony reminiscent to McKay of the colonialism he grew up with in Jamaica. "Sexuality and black culture," Rosenberg explains, "held a privileged place in modernist and avant-garde art from Picasso to Gertrude Stein". In need of money, McKay posed nude for the Cubist painter André Lhote. Through his experience, McKay saw first-hand how the larger social hegemony between European white supremacy and people of Afro-Caribbean descent could play itself out between the artist and its subject. McKay critically recalled the experience in various ways in many of his most notable works. In doing so, he shone a critical light on a cornerstone of modernism and once again pushed back against a system in which he found himself.

In 1977, the government of Jamaica named Claude McKay the national poet and posthumously awarded him the Order of Jamaica for his contribution to literature.

In 2002, scholar Molefi Kete Asante listed Claude McKay on his list of 100 Greatest African Americans. McKay is regarded as the "foremost left-wing black intellectual of his age" and his work heavily influenced a generation of black authors including James Baldwin and Richard Wright

Historical Background of the poem and the issues surrounding it

In his personal poems, McKay often reflects on the racism he experienced in America. He discusses the feelings of pride he has as an African American, but also the alienation that he experiences because of his race. Unlike other writers in the Harlem Renaissance movement, McKay often writes with rage and a call to action.

If We Must Die was written as a response to what is now called the Red Summer of 1919. During this summer, there was a rise in hate crime, race riots, and overall violence towards the black community. The three most violent episodes occurred in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Elaine, Arkansas. The violence included fighting and rioting that led to many black families losing their homes and multiple deaths.

THEMES, SETTING, DICTION, MOOD, TONE, FORM AND STRUCTURE

The poem was written during the dubbed “Red Summer” of 1919 which was characterized by racial violent actions against the African Americans in the United States. Thus, the poem’s subject matter and thematic preoccupations largely revolves round those events in the eyes of an African American, being that the poem was written by one.

THE INEVITABILITY OF DEATH

In examining the themes, the motif of death continues to recur thus emphasizing a major theme, the inevitability of death. The word “if” on first appearance connotes that death may or may not come. However, continuous reading would reveal that death is likely to occur in the present situation. Thus, repetition of certain words such as “die”, “dead”, “death-blow” and “dying” clearly foregrounds the imminence of death. Also, the poetic-persona implies that there is a right and wrong way to die. Thus, the right way would be to defy and fight back until the point of death, while the wrong way would be to do otherwise. This manner of dying, he believes, would constrain his foes to honour him in death. He also hints at the possibility of delivering a death-blow at his foes which could be an actual murder or just a fatal blow to their egos.

THE DEHUMINIZING NATURE OF MAN

The theme exploring the dehumanization of assailants is also present in the poem. The whole poem centres on a struggle between “us” and “them”, that is victims versus antagonists or assailants. On this note, the victims of which the poetic persona is a part, are the unjustly suffering humans, as the only thing concerning them which is likened to that of animals is their suffering. On the other hand, the assailants are directly referred to as “mad and hungry dogs” and “pack”, similar to a pack of wolves. These descriptions point to their inhumane acts similar to how animals would act based on instincts rather than reason. Also, the humanization of their foes may also be a way to counteract the assertions that Blacks are animalistic when Whites are actually the sub-humans.

RESISTANCE AGAINST OPPRESSION

Resistance against what can be changed is another theme explored in this poem as the key word, “defy” points out. The speaker has already accepted their likely death and “accursed lot”. Yet, he emphasizes that the victims must resist what they can resist, even onto death. Phrases such as “defy”, fighting back” seem to encourage outright opposition, and the poetic-persona sees violence as justified when responding to oppression and murder. Still, it could be that the poetic persona may simply be referring to mere defiance to their foes rather than outright warfare.

THE POWER OF COLLECTIVITY AND HONOUR

The poem also points out the power of collectivity and honor. Through the use of “we” and “us”, Mckay develops the need for the victimized to come together and defy their oppressors. The importance of collectivity is further developed through the arousing and urgent tone of the poem thus making us to imagine that he is addressing an audience. Beside that, reference to “kinsmen” further shows that the victims have a common heritage goal and enemy which bind them all together. It can then be implied that collective action and upholding of honour are held in high esteem by the poetic-persona.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAVERY AND MASCULINITY

The poem proposes standing high and brave even in the face of death, defying all attempt to keep on down. The idea is that dying while fighting gives one a sense of honour and nobility which even their foes would not be able to deny them. Yet, it can be gleaned that the concept of bravery is ascribed to the male gender. The poetic-persona insist that the victims fight “like men”, thus holding on to the popular notion that a man is defined not by who he is but how he acts. Indeed, dying “like men”, employed at the later stage of the poem is contrasted with dying “like hogs”, an indication of submission to brutality and degrading situation. In essence, the poet simply believes that this is a battle of men which can only be won by men themselves.

DICTION

Diction refers to the choice of words employed by the poet which could help advance his message, create clarity or ambiguity and produce stylistic imagery. From Mckay’s “If We Must Die Young”, diction is used to develop the themes, create the mood, tone and atmosphere, and thus draw readers to the poet’s side. His directness also makes the poem easily understandable and relatable, especially to those who have experienced oppression, though the message OF THE POEM WAS INTENDED FOR THE Black American of 1919.

In examining how the thematic preoccupations are advanced by the diction, bear in mind that the essence of the poem is to arouse persons, specifically the Blacks Americans, the act in a particular way as regards death. The simple and direct words aid this as the poet hardly makes use of ambiguous words to state the course of action to be taken. Also, phrases such as “fight”, “blood”, “grave”, amongst others, indicate the expediency of acting in the prescribed manner- fighting bravely to retain their honour. Moreover, rather than force his idea on them, he slowly and cleverly provokes those concerned to adopt his stance and advances the need for a collective response by describing an “inglorious” death having being “hunted” and “penned” in the first quantrain and then proceeding to present a noble and honourable death in the second quantrain.

The diction also stimulates the imaginative ability through the advancement of visual imagery. Due to the presence of certain words pertaining to struggle and fight, we are able to imagine a warfare between the foes and the victims. Moreover, the use of words such as “hunted”, “penned” and “accursed lot” as regards the victims’ circumstance is able to evoke sympathy and support from the readers. On the other hand, the poet uses monstrous words to refer to the oppressors to draw objections from readers against them.

Finally, the concept of constraint is presented in two contrasting lights through the words employed. In the first quantrain, a negative depiction is presented through the comparison to hogs being hunted and penned down to a spot, thus restricting freedom and free will and promoting injustice perpetrated by the Whites. The second depiction of constraint is more encouraging because while the men are still restricted, it is seen in valiant men fighting to the bitter end despite being “pressed to the wall”.

SETTING

Although no specific setting is presented in the poem, it can be deduced that the poem is temporally set in 1919 during the period of conflict between Blacks and Whites which resulted in the massive murders of Blacks in America. Being born in a period such as this, the poem is simply a portrayal of the feelings of Blacks as regard the gruesome events that took place.

This temporal setting influences the subject matter and thematic preoccupations of the poem. It informs the need for bravery, nobility and exposes the cruelty of man against man, similar to that of beasts. It thus foregrounds the tone of seriousness and urgency in attending to the issue at hand to ensure that death shall not be in vain.

Additionally, the poem geographically alludes to a war-infested setting as was the case of America in 1919. However, this war is certainly not balanced as one group is weaker and outnumbered compared to the other. In fact, it is more of a battle between the hunters and the hunted as the hunted have decided to struggle until their last breath. That “precious blood” would be shed also points to a gloomy setting as expected in a warring area.

TONE AND MOOD

Mood refers to the emotional feeling passed across to the reader concerning the subject matter of a literary piece. The tone, on the other hand is simply the manner in which a writer approaches his subject matter. It is the attitude of the writer towards the literary piece. Having established that, it is important to note that both elements can be developed through the diction, themes and setting of the poem.

The speaker’s tone can be said to be filled with a sense of urgency and arousal. This is heavily advanced by the thematic preoccupations of the poem as regards imminent death, the call to resist and defy and uphold the supposed masculine notion of bravery. Rather than accept his fate placidly, the tone of his voice indicates a clarion call capable of rousing men to face their foes. Moreover, the tone of the speaker is quite unapologetic for the violent means which he prescribes to face the enemies, as manifested in the theme of resistance and the choice of words employed. He clearly state that they should endeavor to deliver the “death-blow” to their opponents and shed blood, thus indicating his readiness to engage in violent means to uphold his honour, if necessary.

Furthermore, the mood passed across to the reader can be described as sympathetic towards the “accursed lot” yet inimical towards the oppressors. Mckay’s description of the oppressors as “mad and hungry dogs”, “murderous”, “monster” emphasizes the inhumanity of their actions towards their fellow men. On the other hand, he presents the oppressed in a more sympathetic light by comparing their sufferings to being treated “like hogs”, “hunted and penned” at the mercy of degrading humans. Likewise, reference to their “precious blood” to be shed brings to mind the imagery of sacrifice which they would have to undergo because of injustice. Thus, the reader cannot help but understand the decision of the speaker to fight rather than remain passive in the face of an unjust death.

In essence, the tone and mood evoke in the reader an emotional attachment to the poem. Having been emotionally stirred, a reader fully comprehends the message being passed across, the rationale behind it, as well as relate to the poem.

FORM AND STRUCTURE

The poem consists of fourteen lines written in iambic pentameter and with a given rhyme scheme, thus making it a sonnet. Moreover, the rhyme scheme of abab, cdcd, efef, gg makes it an Elizabethan sonnet commonly consisting of three quantrains and a couplet. As peculiar to this form of sonnet, the quantrains present the issues discussed in the poem while placing a resolution at the couplet. The quantrains offer two ways of dying: like inglorious hogs or noble men. The couplet finally confirms the speaker’s preference for a noble death which is facing the murderous and cowardly pack to the last breath. This is what he prescribes for his fellow kinsmen to adopt as well having been united with common heritage and goal.

LITERARY DEVICE

SYMBOLS

Hogs

The speaker’s simile “like hogs” invokes animals trapped and led to the slaughter, and the comparison to pigs invokes all connotations of pigs as dirty, fat and dull to suggest a kind of degraded state. However, since “hog” often refers specifically to a castrated male pig, the word also takes on a more specific resonance of emasculation. Indeed, the speaker’s only other use of “like” in the poem is in the simile “like men”, which creates a direct comparison between these symbolic states. If hogs suggest an “inglorious” shameful state that is weak and subhuman, “men” suggests not just humanity in general but specifically the traditional ideal of “being a man”. In urging his allies to fight, the speaker encourages them to live up to this conception of masculinity, dying in a manner worthy of “men” so that- unlike hogs- they will be remembered after they are gone.

Dogs

Running through the poem is a characterization of the enemy as non-human (and inhumane). While McKay subtly shifts the comparison as the poem continues- the first dogs, then monsters, then the more neutral “foe”, and then finally “pack”- the implication of a bloodthirsty savage mass remains constant throughout. While the dogs clearly symbolize the aggressive and predatory nature of the enemy, this extended metaphor also serves just as importantly as a technique of dehumanization. If we interpret the speaker as a black man and his allies as African Americans facing dehumanization and violence from whites, then these nonhuman descriptions turn the tables on their racist foe, showing that it is in fact the enemy who is not fully human.

Death

Death is a prominent motif throughout the poem. References to death and violence are clearly the most central aspect of the poem, with variations of “die” appearing six times and words like “murderous”, “grave” and shed “blood” all creating a sense of pervasive and impending death. The very basis of the poem itself is the speaker’s acknowledgment of death, and he urges the allies to respond to it in a way that gives death meaning. Despite the imminence of death, the speaker implicitly draws distinctions between different kinds of death and between legitimate and illegitimate violence. Death for a worthy cause, he suggests, is a “defiance” that is worthy of glory, and the act of delivering a “deathblow” to the enemy will allow the dead to live on in glory after they are gone.

While the speaker himself is far from bloodthirsty, seeing life as “precious” and implicitly lamenting the state of things that meant they have to die, he desires to face death head-on and urges his allies to do the same.

Allegory

The poem’s creation of an “us versus them”, Manichean conflict has led to it being interpreted in a number of different ways throughout the years. Readers have understood the poem in terms of racial violence, in terms of laborers versus capitalists, in terms of the two sides in World War II, and in many other capacities. The poem’s grand, elevated diction and rousing call to arms have given it a universal appeal, and McKay’s decision not to describe the particulars of the speaker, his allies, and the “common foe” have allowed the poem to function allegorically for its countless readers across the world.

Litotes

In light of the previous characterizations of “dogs” and monsters”, the reference to the “common foe” in line 9 understates the danger and savagery of their enemy, perhaps in order to depict a more manageable opponent as the speaker begins to rally his “kinsmen”.

Allusion

“Precious blood” not “shed in vain” potentially alludes to Christ’s death on the cross, depicting the speaker and his allies as Christ-like martyrs.

Hyperbole

The speaker’s description of his enemy as a great mass of “monsters” dealing their “thousand blows” may be read as an exaggerated depiction used for purposes of characterization.

Onomatopoeia

“Bark” in line 3 replicates the short and hard noise that a dog makes.

Simile

“like hogs/Hunted and penned” is a simile comparing the speaker and his allies to pigs if they yield to their enemy.

Metaphor

“the mad hungry dogs”

“the monsters”

“the murderous, cowardly pack”

Are extended metaphors which compare the enemy to dogs and non-human creatures.

“the open grave” is a metaphor for death.

Metonymy

“Precious blood may not be shed” refers to not just the loss of blood but death

Alliteration

Assonance

Repetition

CONCLUSION

Although our contemporary conditions are not exactly like those McKay writes about in 1919, Nigerians still face a lot of oppression across different social parameters- be they religious, political or economic. We need to stand united against our current oppressors. When we begin to cognize that we should stop fighting one another and start fighting our oppressors, we will witness the authentic change we long to see.

**GES 201 GROUP ASSIGNMENT**

**An analysis of To His Coy Mistress by Andrew Marvell**

**BACKGROUND OF THE POET**

Andrew Marvell (1621 - 1678) is one of the most reputable metaphysical poets in the history of literature. Born to Reverend Andrew Marvell, Andrew's eventual path in life is a sharp contrast to his presumed Christian upbringing. After the death of his father in 1641, Andrew Marvell took leave of his studies and travelled around the world learning a repertoire of foreign languages. His eventual foray into politics at a time of socio-political upheaval in England was marked by an enormous satirical attitude towards the Parliament and other state officials. Very few of his work were published during his lifetime and although his writings made a few appearances in several anthologies, it wasn't until 1681 that a collection of his works was made public.  During the [Commonwealth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_of_England" \o "Commonwealth of England) period he was a colleague and friend of [John Milton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Milton" \o "John Milton). His poems range from the love-song "[To His Coy Mistress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_His_Coy_Mistress" \o "To His Coy Mistress)", to evocations of an aristocratic [country house](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Country_house_poem" \o "Country house poem) and garden in "[Upon Appleton House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upon_Appleton_House" \o "Upon Appleton House)" and "[The Garden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Garden_(poem)" \o "The Garden (poem))", the political address "An [Horatian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horatian" \o "Horatian) Ode upon [Cromwell's Return from Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cromwellian_conquest_of_Ireland" \o "Cromwellian conquest of Ireland)", and the later personal and political satires "Flecknoe" and "The Character of Holland".

To his coy mistress is one of his most celebrated works and in it, we have a firsthand experience of his profoundly sensual and elegant writing style.

**Overview of the poem**

To His Coy Mistress is a poetic work in which the poet addresses a woman who is slow to respond to his romantic advances. In criticizing her apparent coyness, Andrew Marvel also takes an opportunity to emphasize the importance of time and enjoying the pleasures of life as they come. In this dramatic monologue, Marvell utilizes devices such as allusion, metaphor and imagery to amplify his 'Carpe diem philosophy. By urging his lover to agree to his demands, Marvell also entreats us the readers to seize the day while our willing soul transpires .

**Subject matter**

Andrew Marvell's To his coy mistress is a poetic syllogism and his argument is based on two major premises and a conclusion.

The poem begins with an earnest appeal with which the poet tries to convince his beloved that her shyness would be perfectly understood if time were not the enemy of man. Marvell uses the entire first section of the poem to delineate how he would use the vast expanse of time to shower his mistress with affection. With each line, he catalogues the lady's physical attributes in a hyperbolic manner, assigning long years to each part of the body. An hundred years should go to praise thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze; Two hundred to adore each breast; But thirty thousand to the rest...

Here, he employs an almost Elizabethan approach in his effusive admiration for the woman. However, the praise is also tinged with reason. Even as he professes his love, the poet still employs his wit to show à state of clear-headedness.

As if sensing the urgency of the moment, he breaks off his reverie with the line; thirty thousand to the rest...

The second section of the poem is introduced with the coordinating conjunction, but which heralds the contrast that echoes throughout the rest of the poem. Marvell's rationality, one of the hallmarks of the metaphysical poets is blatantly showcased here as he argues against the coyness of his mistress.

Hearing ...Time's winged chariot hurrying near... and reflecting on the fleeting nature of man's existence, the poet presents a convincing narrative in an attempt to change his mistress's mind.

He reminds her that her beauty shall no more be found and in commenting on the eventual decay that awaits that long preserved virginity, Marvell once again illustrates the straightforwardness of his kind. He does not employ the subtle tactics of the Elizabethan poets but simply uses his words to paint a direct if slightly gruesome picture of what would befall the lady if she keeps up the charade.

The third stanza provides a perfect conclusion to the poet persona's elaborate submission in the previous stanzas. He says Now to illustrate that he has already outlined his position and is now about to highlight the best option available.

To finalize his argument, Andrew Marvell highlights the urgent need to exploit the youthful hue...while thine willing soul transpires... By this he encourages not just his Coy mistress but all of humanity to seize the day and enjoy the pleasures of the moment so that the sun itself which cannot stand still, will run to keep up with the fast pace with which we live our lives to the fullest potential.

**ANALYSIS**

*To His Coy Mistress* has been rightly lauded as a small masterpiece of a poem, primarily because it packs so much into a relatively small space. It manages to carry along on simple rhyming couplets the complex passions of a male speaker, hungry for sexual liaison with a lady, before all devouring time swallows them up.

**Lines 1 - 20**

The argument begins with an appeal to the coy mistress based on the idea that, if time and space were limitless, they could spend their days in leisure, she by the exotic Ganges river for instance, he by the ebb and flow of the Humber.

Sex needn't be a priority in this fantasy world. The speaker's ironic tone even allows for his love of the lady a decade before the Old Testament flood, and she could say no to his advances up to the time when the Jews convert to Christianity - which would never ever happen of course.

These tongue-in-cheek allusions to religious notions of the end of the world, plus the underlying urges for physical intimacy, have been too much for certain Christian groups and others in more modern times. They would like the poem to be banned from being taught in school, claiming that it would negatively influence their children and that it condones predatory male behavior.

Years he would spend growing his love, like a vegetable grows slowly, rooted and strong, in the earth. And he could bide his time admiring her physical beauty - her eyes, forehead, breasts and other parts.

This imaginary scenario is a clever and slightly ludicrous set up. He is clearly in awe of her body and totally wants her heart but because she refuses to comply he introduces this idea of a timeless, boundless love. Time becomes a metaphor for love but is little more than a limitless resource.

**Lines 21 - 32**

But all of the previous means nothing because the reality is that the clock is ticking louder and louder. Time is flying. And then one day you find ten years have got behind you, no one told you when to run, you missed the starting gun. Don't look over your shoulder. Don't look ahead either because there is a vast desert - eternity.

The speaker's tone starts to alter, becoming more serious. The future isn't that bright - her beauty will be lost in the sands of time - even worse, when she's dead and buried only the worms will experience what he presently longs for. What a challenging image.

And there are some who think *quaint honor* is an obscure reference to the female private parts (quaint was used as a noun in pre-Elizabethan times). He too will perish, consumed by his own passion, nothing but a pile of ash.

The last couplet of this section is perhaps the most quoted and puts a seal on the message: Let's make love while we're still alive.

**Lines 33 - 46**

The final part of this poem concentrates on the rational summing up of what's gone before. Note the first two words: *Now therefore*, its as if the speaker is saying, Look I've given you two quite valid reasons for you to succumb, consequently this final effort will make you see sense.

Never has an adverb carried so much weight.

And the speaker has clearly thrown out the fantasies and wishes of the previous scenes. Gone are space and time and death, in their place is the all-consuming present. Just look at the use of the word now (3 times in lines 33-38), suggesting that the speaker cannot wait a second longer for his postponed fulfillment.

The emphasis is on the physical - skin, sport, roll and tear - the language being tinged with aggression and forceful energy.

Line 34 is controversial as many later versions change the word *glew* for *dew*whereas in the original it is definitely glew. So the poet used this word to further the image of youthfulness, as line 33 imparts. The word glew, now archaic, could be the old fashioned word for today's glue but this wouldn't make sense in the context of the couplet: *Sits on thy skin like morning glue,;*what makes better sense is to look for variants of either glow or glee - we still say the skin glows but do not often say the skin is happy. Her skin has a morning glow.

As the lines progress the intensity increases, the passion starts to burn, and when the images of two birds of prey emerge, devouring time (instead of the other way round) the reader is surely taken beyond mere pleasures of the flesh.

Some think the poet is using the symbols of alchemy to express the deep lying sexual chemistry implied in the second unusual image, that of a ball of sweetness to signify the union of male and female.

The iron gates could well be the barrier, the threshold, through which the speaker wishes to emerge. He sets the imperative. If they come together then who knows what will happen? Common sense and the logic of time will no longer dictate their lives.

**STRUCTURE AND FORM OF THE POEM**

The poem is written in free verse and subdivided into three poetic paragraphs or stanzas with 46 lines. It employs an aabb rhyme scheme and a 'run on line' device with interlocking sentences. The poem is written in [iambic tetrameter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iambic_tetrameter" \o "Iambic tetrameter) and rhymes in couplets. The first verse stanza ("Had we...") is ten couplets long, the second ("But...") six, and the third ("Now therefore...") seven. The logical form of the poem runs: if... but... therefore....

There is a certain musical appeal to the poem when it is read out loud and this lends credence to the rhyme scheme and the exactitude of each line.

**Themes**

A theme can be described as an abstract claim or doctrine whether implicit or otherwise which depicts the central idea in a work. Andrew Marvell's To his coy mistress utilizes many of such gems which include the transient nature of life, pleasures of love, and the futility of upholding vanity. These and few other themes in the work will be explored below.

**The transient nature of man's existence**

Throughout the entire poem, the poet persona makes an effort to convince his mistress that time is short and thus, she cannot afford to waste it with her coquettish manner and shyness. In fact, the growing urgency of the speaker can be observed as the poem proceeds. The poet believes that the best way to beat time at its own game is to achieve fulfillment before death comes calling.

**Seize the day**

As a solution to the transience of life, the poet urges his lover to seize the day and enjoy the pleasures of the moment while ... The youthful hue... sits on her skin ... Like morning dew. Seduction is the theme of practically every *carpe diem* poem, and each uses the theme of time as a means to an end. One of the many Excellencies that distinguish Marvells poem from others is the careful integration of time and seduction, so that it is not clear which is the predominant theme: The two are one. Time hovers over the first section of the poem in its slow counting of the years ideally available for one to express love. Time threateningly enters the second section of the poem, relentlessly reminding those who would love that a long postponement of joy means no joy at all. Time moves into the present tense in the third section, obliterating a dried-out past and a sterile future in the intensity of now, the only time in which willing lovers discover themselves and achieve fulfillment. In the final couplet of the poem is its final reversal: Time no longer controls lovers, but they gain dominion over timenot as fully as a god such as Zeus perhaps, to make it stand still, but time speeds through its course at the command of lovers.

**Realism**

The theme of realism echoes throughout the poem as Marvell deviates from the Elizabethan tradition of idealism. Rather than sugarcoat the fatal end which awaits his mistress's beauty in the grave, he opens her eyes to the shocking reality. Though some might criticize the poet's directness, it is a welcome change from the blind adoration which poets of the Renaissance era are known to display.

**Pleasures of love (or lust)**

It is impossible to ignore the sexual undertones which echo throughout the final part of the poem. The poet persona skillfully describes a seemingly sexual encounter which he hopes to have with his mistress and his enthusiasm is never as poignant as when he suggests that they tear...pleasures with rough strife throughout the iron gates of life.

**Time**

Like all carpe diem poems, [Andrew Marvell](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/To-His-Coy-Mistress/author/)'s "To His Coy Mistress" explores the concept of time in a number of interesting ways, focusing most specifically on how little of it is available to the speaker and his mistress.

Stanza 1 posits a situation in which the speaker and his mistress have "world enough and time." Nearly every line of this stanza references either a specific number of years (30,000 being the largest) or an event so far removed from the present as to exist in the realm of mythology (Noah's flood on the one hand and the mass conversion of Jewish people to Christianity before the return of Jesus on the other). This imagined leisureof having plenty of timerepresents an absence of or indifference to time, which the speaker presents as an ideal but impossible state.

In the second stanza time takes on a menacing character, and the speaker and his lover are its victims. He describes time as someone might depict an avenging angel or a vengeful Greek god, bearing down on his back in a winged chariot. Eternity is desolate, and death is certain.

The speaker's solution to the grim reality is to take an active hold of time rather than "languish in his slow-chapped power," to seize the day, as the carpe diem phrase goes. In the third stanza the lovers are described as birds of prey. Now they, not time's chariot, are winged. Although they are unable to still time, they can "make him run."

**LITERARY DEVICES**

**[Assonance](https://literarydevices.net/assonance/):**Assonance is the [repetition](https://literarydevices.net/repetition/) of vowel sounds in the same line such as the sound of /ou/ in And you should, if you please, refuse.

**[Imagery](https://literarydevices.net/imagery/)**: Imagery is used to make the readers perceive things with their five senses. For example, Thou by the Indian Ganges side; Times winged chariot hurrying near; Deserts of vast eternity and then worms shall try that long-preserved virginity.

**[Consonance](https://literarydevices.net/consonance/):**Consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line such as the sound of /l/ in And while thy willing soul transpires.

**[Metaphor](https://literarydevices.net/metaphor/):** It is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) used to compare two objects that are different. There are two metaphors used in this poem. The first is used in the fourth line, To walk, and pass our long loves day where he compares the life span of his and his mistress to one day. The second is used in the eleventh line, My vegetable love should grow where he compares his love with the slow and natural growth of vegetables.

**[Hyperbole](https://literarydevices.net/hyperbole/):**Hyperbole is a device used to exaggerate a statement for the sake of emphasis. The poet has used hyperbole in the fifteenth line, Two hundred to adore each breast.

**[Simile](https://literarydevices.net/simile/):** There is only one simile used in this poem. In the line thirty-four Sits on thy skin like morning dew the poet compares womans youthful skin to morning dew.

**[Enjambment](https://literarydevices.net/enjambment/):**Enjambment refers to the continuation of a [sentence](https://literarydevices.net/sentence/) without the pause beyond the end of a line, [couplet](https://literarydevices.net/couplet/) or [stanza](https://literarydevices.net/stanza/). For example,

But at my back I always hear  
Times winged chariot hurrying near;

**TONE AND MOOD**

The poet persona in his tone was really lustful as he implored the unknown lady to accept his sexual advances towards her. The mood is quite serious and also tense.

**GROUP 21**

**QUESTION**: DISCUSS THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL IN THE TEXT, *DAZZLING MIRAGE.*

**BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHOR.**

Olayinka Abimbola Egbokhare was born in Ibadan, Oyo State. Her love for writing was brought to the fore by Mrs. Ubah, one of her English teachers at the Federal Government Girls College, New-Bussa, Niger State. Yinka holds a Ph.D. in Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan where she teaches writing skills, advertising message development amongst other courses. Her novel, Dazzling Mirage was adapted into a movie by Tunde Kelanis Mainframe Productions.

She makes her home in Ibadan with her husband, Francis and their children.

**INTRODUCTION**

*Dazzling Mirage*, is a story of a young and elegant lady named Funmiwo Adebayo who has a medical condition known as Sickle cell anaemia. And how she goes through life with a strong determination to stay alive.

Sickle cell anaemia is a severe form of anaemia in which a mutated form of haemoglobin distorts the red blood cells into a crescent shape, unlike the normal disk shape, at low oxygen levels. It is an ''African Disease'', in the sense that it is commonly found among those of African descent. Patients of sickle cell anaemia at various times, caused by stress, depression and other forms of heavy exertion, go through ''crisis'', which is caused by the early death of cells that leave a shortage of healthy red blood cells, which block the normal flow of blood through the veins in the body.

It is beautifully written text about the realities of Sickle cell anaemia. The author uses the character of Funmiwo to carefully dive the audience into the painful experiences, hurt and stigmatization that each sickle cell patient faces in their everyday life. Funmiwo is unfortunately, a carrier of the sickle cell trait. Caught between the survival for life and to relinquish life itself. She chooses the former, raging wars of doubts within her. The novel explores her struggles, fears ,and hopes as well as her great desire to live.

The text falls under the prose genre of literature, and can be classified under the factional prose. Faction is a portmanteau word of "fact" & "fiction. It denotes literary works that present factual contents in the form of a fictional novel.

It is important to note that the story focuses on the Sickle cell anaemia illness. However, the author decided to pass across her message on Sickle cell anaemia in form of a story. We know this because the characters were not real people, but figments of the author's imagination and the story was not based on a true life story of a person. However, the information regarding persons living with Sickle cell anaemia, were actually facts. This is why we say that *Dazzling Mirage* is a faction.

The story was well written, and the writer made use of the third person omniscient point of view.

In third person omniscient, the narrator knows all the thoughts and feelings of all the characters in the story. When writing in third person omniscient, the author will move from character to character, allowing the events to be interpreted by several different voices, but always maintaining an omniscient - or godlike - distance.

It follows from the above definition that the third person narrative point of view was used in this text.

The Novel borders on so many issues. Issues such as:

- Should health condition be a barrier to love?

-When faced with situations which we are unable to change, what then should be our resolution? Should we retire into an opaque corner or hold on to the certainty and warmth of the morning?

-When does one know that the time has come to back out?

-If it were possible for us to create a version of our lives that we have so much imagined, what would the created version be like? One remarkable thing to note is that, the author leaves these questions unanswered. Perhaps, the author believes that our individuality and society play a vital role in providing answers to these questions.

***PLOT ANALYSIS***

Plot is the pattern of events and situations in a narrative work as are selected and arranged both to emphasize relationships usually of cause and effect between incidents and to elicit a particular kind of interest in the reader. Therefore, plot is the arrangement of events in a fiction, or nonfiction, following the principle of cause and effect.

In the first chapter of the text, we are introduced to Funmiwo, and also to the fact that she possesses the sickle cell trait. We are also introduced to her parents Dr. Femi Adebayo, and his wife, Mrs. Alice Adebayo. The author also makes a shocking revelation of the fact that Funmiwo was adopted, and the circumstances behind this. This is a huge revelation at the beginning of the book. We are also introduced to Sanya, Funmiwo's lover.

In the next chapter, we learn that Funmiwo works at Adverts Merchant Nigeria Limited. And that she is a copywriter. Her employer, and the Managing Director of the company, Mr. Dotun Atoyebi is also introduced to us in this chapter.

Sanya's mother's disapproval of his and Funmiwos relationship, owing to the fact that she is a sickler, leaves him in contemplation of whether or not to put an end to their relationship.

Meanwhile, a sudden friendship between Funmiwo and Dotun begins to blossom, as he helps her fix her car on a fateful night. Upon his visit to her house, we learn of the feelings he has begun to develop towards Funmiwo.

Sanya abandons Funmiwo for Tade, an intern at the institute which he works in, and she is also pregnant for him. Upon this discovery, Funmiwo is deeply hurt, and at the verge of death. However, her gateman Alli, put a call through to Dotun, who rushes her to the hospital. Funmiwo narrates the story of Sanya's betrayal, and marriage to Tade, to her best friend, Bukola Osuolale.

Dotun and Funmiwo end up getting married. Funmiwo is pregnant, and on the day of her delivery, a Caesarian Section is performed on her due to complications during her pregnancy. She gives birth to a beautiful baby girl, whom they name Damilola. But she has a heart attack after childbirth. Miraculously, she survives, and they have a happy ever after ending.

**STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL**

The struggle for survival in this text, refers to the strong will of those with Sickle cell anaemia to remain alive. It refers to their determination to achieve things that those without their illness achieve, and possibly outdo them.

The first chapter of the novel captures a portion of pain and an utmost quest for survival. It brings to the reader an awareness of Funmiwo's pains and struggles. Funmiwo happens to be a carrier of the sickle cell trait, faced with sudden and unprecedented crises and breakdown due to the nature of her illness. The author brings to light a vivid description of her pains, plight, as well as her struggles. Sickle cell is no small sickness. The crises come unexpectedly, irrespective of the time or hour. Funmiwo is faced with one in the first chapter. Here, we see the pain she experiences as a result of a crisis. The pain is totally beyond her control, hitting heavily upon and within her. She writhes, screams and cries as a result of the pain, . This goes on for several minutes, leaving her in a bad shape. She however, tries to reach for her medication, the one thing that seems to reduce the pain. The reader can literally feel her pain, and wonders if she would survive this crisis.

In the text, the major character, Funmiwo is a perfect depiction of a person with a strong will to survive. Many would have thought that due to the fact that she had Sickle cell anaemia, she would not make productive use of her life or more so, she would wallow in self-pity. However, she does not give up, and constantly pushes herself to be the best. She exhibits diligence in her studies, and goes ahead to have a job, and also works very hard at it. Even on the occasion when her boss asks her to finish the piled up work which she could not finish due to a crisis resulting from her medical condition, she did it with determination. She was never one to be held back by her medical condition.

The subsequent events bring to the forefront the plight of Mrs. Adebayo, Funmiwo's mother. The constant thoughts of her daughter make a home within her, as she wonders about Funmiwos wellbeing. This very thought leaves her flooding in tears, questioning herself and holding on to the certainty of her faith in God. She is comforted by husband who as well is a bit worried but holds on to courage, not just for himself and his wife but also for his daughter, Funmiwo.

Also, in page 73 of *Dazzling Mirage* , mention is made of sicklers who are lawyers, doctors, teachers, architects, engineers, etc. These people did not allow their genetic peculiarity to limit their achievements in life. They did their very best to live fulfilling lives. Funmiwo can also be listed amongst such persons, owing to the fact that she too worked very hard to get a job as a copywriter. As the author put it in page 71, " so much pain and suffering, and yet a strong determination to survive."

In chapter 7, we are exposed to the pain Funmiwo has to go through at childbirth. Funmiwos plight at childbirth was the height of her pain. She had to be admitted three months before she was due, owing to the nature of her illness. How she survives both a Caesarian Section, and a heart attack. However, this was made possible by her determination to live, and the love shown to her by her family, and loved ones. The strength of the love of her family and loved ones, pushes her to fight, not only for herself but for others who have shed tears, prayed and hoped greatly that she stays alive. The author points out that, all sicklers need love, care and affection, and that apart from the drugs they take to ease the pain they face due to crisis resulting from their illness, it is also important that they are surrounded by people who show them love.

Sanyas inability to make a decision for himself leaves him accepting every decision his mother makes, this causes him to end his relationship with Funmiwo. This particular incident leaves Funmiwo completely devastated, contemplating between relinquishing life or fighting for the remnants of what life holds for her. She chooses the latter and pushes further,with the help of her best friend, Bukola. She channels her energy into her job and covers up for the time she has lost. One thing keeps her moving though, which is the love of her parents, and that of her childhood friend, Bukola. After her breakup with Sanya, Funmiwo goes through life with a new hope and will to live. However, Dotun falls in love with her. She tries to suppress her feelings for him, and takes a decision to focus on her health and career, but Dotun's persistent love, affection, and strong will, causes her to give love a second chance. The author is trying to say that it is better for us to love a million times and have our hearts broken a thousand times than to be people with hearts of stone, devoid of feeling and the heart to love.

The novel captures the plight, struggles, and pain of persons living with Sickle cell anaemia, as well as that of their relatives and family members, who are left in constant pain, worry, and endless thoughts, coupled with prayers for their wellbeing and sustenance.

In the text, Funmiwo fought to stay alive, and she did. Using her as an example, the author, through the novel, brings a certain kind of impulse within the hearts and minds of the readers to fight to stay alive, no matter what situation they may find themselves in, and admonishes them to not give up on life no matter the pain or struggle they may be facing.

Although the author's major character exemplifies the strong-willed sicklers, she is indirectly hinting at the things which sicklers who are not so strong-willed, need. Such as love, and good medical facilities. The novel touches the quest and struggle for survival, not only for Funmiwo, but also for others who are sickle cell patients, who do not desire to be pitied or treated differently but rather to be regarded as normal human beings with the heart to love, hope, cherish and survive.

Conclusively, not all sicklers are so strong-willed, and not all of them push themselves. Due to the fact that they lack the love and affection they require. Some don't have access to drugs, and medical care. Some don't think they can make a difference in the society. They feel tied down by their illness. To make matters worse, some of them are discriminated against. But, life itself is full of challenges that make us tougher and give us and the resilience to keep fighting.The author communicates to the readers, through this novel, to fight for survival, for love, and for happiness. And to explore, experience, and love while they have the chance, because life is short.

**GROUP 16**

Discuss the **Role of Culture** in Dilemma of an African Prince.

JULY/AUGUST 2019

**Dilemma Of An African Prince by Abayomi Awelewa**

**INTRODUCTION**

Man is not only a social animal but also a cultured being. Man's social life has been made possible because of culture. Culture is something that has elevated him from the level of animal to the heights of man. Man cannot survive as mab without culture. Culture represents the entire achievements of mankind. Culture has been fulfilling a number of functions, among which will be highlighted in relation to Awelewa's '**Dilemma of an African Prince'.**

'**Dilemma of an African Prince**' in summary, is talking about the socialization in our community, how we forgot about our culture and embraced the white culture. Notwithsatndig, in the conflict between the two cultures depicted in the text, the traditional African culture gains a somewhat upper hand,bwith the Western culture serving merely as an enhancemet.

Abayomi Awelewa is a lecturer at McPherson University and a graduate of University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. In his own words, "I am a university lecturer,an early career researcher, a publisher and a communications expert. My fields of research include African and Afrin Diasporan Literature, Gender and Trauma Studies." From this words,one can guess where any literary work he authors tilts to. 'Dilemma of an African Prince' is not an exceotion.

The play was published in 2004 and is a play on youth involvement in nation building. It depicts a typical youth's interaction and reaction or responses to the barrage of white culture and its resulting mix and conflict with traditional African culture in his society. This concept is typically portrayed by Prince Obalolu, Iyun, and Florentina in the text.

**SYNOPSIS OF THE TEXT.**

Dilemma of an African Prince by Abayomi Awelewa is a short dramatic text that explores real life situations and complications faced by societies and youths in particular. The plot opens with a festival celebrating the 10th year of Oba Akiode's ascent on the throne of Igbadiland. In the same ceremony, Prince Obalolu is crowned Crown Prince and bethroted to Iyun. The intention to send the Prince to study law in the UK was also made known. The Prince travelled for his studies and had a family abroad, though illegitimately. In the meantime, the Prince's bethroted was raped by one of her chilhood admirers, defiling her and afflicting her with the deadly HIV/AIDS. The incumbent King dies and the Prince is summoned to bury him and takes his place as next king. These incidents and the Prince's reaction to them are what, upon the arrival of the Prince to Igbadiland, make up the conflict of the text. The Prince was able to decide wisely in a way that the greater benefit was enjoyed by more people.

The role of culture could be outlined into twelve,which will in turn be used in relation to the text.

1. Culture is the treasury of knowledge.

2. Culture defines situations.

3. Culture defines attitudes, values, and goods.

4. Culture decides our career.

5. Culture provides behaviour pattern.

6. Culture provides personality.

7. Culture makes man a human being.

8. Culture provides solution for complicated situations.

9. Culture provides trditinal interpretations to certain situations.

10. Culture keeps social relationship intact.

11. Culture broadens the out-lookd of the individual.

12. Culture creates new needs.

**Culture is the treasury of Knowledge.**

Culture provides knowledge which is essential for the physical and intellectual existence of man. When faced with a new society of people, it is their culture that reveals what their society is about. Their culture teaches how to interact with the people, the history of such society and even how they interact with themselves. Culture teaches us how to behave, how to conduct ourselves and what to expect in a society.

In the introduction to the first Act in Dilemma of an African Prince, it is culture that prompts Akigbe, the King's praise singer to "**sing the King's praise, tracing the ancestral history of the royal family and telling the crowd of the great achievements of Oba Akiode since he ascended the throne."**

It is also in the first act that we discover that "**Igbadi's tradition demands that all prominent sons and daughters come home for the annual festival where honours are bestowed on a few of them unannounced."** We know this because it is their culture to do same every year.

In Act one, scene three, we find out in Prince Obalolu's words that **"a prince...is not expected to know a woman until...wedding night".** This is the culture of the people of Igbadi and by this we are made aware of the fact that Obalolu by his conduct, has flouted this rule for which he will " **face the music"** when the time comes.

Also in Act two, scene one, through Jagunmolu's dialogue with Professor Jamboree, we find out a lot about the history of the people's gods. It is their culture that made the elders keep this information and to pass it down to generations. In scene two of the same Act, we garner that the prince "**could not sit on the throne pending his coronation."**

In the same vein in Act three, scene two, Queen Adeola, led by culture, reveals to us that "**wedding introduction and engagement are a prerequisite for...initiation into the royal kingship...coronation can never begin until you have been properly married"** We become aware that Prince Obalolu is under a compulsory obligation to marry Iyun in order to bury his father and ascend the throne as King.

**Culture Defines Situations**

Culture define social situations for us. It not only defines us but also conditions and determines our social actions. In the text, culture determines the course of Prince Obalolu's actions. He had to marry who his father chose for him as was their tradition and also when he found out about Iyun's affliction, culture demanded he still married her to continue in the path chosen for him. In the words of Baba Awo, in act four, scene two, "**You have to marry Iyun for the gods to recognise the disease you talk bout. If you fail to mount the throne in the next seven days, there'll be trouble in the land."**

Also, as Obadele, Obalolu's brother was trying every means possible to ascend the throne in his brothers's stead, culture determined that no matter the circumstance, "**no-one else can climb the throne except the immediate past King pronounced him"**

**Culture defines attitudes, values and goods.**

Attitudes refer to the tendency to feel and work out in certain ways. Values are the measure of goodness or desirability. Goods refer to the attainments, which our values define as worthy. It is culture, which conditions our attitude towards various issues such as religion, morality, marriage, science, family planning, positions and so on. Culture is a major influence in our lives and we are socialized by the models set out by our culture. Upholding the cultural values of the Igbadi people is what led Prince Obalolu to leave his illegal family in the UK and fulfill his obligations back home in Africa. Culture demanded that Obalolu favors the general good of the society when confronted with choices on whether to act selfishly or selflessly.

In act one, scene two, Mope was upholding cultural values when she warned Ajadi to "**look here, my friend! You are a dreamer. The whole town is watching. If anything happens to Iyun, the curse would be on your head."**

**Culture provides solution for complicated situations.**

Culture provides man with a set of behaviours every for complicated situations. It has so thoroughly influenced that often times, he does not require any external force to keep himself in conformity with social requirements.

The dilemma of Prince Obalolu. He was at first faced with whether he should stay with his non-African family or return to his home and bethroted. After making his choice, he was then again faced with whether he should marry Iyun with her HIV/AIDS affliction and have no chance of making offspring with her or desert her to avoid complications. Culture influenced the choices Prince Obalolu made in these two scenarios. In the latter, he was given an ultimatum of seven days to make things right according to custom or incur the wrath of the gods.

**Culture keeps social relationships intact.**

Culture has importance not only for man, but also for the group. Had there been no culture, there would have been no group life. Culture is the design and the prescription for guiding value and ideals. It is culture that makes such thing as the people of Igbadi exist. If it were just a man, such practices thatbmke up a society's culture would be called mere habits. But culture done across a group of people. The principles of the culture if the Igbadiland people mentioned above guides all and sundry in the society. Everyone in the society had consciously or sub-consciously agreed to live under the tenets of such cultural principles. In a simple example, in act three, scene three of the text, we are intimated with the sitting positions of the chiefs when in council. Chiefs Otun and Osi are sorted in opposite direction as dictated by their titles.

Culture holds the people of Igbadiland together and links them, from the King, to the ordinary townspeople attending the Olembe festival.

**Culture creates new needs.**

Although culture reveals down from ancient history, it I also always changing. Circumstances occur that demand reformation in aspects of culture held by people. According to Prince Obalolu, "**to move ahead is to challenge the status quo."** Also in his words in a different scene, "**things are changing, and we human beings are not left out of the change."** The change talked about here, was mostly heralded by the advent of modern technology. Modernism clashes with the culture of the people and new needs arise. People thirst for more knowledge and seek formal education. A university was even established in Igbadiland. According to Professor Jamboree, **".. custom and tradition cannot win in the face of technological change. Maybe someday, we are going to review our customs and traditions in line with modern developments."** This iterates that as cultures mix, one might have to sacrifice for the existence of another and the traditional culture was fighting a losing battle.

**GROUP 9**

**LITERARY APPRECIATION OF ‘PARADES, PARADES’ BY DEREK WALCOTT**

**Background of the poet:**

**D**erek Walcott hailed from the island of Saint Lucia, a former British colony in the West Indies, and sustained a good taste for literature right from childhood, which is evident in his attempt, at fourteen, to publish his first poem in a local newspaper. He has a number of collections of poetry to his credit like Green Night and has won a number of awards like Nobel Prize Awards. As a renowned playwright, he has also bagged some other awards like Obie Award for his play *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. Oftentimes, a poet is a griot of his people; he is their spokesperson who fetches from the past experiences in order to throw more light on the present and join pieces to create and make conclusions about the future. Walcott has taken on this duty and used many of his poems to invite the past through visual imagery and natural symbolization with a view to explore, in order to educate, the colonial as well as post-colonial experiences in his homeland. For this reason, we always find him discussing political power, language, place and government, etc. in his literary works.

**PARADES, PARADES**

**An overview of the poem:**

The poem starts by juxtaposing natural elements like the desert, the sky and the ocean joined together by a parallel margin to show monotonousness and unvarying habit. It draws further in the subsequent lines to paint the politicians like the tedious parallel lines made by jet or ships at sea. The atmosphere changes to Independence Ceremony where the citizens sing ‘calypso’ to the ‘brazen joy of the tubas’. With a rhetorical question, the poet persona contemplates the appearance of the ‘beautiful and unmarked children in the uniform of the country’ who look bewildered and shy. In the second stanza, the poet contemplates whether their colonial experience is even better than their self-rule. They wait for things to change but things remain how they were or even worse. The poet concludes by making mockery of the situation; leaving the reader with the discretion as to what name can suit the facial expression of the electorates who wait for the politicians to address them, expectant that there might have been a change which they have for long been anticipating.

**STANZA BY STANZA ANALYSIS**

**Stanza one:**

The poet starts by outstretching a mat of visual imagery of the desert,negating any human movement on it except the politicians in the ‘old caravan’. The recurrent adjective, old, here indicates a repetitive practice in an unvarying way. The third line introduces the ‘image’ of the ocean on which the keels of ships incise the same ‘old’parallel lines and also by the metaphoric use of the ‘blue sea’ the poet paints the skyline in which jet trails draw also the same lines. This only introduces us to the caricatural picture of the politicians who plod their way without imagination, circling the same sombre gardens. The garden symbolizes the country and its fountain are the people or citizens. They are likened to palms or some plants that dry in the forecourt. However, though the people are ‘desiccating’ or becoming more impoverished, the same line rules Whitepaper and the same steps ascend the Whitehall. Nothing changes except the name of the ‘fool’. The ‘fool’ here refers to the politicians whose conduct of governance is always the same, despite the change of administration. This background brings us to the Independence Day when the innocent youths in the uniform of the country sing calypsos and make parades to honour the occasion. However, two questions engross our attention to the fact that,in spite of the ceremonies of this historicday, the citizens are bewildered and shy, full of terror of the pride drummed into their heads which, as they know, is ironic. In essence, what this stanza tries to establish is the shameful fact that the politicians lack vision, leadership skills, and therefore fail to improve the life of their citizens even after several years of self-rule. The citizens are seen to be anticipating from one Independence Day ceremony to another, singing parade songs but still bent down by the consciousness that their attainment of independence is more or less absurd.

**Stanza two:**

The last stanza in the same derogatory way pursues the subject matter farther; by seeking to answer the afore-raised questions. In another set of rhetorical questions, the poet suggests that it may be that the old songs before independence were truer than the ones they are singing now. He drifts from an objective general presentation of views and experience to a subjective personal account. This is to present a potential witness to the reader who might not have been exposed to the experience of the poet. He accounts how they ‘wait for the change of statues’ as an emerging independent people to celebrate their heroes, and new autochthonous parades as against the one imposed on them by the former colonial power. They hail their politicians who address them in the public gathering, expecting that better changes will result from their own self-government, but nothing seems ever to ensue. The words; waddling seals of his cabinet, trundling up to the dais, suggest heavy motion and therefore interpretively indicate the laziness and irresponsible nature of their government. The poet concludes by two sarcastic rhetorical questions; whether that silence of the citizens can be named ‘respect’ or ‘awe’ or those circling horns the dawn of a ‘new world’. The poet tries to engage his audience directly by addressing the questions to and demanding them to interpret the look of the electorate which is enough an indication of disillusionment ang disappointment. In a bitter sarcasm, he goes further to ask the audience how it all happened, and why the poet persona said nothing. The last line shows that he already knows the answer to the aforementioned question and is only keeping silent because the answer is not desirable. The poem is a political satire which seeks to scoff off the parochial nature of the corrupt politicians who instead of promoting the interest of the electorate, loot and squander the public treasury without imagination. All of them are depicted the same and nothing changes except the name of the fool.

**Poetic devices:**

Poetic devices are those figures of speech or tropes used by poets to convey meaning beyond ordinary sense of the words. In other words, figurative language is a departure from the denotative to connotative meaning of words. By the help of these devices, poets bewitch their audience or readers and compel them to reflect on the clear image etched in the words they read. The poem under consideration is enriched with these tropes and, in the following, we are going to point out some of them.

IMAGERY

This is a figure of speech by which the poet seeks to create a mental picture in the minds of his readers through words. In the poem, Parades, Parades, the poet uses imagery in the ‘*wide desert…oceans but the keels incise’*, the image of ‘*blue sea’*, ‘*jet trails’* and others. By drawing a comparative line between the already clear image of the Natural environment and the politicians, the image is even clearer and more exact.

ENJAMBMENT

At times, a line of poetry may not convey its whole meaning but in conjunction with the subsequent lines. This is referred to as enjambment and we can see it in line 1-2 and throughout the remaining lines in the first stanza.

SYMBOLISM

Symbol is a common feature of human understanding. An object, whether concrete or abstract, may be used to substitute a phenomenon, idea or concept, by embodying the characteristic quality of the symbolized object. Sombre gardens represent the country or public offices where the ‘dull’ politicians keep rotating aimlessly and without development. The ‘fountain dry in the forecourt’ represents the exploited citizens who are suffering from severe poverty and impoverished lifestyle.

METAPHOR

When two different things are directly simulated to each other, the figure of speech used here is called metaphor; e.g. saying: Ali is a lion. This abounds in the poem. For example, *blue sea above the mountains*, etc.

PERSONIFICATION

Endowing human attributes on an inanimate object is known as personification. There are many instances of personification in the poem, some of which are; *the law lived far away*, *the same lines rule the whitepapers*, *the samesteps ascend the Whitehall*, etc. There are many other figures of speech extractable from the poem, but because of time limit only the few above have been made mention of.

STYLE/DICTION

The poem is written in free verse, without specific rhyme scheme. It is in two stanzas of unequal length and the language of the poem is slightly complicated in the sense that words have been manipulated by the poet to create mental images. But the key words that seem to carry more weight of signification are; the adjective *old*, *Whitepapers* and *Whitehall*, the *politicians plod without imagination*, etc. The poem also is woven through recurring rhetorical questions which help to develop the satiric tone of the poem per se.

THEME

The poem is a political satire which mocks the unfitness of the political leaders who barely make any effort to develop their nation even after several years of independence. The poet goes further to depict how they exploit and oppress their citizens by looting and plundering the public treasury. Corruption is also shown as the bane of the country. The politicians circle the same sombre gardens with its fountain dry in the forecourt sit at ease repeating the same thing all the time, ignorant of the suffering of their citizens and the deficit they are creating in the national economy. Lack of political accountability and the defiance of the people’s expectation are all treated in the poem. With a note of sorrow, the poet persona turns to the reader for explanation; that after all the poet has said, the reader is left to judge why it all happened and why he kept silent. Was it suppression, insensitivity, fear or cowardice? This is a question the reader has to conjure an answer to, from what has gone on in the poem.

CONCLUSION

Writers are the voice of their people and are definitely shaped and influenced by their personal experiences. Their writings therefore are like a mirror in which those experiences reflect. Hardly can there be a writer who strips himself from his personal as well as collective experiences. In the poem, *Parades Parades* by Derek Walcott, it can be said that the poet, who was a prime witness of what had happened before and after independence in his country of Saint Lucia, appreciates the beauty of the natural environment where he grew up and gives it another layer of meaning which conveys the notion that the same way things in the natural environment keep unchanged, the same way the politicians. However, the point of difference is that the latter stick to the bad ways. Themes that have been explored in the poem include corruption, incompetence, disillusionment and the foolishness of the political scene. The style of the poem employs recurrent rhetorical questions, imagery and symbolism that help to drive home the thematic presentation of the poem. Lastly, the poem is a masterpiece of departure from ordinary sense of the words, sentences and phrases.

**ANALYSIS OF**

**‘’DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT’’**

**BY**

**DYLAN THOMAS**

**GROUP 13**

**DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT**

Do not go gentle into that good night,

Old age should burn and rave at close of day;

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise man at their end know dark is right,

Because their words had forked no lightning they

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright

Their frail deeds might have danced in a green

bay,

rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,

And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding

sight

Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,

Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I

pray.

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Dylan Thomas

**ABOUT THE POET: DYLAN THOMAS**

Dylan Thomas is a literary figure born in Swansea, Wales in 1914. He started his poetic career at an early age and as such had the opportunity to write many poems that made him well known and well acclaimed during his lifetime. He wrote the poems “And death shall have no dominion”, “Before I knocked” and many others while he was a teenager. His poetry collections were critical hits as he participated in multiple tours, both domestic and international to talk about his work. He had so many achievements in his lifetime including dabbing in film and scripting at least five movies; wrote and recorded for BBC radio; performed in BBC radio dramas, etc.

However, Dylan’s personal life proved difficult despite his achievements. He suffered from breathing issues from childhood although he was a very heavy drinker and carouser. This plagued him throughout his lifetime and his multiple affairs put a strain on his relationship with his wife, Caitlin McNamara. He started getting sick during one of his American tours in 1953, fell ill and slipped into coma on the night of his 39th birthday and died eventually a few days later.

The major idea behind Dylan Thomas’ “Do not go gentle into that good night” was the death period of Dylan Thomas’ father, David John Thomas in 1952. His father was a grammar school teacher and had always wanted to be a poet but was never able to realize his dream. While sitting vigil with his father, Thomas was struck by both the inescapability of death and the anguish of grief at his father’s passing. As a result of this experience, Thomas penned down “Do not go gentle into that good night” which is both a poem about the death of his father and more generally, a poem about the tension between life and death. Quite funny as a twist of fate how Thomas’ poem about death would be one of the last poems he would write before his untimely demise the following year

Dylan Thomas is nevertheless considered to be one of the most influential poets of modern period and certainly one of the most famous Welsh poets of all time.

**SUMMARY OF ‘DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT’**

At its heart, the poem is a poem about death as the narrator of the poem is experiencing the death of his father which is seen in the last stanza. The speaker opens with a command, addressing an unknown listener to resist dying peacefully and instead to fight hard against death despite its inevitability, using night and day as metaphors for death and life. He states that “wise men” know that death is untimely right but they nonetheless fight against it because they haven’t left enough of a mark on the world. The speaker continues to use natural imagery in the second stanza likening the failure of words to leave a mark on the world to an inability to “fork” or redirect lightening.

In the third stanza, the speaker adds that “good men” too stand against death for similar reasons. Despite their virtue, their deeds remain “frail” and haven’t stood out sufficiently to as a strong, massive wave in a calm bay would. These men too fight death in hopes of leaving a lasting legacy.

The fourth stanza continues this same theme as the speaker discusses “wild men” who spend their lives on futile adventures, failing to appreciate how short life is until they face death, which they refuse to meet calmly. Again, the speaker uses the natural imagery comparing wild men’s adventures to the excitement yet ultimate fruitlessness of “ca[tching] and s[inging] the sun”. He continues as he says “grave men” realize they can die dramatically (blaze the meteors) by refusing to yield to death. In their old age, they have a clarity that escaped them when they were younger, now able to see with “blinding sight”, or understand things with piercing lucidity. Finally, the speaker reveals who is dying and urges him to shoe emotion like the men he has just described.

**ANALYSIS AND LITERARY DEVICES**

**Metaphor**

In the first stanza, Thomas uses day and night as extended metaphor for life and death, urging people to resist death courageously rather than simply accepting it. By using this metaphor, he presents life and death as part of the endless natural cycle of time which began long before our lives and will go on long after them just as day and night are part of it. This gives death an impersonal feel that if everyone and everything dies, there is little that is special or notable about one death. This generic conception of death is what Thomas’ characters are fighting against striving to give their deaths individual significance.

**Alliteration**

With the similar sounding words “rave” and “rage”, Thomas emphasizes anger and passionate intensity in the face of death. Though he acknowledges that death may be “right” after all, everyone dies eventually as part of the natural process of life as every fights against death but eventually die.

**Symbolism**

At the beginning of the second stanza, he writes that “wise men” refuse to accept it because they haven’t yet left enough impact on the world. They’ve forked no lightening or failed to create a big burst of life that would give them a legacy. This symbolizes life as many people refuse to accept death because they haven’t left enough impact on earth.

**Allusion**

In the third stanza, the speaker insists that “good men” similarly see their actions as frail and long to stand out more as a wave does in a calm bay. Rushworth M. Kidder suggests that “green bay” may be an allusion Psalms 37:35 which states that “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree”. This interpretation shows that the good men’s frail but virtuous deeds would have been more remarkable when seen in contrast to the evil of the “green bay”. Without any great evil to fight against, these men’s virtues are less noteworthy.

The fourth stanza also alludes to the Greek myth of Icarus, who flew too close to the sun, melting the wings his father had crafted for him and causing him to plumage to the ground and his death. This myth is often understood as a warning against hubris or excessive pride. This lines indicate that the wild men were too proud to realize that death would eventually befall them too no matter how grand their adventures were.

In the final stanza, the speaker reveals that he has been addressing his father, which gives the poem a personal significance it previously lacked. The speaker again underscores the poem’s message, urging his father to show any sort of emotion in the face of death. The “sad height” may be an allusion to the Bible’s valley of shadow of death, which appears in Psalms 23. If death is casting its shadow on the valley, it must be above the valley, like the father on the “sad height” of the mortal realm. Despite the anguish that this expression of grief and fear would cause him, the speaker longs for his father to cry at his impending death, because it would show that his father still has vitality and dignity. It’s hard to see our parents, especially traditionally stoic fathers, cry, but it reminds us of the full range of their humanity and the vulnerability that comes with that humanity.

**Imagery**

In the fifth stanza, the speaker discusses “grave men” (who are grave in the sense of being serious and in the sense of being near to death) who see fixedly with piercing sight that they must fight death as well., choosing to go out “like meteors” referring again to the sky. The imagery of meteors here recalls the impersonal vastness of the cycle of life and death. Meteors are so immense, scalding and fast that it’s difficult to comprehend them. Just like night, day and lightening, they are also transient appearing to us only for moments in the night sky.

The fourth stanza continues the now-familiar pattern of the poem with the speaker describing “wild men” who “caught and sang the sun in flight”, or in other words, celebrated the world around them through bold actions and feats, and belatedly realized the brevity of life. By returning to the sky as a source of imagery, Thomas reemphasizes the central day/night metaphor of the poem.

**Simile**

The use of ‘like’ and ‘as’ ‘blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay’ in the first line of the last tercet is a simile. This helps to recall the impersonal vastness of the cycle of life and death.

**Personification**

Personification is seen in “their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay” in the second line of the third tercet. This shows how despite the regrets men have, they still might have had some exciting moments in their lifetime.

**Apostrophe**

“And you, my father, there on the sad height” seen in the first line of the last stanza is an example of apostrophe. It helps to finally reveal that the poet persona got his inspiration from witnessing the death of his father.

**Repetition**

Repetition seen in “rage rage” in the third line of the first stanza shows how man should not only be passive in facing death but try to fight against it.

**Refrain**

The line “do not go gentle into that good night” is repeated mostly in the poem as a form of refrain. This shows the emphasis the poet persona places on how man should not face death “gently” or passively.

**THEMES**

**Death**

Death is the central theme in the poem as the speaker likens death to darkness and light time throughout the poem. The poem expresses a complex attitude towards death as the speaker acknowledges that death is impossible to evade but urges his father to fight it as long as he can. Yet the poem suggests that despite death’s inevitability, one can overcome it in some sense by leaving behind great words and actions which requires resisting the temptation to yield to death. For example, in the second stanza, “wise men” mourn the fact that their words haven’t had enough influence and in the third, “good men” lament how much their deed would have stood out had they been stronger. Both sets of men commit to not facing death with acquiescence, in hopes of leaving enough of a legacy to be remembered by.

**Aging**

Old age is often associated with calmness and even weakness, but the speaker has a very different view of it. He declares that old age should “burn and rave” using vivid and almost violent language and calls his father to rage against death, conjuring the image of a brutal fight. The light of old age is portrayed as blinding, not soft and pleasant. Furthermore, the speaker’s depiction of “wise men” is particularly interesting. While wisdom is commonly paired withhold age, the speaker doesn’t envision the sort of serene wisdom typically conjured up. Instead, he asserts that the wise do not face death (that good night) gently but instead dream of harnessing lightening.

**The unstoppable nature of death**

The primary purpose of the poem is to think about death or dying. It’s about a man’s mortal act which is passing away. The poem is often taught as a grieving man’s anger at death, which has come to take his father away. “Good night” refers to how we say goodbye to people and how a dying person slips into a final sleep that they never wake up from. The poem tells readers not to accept death passively but instead could fight against it. According to Thomas, the best way to face death is with strength and power like the “wild” heroes of old. He argues that this allows dying people to embrace the fiery energy of life one last time, and in many ways, serves as a small way to triumph something they have no control over in the end. Put in another way, if one can’t avoid dying, it’s better to go down fighting than not to fight at all. Thus, the poem focuses on a person’s literal final choice, not whether or not to die, but how they will face the inevitable.

**The power of life**

This poem creates tension between death which he speaks about symbolically through images of night and darkness, and life which he represents with life. This juxtaposition emphasizes the contrast between life and death. If dark (death) is inevitable, it helps readers to see that life is powerful and full of energy. The two instances light imagery in lines seven and eight, “bright” and “green bay” helps to describe the “good” man’s life, which is full of light and energy. After all, even enough of his deeds are “frail” which means “minor” or “insignificant” in this instance-they still might have “danced”. This shows how the living are full of light and energy. Thomas, through this, tells readers the true tragedy of aging and death as it takes away the vitality of life.

**The limit of time**

In each stanza, the type of man mentioned is looking back at his life. He’s reflecting on what he did and what he didn’t do. He worries that his ideas will not live on and regrets what he has left undone. For example, the wise man worries that his “words had forked no lightening”. This shows how time waits for no one but one has to do whatever one has to do. Thomas uses the idea of regret in his poem to show readers how short life truly is. When we are young, we have grand plans for everything we want to do, and we feel like we have all the time in the world to accomplish our goals. But Thomas argues in his poem that time goes by quickly. People often want time to move faster but by doing that, we miss out on the opportunities of life. Instead, Thomas is telling his readers in a roundabout way that it’s important to seize the day. Time is short and death waits for all, so Thomas reminds readers to embrace life rather than let it pass by them.

**STRUCTURE**

The poem is a villanelle poem. A villanelle poem is a poem of 19 lines of fixed form consisting of five tercets and a final quatrain on two rhymes, with the first and third line of the first tercet repeated alternately as a refrain closing the succeeding stanzas as the final couplet of the quatrain.

**RHYME SCHEME**

A rhyme in a poem is a repetition of sameness of sound pattern in a poem. For instance a repetition of sound patterns of AAA. The rhymes in the poem are fixed as:

ABA ABA ABA ABA ABA ABAA

**CONCLUSION**

The poem summarizes how witnessing the death of his father makes the speaker think about death in a more general way. The first five stanzas focus on different types of men, and the speaker thinks about how they will have to face death one day too.

In the end, the speaker realizes that death cannot be avoided but it can be challenged. When he tells readers to “not go gentle into that good night” and “rage against the dying of the light”, he’s telling them not to accept death passively. Instead, he tells people that the last thing a dying person gets to choose is how he faces death. For Thomas, struggling against death is both a valiant and a human reaction.

**GROUP 15:**

**TOPIC: DISCUSS THE THEME OF LOVE IN THE PLAY, 'THE DILEMMA OF AN AFRICAN PRINCE' BY ABAYOMI AWELEWA**

The play, *The dilemma of an African Prince* which was set in the south western part of Nigeria, precisely, Igbadi community is an African play which reflects the culture of the Yoruba tribe. The play centers on the cultural beliefs of the indigenes of Igbadi community particularly on issues relating to kingship.

The play begins with the celebration of the tenth year anniversary of Oba Akiode as the king of Igbadi community. During the ceremony, the king betroths Iyun, a beautiful young lady to his heir, Obalolu. Obalolu proceeds to the United Kingdom to obtain a degree in Law and there he meets Florentina who later bears him a son. After the King's demise, the prince goes back to the land of Igbadi to be crowned the next king. He discovers that his betrothed wife, Iyun, has been raped by a group of boys and had been infected with HIV. He hesitates at first but after consulting the Oracle, he agrees to marry her. Florentina comes back with her son to the coronation of Obalolu and the new king takes her in together with her son to live together with Iyun in the palace.

One of the major themes in the play is love. In considering the theme of love, it is important to see it in light of the setting of the play. The practice of prearranged marriage in the play erodes the modern day idea of love. It was believed that two people could be placed together by the ordinance of the gods, with or without their consent. This is why this idea of love in Igbadi, which prince Obalolu was indoctrinated with clashed with the modern European and enlightened idea of love that gives room for personal liberty to choose whom to love and how to love them.

The theme of love, although not all-encompassing in the play, is in the very fabric of the plot. From the title of the play, 'dilemma of an African prince' it is evident that the dilemma revolves around theme of love. The prince is in love with two separate people, the bethrothed Iyun and his foreign love, Florentina. The playwright brilliantly adopts the theme of love to represent other ideas in the play. The dilemma of love that prince is in was a subtle representation of the dilemma of an average African man. Iyun stands for the African culture, while Florentina stands for the European culture. Therefore, and African man who loves the two cultures is stuck between two decisions in his day-to-day activities. Whether to live life as a pure African man or bend to the adopted values of the white man. This idea perverse the daily life of an African man, from his choice of food to clothing and even communication.

Furthermore, the playwright differentiated the theme of love from lust in the play to the audience. This was done by contrasting the character of Obalolu with that of Ajadi. Obalolu loved Iyun while Ajadi was merely after her due to his lustful desires which are portrayed in Act One, Scene Three, where he believed she should not be denied the 'good life’s which lies in the 'loins of virile men'. Therefore, the theme of love is well dignified in the play as it is distinguished from other emotions such as lust and infatuation.

Irrespective of the situation that surrounds the two women in Obalolu's life, he loves them equally. The prince portrays himself as a man of integrity by standing on his promise to Florentina to support her and her son. He takes them in to live with him in the palace. He admits the paternity of Florentina's son in the presence of the community and his flaws which he could have denied to save his face.

Also, Obalolu's feeling towards Iyun moves from disappointment to compassion, then love. Although his kingship ambition is one of the factors that fuels his love for her, he grows to love her even after discovering that she has incurable disease. He takes her as his wife and promises to support and protect her as long as he lives. The playwright by this, asserts that emotions can be fluid and the audience should not give up on love. Despite all the trials they both faced, Obalolu and Iyun still ended up together. This preaches to the audience the essence of true love that can withstand tough times and troubles as against shallow relationships that have come with the European culture as portrayed in the play.

It should be noted that the theme of love was not only restricted to love between couples alone. Familial love was also represented in the pay The prince's love and respect for his mother makes him head to her advice, hence, foregrounding the influence of parents over their children. Obalolu's life is shaped by his parents' decisions. First, his father chooses him to be the next king and even chooses a wife for him. His mother also advised him to marry Iyun irrespective of her ailment. All these he does because of the love and regard he has not only for his parents, but for the tradition of the land.

Jagunmolu, the chief warrior also displays some kind of fatherly love in the play as seen in *Act five, Scene three* where he pleads with professor Jamboree to reverse the suspension of his son from the University. Even though his son commits an abomination by leading the cult group that rapes Iyun, the prince's betrothed wife, he protects him from being punished.

Finally, most of the characters in the text display some kind of love either directly or implied. This foregrounds love as an indispensable factor that regulates human actions and decisions. The playwright adopted the use of Contrast, dialogue, narration to portray the theme of love.

**DRAMA TEXTS**

**A PAPER EXAMINING THE USE OF IRONY IN ABAYOMI AWELEWA'S DILEMMA OF AN AFRICAN PRINCE**

**GROUP 18**

**BACKGROUND**

Several plays written by African writers have focused on the conflict caused by the introduction of Western culture into the African traditional society. Post-colonial African writers have taken it upon themselves to discuss the clash of cultures. Popular plays like Wole Soyinka's *The* *Lion and the Jewel* and Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards,* are efforts made to address the conflict between the two cultures. The play, *Dilemma of An African Prince* is not found wanting, as it also focuses on the conflict between African culture and Western Culture. This is indeed the foundation of Abayomi Awelewa's *Dilemma of an African Prince.* The play, through the juxtaposition of African and Western settings, expresses the struggle of Africans caught between holding onto traditions and embracing the appeals of the Western cultures. The town of Igbadi and its prince, Obalolu is used as a case study in this play with their continuous struggle to keep up with the modern trends while still holding to their traditions.

**INTRODUCTION**

Irony is a figure of speech which aims at contrasting between appearance and reality. It involves situations where words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. It may also refer to a situation that ends up in a way different from what is generally anticipated. Irony occurs in three forms: Verbal, Situational and Dramatic irony. This paper seeks to examine the application of irony by Awelewa in the play, *Dilemma of an African Prince* and with what intent. As such, the various examples of irony as used in the play will be examined with the effects they have on the general plot of the play, understanding of characterization and portrayal of the major themes of the play.

**APPLICATION OF IRONY IN *DILEMMA OF AN AFRICAN PRINCE***

Firstly, one of the most prominent instances of irony in the play is when Prince Obalolu decides not to marry Iyun because she was raped and has contracted HIV while he, himself has broken the rules; and deliberately at that. The reader’s attention is brought to this fact during the celebration of the return of Prince Obalolu from the United Kingdom. He says in Act two, scene two,

*“I am flattered by the honour you have accorded to me as the heir to the throne of Onigbadi. (Ironically,) But I am not sure whether I merit all the honours you bestow on me.”*

This points to the fact that he acknowledges that he has gone against tradition and may have to pay for it. The irony, however, comes into play when he declares to his mother that he will not marry Iyun because it has never been heard of that someone who has incurable disease becomes the queen of Igbadiland. He says in Act three, scene two,

*“As for my wife-to-be, Iyun, tell her that I, Prince Obalolu, I am calling off the introduction and the wedding engagement. How do you want me to marry a woman that is suffering from an incurable disease? Have you ever heard of such in the history of Igbadiland? Has it ever happened to any prince in Igbadi? It is not going to start with me.”*

Here, he ironically invokes the tradition whereby no prince has ever married a woman suffering from an incurable disease. This is the same tradition he flaunts when he goes ahead to impregnate a lady when he is supposed to be chaste. This ironic event depicts the Prince as an individual that is marked by doubled-standard. He is also a character who uses prevailing circumstances to excuse his wrongdoings.

More so, there is a situational irony when news of Iyun’s rape breaks. It is expected that she would marry the prince as a virgin in line with tradition, but the playwright introduces a plot twist by employing situational irony. The irony in this sense adds to the event that culminates in the conflict of the play. Flowing from this event, another form of irony is engaged when the prince decides to marry Iyun, notwithstanding that she is HIV positive. Being a contrast to a long-standing tradition, it is expected that the prince will refuse to marry her, but a denouement is gradually built up by his acceptance of her. This helps present the theme of love; the theme of faith; and the intrusion of gods into the everyday affairs of men. The vulnerability of the female gender is also presented as, in the whole play, Iyun is a passive character; even though the actions of other characters revolve around her and greatly affect her. This reveals the setting of the play as a patriarchal society.

Furthermore, irony in the play can be seen in the character of Chief Jagunmolu who was going to withdraw his support from Obalolu based on him – Obalolu, breaking the traditions while he – Jagunmolu, is not aware that his son is about to disgrace him by committing an offence greater than even Obalolu's abomination in the eye of the tradition. Chief Jagunmolu brazenly challenges Prince Obalolu with the newspaper reporting the news of his scandal in the spirit of righteousness. The situation becomes ironic when the table turns side and he goes to plead with Professor Jamboree to reverse the expulsion of his son; Ajadi from the university. He closes his eyes to the tradition which calls for severe punishment for the offence his son has committed; defiling a queen-to-be. He instead pleads for leniency as he says in act five, scene three,

*“(Pleading) The deed is done already, Prof. Let’s think of a solution. You are the chairman of the panel that investigated that case, you could still help my son. I don’t want him to be out of the university.”*

This is quite ironical since he is the one who has no problem with Obalolu forfeiting the throne to pay for his recklessness. This also exposes the hypocrisy of the society where everyone displays integrity when it is another at the hot side of the table but go back on their words/standards when they find themselves in a similar situation. Chief Jagunmolu’s plea for leniency for his son is used by the playwright to satirize the typical Nigerian society. He presents a complex scenario where those at the top of the society use power and influence to cover up their wrongs and by extension breed further criminal and evil doings in the society since they go unpunished.

Moreover, there is an instance of dramatic irony when Chief Jagunmolu confronts Prince Obalolu with the newspaper proving his defilement of the tradition. Obalolu reacts with fury, not thinking his life in London will catch up with him at home so fast. His first reaction is to lash out angrily, but when he realizes that anger will not solve the problem, he calms down and surrenders himself to the decision of the chiefs. The playwright by this introduces the concept of karma (an opinion that “what goes around, comes around” and no deed is hidden under the sun) which is a widely held view by every African society. He says in Act three, scene three,

*“…Where is the hiding place in a world that is fast turning into a global community via technology? …. Sincerely, I don’t know what to do. As you can see, I am not fit by custom to mount the throne…”*

The presence of madmen in African plays has always been used to pass across messages. As such, there is always something significant about madmen appearing in African plays. An example of this is the presence of a mad man in Frank Ogodo Ogbeche's *Harvest of Corruption.* In Abayomi Awelewa's *Dilemma of an African Prince*, not only is the mad man used to pass a message, but there are also noticeable elements of irony surrounding his presence in the play. The mad man's name 'Eto' meaning "queue up", is an example of verbal irony. It is a generally known fact that mad people are not orderly or calm. In fact, the mad man is busy disturbing Prof. Jamboree at the start of Act 2 Scene 1. Thus, using the name 'Eto' to address a mad man is indeed a great irony. Also, the mad man issues orderly commands to an unseen army. This is ironical as there is no present army, and he unknowingly issues these commands at the point where things are huggy-muggy in the land.

Other instances of irony abound in the play such as when Akanbi comes to call Professor Jamboree to class. He informs the professor that they have logic which leads the reader to mull over the illogicality of the situations surrounding the scene/play and examine the words of Professor Jamboree when he argues about the importance of logic to rejuvenating the fatherland. He says to Akanbi,

*"Logic has got a lot to do with it. But when I propound my theory for the economic rejuvenation of our fatherland, what does the clique in Aso Rock tell me? Foolish old men! What do they know but to ask for more pay! Tell me, Akanbi, is it that when we go on strike, we do it for our own sake or the sake of the nation and the future?"*

Also, Professor Jamboree has a degree in Logic which makes him disagree with the potency of juju (African charms) but he believes – or at least seems sympathetic to – the words of a mad man; which in a normal situation would be disregarded as illogical.

The word ‘logic’ is played on severally in the play especially during the debate session between Professor Jamboree and Chief Jagunmolu where they argue over the logicality in sticking to culture, and the role culture has to play in the recent events going on in the town such as another prince, Obadele, trying to usurp the throne against the wishes of the late king. The action seems okay with Professor Jamboree who argues that what is good for the goose is also good for the gander. However, Chief Jagunmolu argues that logic in such a situation is different. He says,

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Again, reference is made to the ‘voice of the madman’, which makes one conclude that the word ‘madman’ is not only being used in its literal term. To some extent, it is, which is ironical since one would expect such a society to discard the words of a madman but the Professor listens to Eto; the madman and even obeys the command of Eto subconsciously by banging his feet to the ground as Eto calls out his military commands.

Another instance of situational irony is when Florentina shows up unexpectedly during the coronation of Obalolu. It comes as a shock to Obalolu because they already had an agreement that she will not impede his ascension to the throne of his fathers. Everyone, especially Prince Obalolu, expects 'war' when she surfaces. Her presence throws everyone into pandemonium. This is because she and her baby have been abandoned by Prince Obalolu (the father). Thus, one expects her to cause trouble for the king-to-be. A dramatic irony, however, comes into play when Florentina reveals that she has not come to disrupt Obalolu's life nor to cause problems for the village but to extend a hand of assistance to them all. She intends to find a solution to HIV/AIDS, not only for Igbadi village but for the whole of Africa.

**CONCLUSION**

The denouement occurs when Florentina extends her goodwill to the village of Onigba. This will proffer a solution to the scores of people who are trying to find a balance in the turbulent sea of the modern world. The denouement is against the belief of the Professor that we must review our customs and traditions in line with modern developments. The author shows the side he favours in the never-ending struggle between traditionalism and Westernisation when the play resolves amicably with everyone agreeing to work together to achieve the greater good. Tradition wins when the Prince ascends his father’s throne, peace reigns in the town, and everyone gets their happy-ever-after; even Florentina, as she achieves her dream of associating herself with an African community. This also shows the fallibility of the Professor as he already proclaims in Act two, Scene One that customs and tradition cannot win in the face of technological change

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**GROUP 29 SUB-GROUP 18**

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GES 201 GROUP {28} PROJECT

**Question:**

Evaluate character and characterization in the novel, *Dazzling Mirage* by Olayinka Abimbola Egbokhare.

About the author

Olayinka Abimbola Egbokhare was born in Ibadan, Oyo State. Her love for writing was brought to the fore by Mrs Ubah, one of her English teachers at the Federal Government Girls College, New-Bussa, Niger State. Yinka holds a PhD in Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan where she teaches writing skills, advertising message development amongst other courses.

Her novel, *Dazzling Mirage* was adapted into a movie by Tunde Kelani’s Mainframe Productions. She makes her home in Ibadan with her husband, Francis and children. It is safe to say that the writing of this text shows her love for sensitization and the book serves as a formidable tool for social awareness on Sickle Cell Anemia.

Background/Backdrop of the novel

*Dazzling Mirage* was written in partial fulfillment for the Bachelor of Arts Degree in the Department of Communication and language Arts, University of Ibadan. It was submitted as the author’s long essay in her final year in 1999. The subject matter – Awareness on Sickle Cell Anemia emanated from her desire to retract misconceptions, stereotypical beliefs and sensitize the public on the disease.

The novel’s creation was also influenced by her interaction with a girl suffering from the illness in her (the author’s) early years. Apart from the girl’s yellow eyes and the limp on her leg, there was nothing to give her away as a Sickle Cell patient. Her research work on the disease was achieved in Jaja Clinic where she interviewed patients and even professionals who suffered from the illness. She then deduced that life really is what you make out of it and to some, living with the illness is nothing but a mirage because it is deceptive- the more you look, the less you see.

Setting

The Setting of this novel is largely African. It is geographically centered in West Africa, Nigeria to be precise. This is seen in various excerpts such as “Ibadan”, and “Ilorin” which are real places in Nigeria. Its temporal setting is the post- colonial era where civilization and education has set in in full force. Occupationally, white collar jobs are mostly emphasized.

Introduction/synopsis of the text

*Dazzling Mirage* a first by Yinka Egbokhare expounds the challenges faced by a sickler in a contemporary African Society such as Nigeria. It centers on the protagonist Funmiwo, a sickler, and her struggles with the disease, her journey through finding love and stability in life. The novel focuses on her experiences, that of the characters that come into her life and the importance of love and sheer willpower, a will to live, love and not give up.

As descriptive and didactic as the plot is, it sheds light on the series of situations Funmiwo faces as an adopted sickle cell child of two medically inclined patients. It is indeed ironic that the author choses to expound the protagonist’s story using two medically inclined parents who very well know the financial and emotional implication of having a child with an SS genotype.

Funmiwo chooses life. Indeed she is a pure example of a dazzler who has demystified the popular idea of life being for the healthy alone. She shows that no illness should affect a person’s outlook or expectation. This further explains the tittle of the text. Funmiwo is dazzling the Mirage of her predicament. Even in chapter 1, {page 19}, she’s described as “*Funmiwo Dazzler*”

**Essay**

A character may be an animal, person or figure represented in a literary work. However, this definition might create a hasty generalization that the “*big hairy dog*” stated in Chapter1, page 10 is a character. Hence, altering the definition above, it is not just any animal, person or figure used in a literary work but must be an object of importance to the development of the plot of any literary work particularly drama and prose. By this addition, the dog cannot be considered to be a character because it does not play a significantly important role in the development of the play. Characters could be round, flat, static or dynamic in nature.

Characterization is the process by which the writer reveals the personality of a character. It equally refers to the way the author choses to portray the characters in a drama or prose work. It is important to note that characterization can be direct or indirect. Direct characterization occurs when a writer portrays a character using direct qualities. For instance, in *Dazzling Mirage,* Dotun is described as a gentleman as seen in this excerpt;

*“… but one thing none of them would put to debate is his* ***gentlemanliness****” {chapter2, page 41/42}*  Indirect characterization on the other hand occurs through speech, thought, action ,looks or the effect on others towards the character. By implication, Funmiwo is considered resilient as a result of the trials she has faced and conquered. In other words, by action, she has shown a quality. This could equally occur through what a character says {speech}, his/her thoughts expressed in words by the author, the description of his/her physique as well as the perspectives of other characters about him/her. Conclusively, characterization can be expressed by showing telling and naming.

The terms character and characterization can only be used in two out of the three genres of literature namely Drama and Prose.

The various Characters in the text will be explained starting with major characters.

**OLUFUNMIWO**

Funmiwo is the central character in the story. The plot of the story revolves round her. She is also referred to as Ebuoluwa and Iretiayo respectively. Clearly these are symbolic names. She is the 23 year old adopted daughter of Dr Femi and Alice Adebayo. She is portrayed as a sickle cell patient who lives at the mercies of DF118 and exuberant medical care. She is equally the protagonist of the novel.

Having “born, bread and buttered” in Illorin, she is a very promising young chap who is a source of joy and pride to her parents. According the the text,

“*Her presence had filled their lives with love and laughter.”{Chapter1, page 1}*

Details of her birth mother are given in the text; *“She was merely a child of 21, an unmarried mother, a nursing student”* *{Chapter1, page 27}. Her birth mum is said to have died during child birth.*

She is considered to have several qualities including “*quiet nature, pleasant disposition, childlike trust and open-eyed credulity*”*.{Chapter1, Page 19}*

Despite her health situation, she graduates from University of Ilorin and contrary to her parents wish, she moves to Ibadan after 6 months to take up a job in an advertising firm {Advert Merchant Nigeria Limited] for so many reasons including Sanya, her love interest. This is seen as in the text below

**“***Actually, Sanya was one of the reasons why Funmiwo took up this job in Ibadan”{chapter 4 page 83]*

This character experiences an emotional breakdown when her love interest-Sanya deserts her, however, she falls in love with her colleague an boss (Dotun), **marries him** and has a child with him named Damilola.

Symbolically, she represents a “Dazzler”. The author effectively uses her character to portray a woman of determination. Judging by the background of this text, it is possible that the life of Funmiwo is directed to show strong will in the face of difficulties. She stands as a beacon of strength, will power and how love; true love prevails in the end.

**SANYA**

Sanya is considered a dark handsome man with masculine grace.

He is Funmiwo’s boyfriend at the earlier chapters of the text before their break up. He was the antidote to Funmiwo’s pain as whenever she feels endless pain within her bone marrow, she thinks of him. *“All that mattered then was that Sanya was there and that he loved her” { Chapter1, page 32}.* Following his excerpt, their love seemed real.

Cooking isn’t one of the favorable qualities he has. His only edible feat is *“popped melon and French fries”* Sanya works at the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) as a laboratory staff. The nature of his job makes him busy and always up and doing.

He is the character who Funmiwo remarks as easily being controlled by his mother. He breaks up with her because of her situation and because his mother did not like her. He eventually got married to his research assistant- Tade.

He is a direct contrast to Dotun. He would have been all that Funmiwo needed as an anaemic to be free from social stereotype but he wasn’t. Dotun on the other hand turned out to be all that every sickle cell patient needs; tender love and care.

He represents a fraction of the society who would change their views and opinions as a result of a popular view.

**DOTUN ATOYEBI**

Adedotun Atoyebi is a man of many parts! He is a 29 year old hardworking and vibrant man with the carriage of an older man and the looks of a young man. His 6ft 2 height coupled with his athletic and trim physique and his carriage made him a total package.

To some, he is a proud man. To others, a brilliant chap. Though perceived as a bossy person, he is a gentleman to the core. However, an undeniable attribute he has is his quest to get things done.

Adedotun is the second son in a family of six. His attachment to his mum is undeniable and unbreakable. He is considered as symbol for brilliance. His gift to comprehend easily often exuded a feeling of arrogance with teaching others particularly girls. He opines that *“Most girls have cotton wool in place of their brains” {Chapter2, page 43}.* Well, this opinion doesn’t hold much weight as he meets Ejiowuro. Ejias he fondly calls her becomes the love of his life. His marriage proposal to her is however rejected. For a long time after his rejection, he made no deep mutual connection with any woman.

He is Funmiwo and Lanre’s boss. He is the owner of the advertising firm where Funmiwo works, that is, Advert Merchant Nigeria Limited. He is portrayed as being a respectful man who cares about his mother but is not under her control.

He is emotionally fragile, as exemplified by how he refused to be emotionally invested in any other woman after Ejiwuro, his colleague in the University. He eventually falls in love with Funmiwo. His emotional side is seen in her battle with illness when she becomes pregnant. To his delight and relief, Funmiwo survives.

Other characters worthy of note are;

**DR FEMI AND ALICE ADEBAYO**

They are the loving parents of Funmiwo. Dr Femi is often playfully called “damaging director”. From the actions in the play, Alice is likely to be very persuasive in matters relating to her daughter, Funmiwo. She persuades her husband to go with her to visit Funmiwo in Ibadan. They equally happen to be very concerned fellows on their daughter’s health.

They are equally medical practioners. In order to fulfill their love, they decide to get married irrespective of their medical incompatibility. This happens after three and half years of courtship. Unable to give birth due to medical incompatibility, they adopt a child- Funmiwo and give her all the necessities of life including a wholesome education up to Universty Degree level.

Their love for Funmiwo knows no bounds. They play a major role in the story by being part of the exception to societal misconceptions and stereotypical beliefs about being a sickler. They are symbols and sources of stability for Funmiwo, their love and sacrifices that keep her going throughout the novel.

The author fully uses his power to characterize to create two personalities that defile all odds at Funmiwo’s survival. It is ironic that medically inclined people take Funmiwo as a daughter. However, this goes to show that society needs to provide basic neceesities for the anemic and ensure that they are brought up in the right environment void of stigma.

**LANRE DAWOLU**

He is Funmiwo’s colleague in Advert Merchant Nigeria Limited. He is a dedicated worker at Advert Merchant and refuses to let his work clash with her private life.

He is Dotun’s friend and following the plot of the story, they happen to be best of friends. Lanre is equally Dotun’s Confidante and Colleague at work. He was the first person Dotun opens up to about his interest in Funmiwo. He frequently teases Dotun about his bachelor status and many girls he has on his ranks.

He is a symbol of loyalty and friendship and he stood by the Ayotebis’ throughout their period of distress. He plays a making role bring the two lovers together. He is also a very comical character, providing comic relief throughout the story.

**BUKOLA OSOLALE**

She is the best friend of Fumiwo. She does not fancy Sanya much as it annoys her that she calls her ‘Bukky’. She gets engaged to Kunle as seen in page 65 of the text, with Toye as his bestman.

She is a loving fun character who loves Funmiwo very much, as she proves this by how she stood by her ordeal at childbirth.

**DAOLU**

He is a young boy who grew close to Funmiwo after they met at a sickle cell event. She views Funmiwo as a confidante who understands him

**MRS FADIPE**

She is Sanya’s controlling mother and can be credited for the breakup of her son with Funmiwo. She is a controlling and arrogant character with the way she views sickle cell patients.

Symbolically, she represents the fraction of the society that places unwarranted stigma on the anemic

**ADUN AND ODUNOLA**

They are the children of Funmiwo’s landlord. They love Funmiwo and she shares the same affection with them.

**ALLI**

He is Funmiwo’s gateman, he is a comical character and was integral towards saving Funmiwo’s life after she broke down during her breakup with Sanya.

**MRS ATOYEBI**

This is Dotun’s mother. She loves her son, but is not controlling. Unlike Mrs Fadipe, She is enlightened about Sickle Cell and she loves and supports Funmiwo throughout the course of the story

Symbolically, she represents the supportive and educated unit of the society.

**DAMILOLA**

This is the daughter of Funmiwo and Dotun Atoyebi. She is a doting child and a source of joy to her parents. She is the result of the love between them.

**DR AYODELE**

This is Funmiwo’s Doctor and he was there since she was a child up until she gave birth. He is an important character as he brings stability to her life.

**Other characters of Angela , Tade and Ejiwuro also help propel the plot of the novel.**

**CONCLUSION**

The work *Dazzling Mirage* remains a text with a strong plot. Centred on the life of Funmiwo as a sickle cell patient, the author addresses the stigma and sterotype of sickle cell and medical issues generally using the tools of character and characterization.

Little do we wonder why Remi Raji, a Professor of African Literatures and Creative Writing considers the novel a tool for gaining information about the medical condition commonly known as Sickle Cell Disease. Indeed, *“this is a story worth telling and is told well.”*

**QUESTION: DISCUSS, WITH RELEVANT ILLUSRATIONS, THE MAJOR THEMES IN THE TEXT, *DAZZLING MIRAGE***

To a very large extent, it suffices to posit that no writer writes out of vacuum. Every writing is a product of the sociopolitical realities of a society. Thus, when a writer puts his/her pen on paper, s/he writes to portray these realities to the audience. One of the literary devices used in conveying this reality is theme. In works of fiction, a theme is the central idea or ideas explored in the story. Stated directly or indirectly, theme is a universal idea, lesson, or message explored throughout a work of literature. One key characteristic of literary themes is their universality. In other words, themes are ideas that not only apply to the specific characters and events of a book or play, but also express broader truths about human experience that readers can apply to their own lives. In Olayinka Abimbola Egbokhare's *Dazzling Mirage*, attention would be given to these following themes: theme of survival, stigma, love, optimism and diligence. For the sake of clarity and proper presentation of thoughts, the synopsis of the novel would first be treated first before an in depth analysis of each of the aforementioned themes using a subheading format.

**THE SYNOPSIS**

The novel, *Dazzling Mirage* was written by Olayinka Abimbola Egbokhare. It was set in the western part of Nigeria, precisely Orogun, Ibadan. It is a very unique novel as the author succinctly depicts the theme of love from start to finish. When critically assessed, it can be said that the novel is written to spread awareness on the disease called Sickle cell anemia and its effects on persons affected by it. The author vividly tries to portray determination, strength and perseverance through the central character in the person of Oluwafunmiwo Adebayo. The author, in different chapters of the novel, shows expressly the degree of excruciating pain involved in being riddled with sickle cell anaemia. She depicts how these persons saddled with the burden of this disease are brave. The lucky ones manage to beat it into submission and live a good life with their family, others may not be so lucky. It is very intriguing to note that although Sickle cell anaemia is a generic disease in which the victims get saddled with it with no control or choice, there is still a high rate of stigmatisation and segregation of these beings in our modern society. Some characters such as Sanya's mother openly shows displeasure and disgust at anything having to do with the disease. The author also makes efforts to dispense with that are usually associated with the disease, for instance through the use of dialogue, the author subtly dispels the notion that persons with sickle cell anaemia do not live past twenty one years, she also tries to kill the popular opinion that the Sickle cell anaemia is a black mans disease and the whites have abandoned the us to fight the disease alone, mainly because it is common in Africa. There are different instances where the author emphasises that people with sickle cell disease do not need cuddling or pampering, restrictions, segregation, stigmatisation or victimisation. The author keeps hammering on the fact that they only need love and care. Of course, there is also quality hospital care that is being emphasized in the novel. The character, Funmiwo, although not without her flaws, is hardworking, determined and she bears the pain of the menace disease till the end. One very deep and touching aspect of the novel is that it shows how persons affected by the disease are put in an unbearable situation because of their parents’ selfish choice or ignorance, are still able to fight the obstacles and rise to be better people, impacting the society for good.

**Theme of Survival**

Survival can be defined as the state or fact of continuing to live or exist especially in spite of difficult conditions. Survival in *Dazzling mirage* is seen expressly throughout the novel and portrayed by various characters mainly the Sickers who have Sickle Cell Aneamia. Funmiwo who is the protagonist of the novel is the adopted child of the Adebayo's,she survives through many crisis whereby she suffers excruciating bone pain and psychological trauma. Funmiwo is faced with social stigma and prejudice in the society such as when she was prevented from playing with other children and not even allowed in the cultural troupe and also not allowed to neither have an ice-cream nor play in the rain. Funmiwo is not allowed to have her 21st birthday due to fear of stress which could lead to another crisis. All this created psychological trauma for her. Funmiwo against all odds goes to the University, graduates with flying colours, gets a job at Adverts Merchant Nigeria Limited and is described as being hardworking and intelligent even though she recurrently has her sickle cell crisis. She also survives through emotional breakup when Sanya the man she loves abandons her for another woman Tade because of pressure from his mother that he cannot marry her because of her sickness. She later finds love and comfort in Dotun the managing director of Adverts Merchant Nigeria Limited who also happens to be her boss. During her pregnancy, she goes through a lot of pain as her Sickler crisis occurs. She also suffers from acute anemia, dry cell and she has to be hospitalized during childbirth complications occur whereby she renal closure and blood loss. She has to be operated on and the baby is delivered through Caesarean operation. She suffers blood loss as a result of this and has an heart attack even with all these she still survives. Funmiwo is described as frail in body but full of spirit and talent, she triumphs over all trials and tribulations to survive and becomes a mother. Funmiwo becomes the Dazzling reality. Also is Chief Adesina Sodwin who is also a sickler who grows to an old age even though the Sicklers are said to not live long. Chief Adesina Sodwin is described as being full of life and active even more industrious than many of the so called normal people and he is a great philanthropist while alive. In *Dazzling mirage,* the sicklers are portrayed as being strong willed and not allowing their clinical problem get the better of them.

**Theme of Stigma**

Based on Goffmans Social Theory of Stigma, stigma is defined as a phenomenon where an individual is rejected due to an attribute or behaviour that is deeply discredited by society.Unlike the colonial regime in Africa where Africans were discriminated based on the colour of their skins, in this novel, discriminatory acts are heavily meted out based on genotype. The sickle cell disease can be defined as the variant gene inherited as an autosomal recessive mendelian trait in persons who inherit the homozygous hemoglobin gene (HbSS). Such persons are referred to as Sicklers and generally suffer lifelong acute and chronic complications. Sickle cell disease exerts a high economic and psychosocial burden on the individual, the family, caregivers, and public health system. The disease also has potential for multiple psychosocial effects, such as loss of independence, feelings of isolation and loneliness and poor interpersonal relationships. Egbokhare uses her stunning and appealing protagonist, Funmiwo to espouse daily issues that the Sicklers have to live with in a society whereby anything considered different from the norm is relegated and ostracized to the abyss. Egbokhare laments:

* the Sickler is suppressed. He is partly ostracized. He cant join the schools football team. She cant dance in the cultural troupe. He cant hold a demanding post. All over the Sickler, a caption is boldly printed Delicate! Handle with care! (76)*

Sicklers are considered health traitors because their marginal body places them in opposition to the normative health condition. As such, the supposed morals of strict identity have more to do with ideologies of racism than genuine ethics. It awards merit to the mainstream and relegates frailty to the disadvantaged. In this case, Egbokhare asserts that*;Sicklers  dont need our pity All they need is to be accepted and loved, nothing more (80).*

**Theme of Love**

The Merriam Webster's Dictionary of English language defines love as a strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties. The theme of love, amongst others, is one of the primary thematic preoccupation upon which the author, Abimbola Egbokhare, focuses on all through the literary text. This theme of love is exploited by the author in several ways so as to underscore its need in the modern day society where discrimination is rife.Essentially, using this theme, Egbokhare is able to showcase its effect on sickle cell patients as portrayed by the central character, Funmiwo. Generally speaking, sickle cell patients not only go through lots of agonizing pain brought about by the disease itself, but equally face criticisms and pity in the outside world, to the extent that most of them die as a result at early ages. However, we learn that Funmiwo, also an SS patient, is constantly shown love by not only her adopted parents (Dr. and Mrs. Adebayo) but also her husband (Dotun) and daughter as could be seen particularly in Chapter 8 of the novel. For instance, Funmiwo is reported to be elated and feels a lot better when her parents come all the way to Ibadan to see her shortly after one of her crises in the second chapter. Thus, love is presented as a placate of pain.

Furthermore, family as a tool reinforces the theme of love in the novel. From the analysis above it is clear that asides from the love that is mutually shared by members of the NGO(Non-Governmental Organisation) called *Sicklers United Conference*, the major medium through which Funmiwo gets the love which keeps her going is from her family, being her parents, husband and even children.In the same vein, through the theme of love, Egbokhare has been able to present common societal phenomena such as sickle cell and discrimination in unfamiliar ways to the readers by showing how love conquers all, there by achieving the technique of defamiliarization. Thus, it suffices to point out the words of Chapter 8*: Sickle cell or no sickle cell, mirage or reality, love endures all things.* In this sense, the book concludes by reasserting the power of love, thereby buttressing the theme of Love.

**Theme of Optimism**

Optimism as a major thematic preoccupation is a mental attitude reflecting a belief or hope that the outcome of some specific endeavour in general, will be positive, favourable and desirable. Optimism is also a form of positive thinking that includes the belief that you are responsible for your own happiness and that more good things will continue to happen to you in the future, irrespective of any bad situation a person is in presently. The central idea of optimism is portrayed in the characters of Funmiwo, her parents and Sanya.

As the main protagonist in the literary text, Funmiwo's actions and inactions have gone a long way to propel the events in the narrative. Her optimistic and resilient spirit is overwhelming. Despite her Sickle Cell medical condition, she doesn't allow this to deter her as she is still very diligent and hardworking in an advertising agency. Also, the love and unique bond that exists between her and parents also contributes to her being optimistic. They always come through for her, encourage her, despite her medical condition. Though, Funmiwo is not their biological child and they had not discovered her Sickle Cell medical condition until after she was adopted, they still believe in her and care for her as though she were their biological child.

*"...what matters is if we love each other enough to face the future together, to love any child who comes our way, sickler inclusive and to provide maximum care for such a child. That's what every child, especially a sickler needs: love and adequate medicare".* Page 8. When her parents, Alice and Femi visit her at her Ibadan residence, they feed and fuel her with words of encouragement and these words keeps her going and motivated. In her fathers locution,

"...*bitterness doesn't solve anything. Self-pity won't get you anywhere either. They are both destructive to the self, spirit, body and soul"*. Page 22

Sanya also embodies optimism. He has been there for Funmiwo. With Sanya on her side, she knows what true friendship is, though they did not end up marrying each other at the end. He loves and cares for her. Underscoring Sanyas compassionate attitude towards her is this statement:

"...*all that mattered then was that Sanya was there and that he loved her. She cared little about the tortous pain. With Sanya around, she did not feel bothered about the unknown".* Page 32.

In addition , the Sicklers' Conference that is organised plays two major important roles: it helps to create awareness and this serves as a public enlightenment campaign to people, most especially those living with the Sickle Cell condition. Also, through Funmiwo's lecture and the other lectures deliver in the conference, it has gone a long way to help encourage the sicklers and this makes them optimistic about life; to see that despite their medical condition, they should not give up and that the disorder should not restrict them from achieving their goals, aspirations in life and making the best life out of their condition.

**Theme of Diligence**

The novel foregrounds the theme of diligence especially in the attitude that Funmiwo portrays in the story. Even though Funmiwo lives at the mercies of DF 118, some multivitamins and Novalgin tablets during crisis, she accepts a job at Advert Merchants in Ibadan. At Advert Merchant, her boss, Dotun Atoyebi attests to the fact that Funmiwo is an epitome of industriousness. In the story, she is referred to as the *one and only copy writer* and she is warmly received into the office after her ill health as she has been a diligent worker and no one can fill the void she leaves at the office during her absence. Funmilayos diligence can be seen right from her childhood days when she ensures that she makes up for every class she misses as a result of her crises and comes out as the best at the end of every year in secondary school. She is able to meet the demands of her place of work. The author opines: *she liked her job and the inconveniences that went with it. She only wished she did not fall sick so often so as not to disturb the flow of work*. Page 35

The author further mirrors the theme of diligence in the character of Dotun Atoyebi, the managing director of Advert Merchants Nigeria limited. With a myriad of teething problems, but with a hardworking staff, the company is able to scale through foundational problems. Dotun does not condone any form of unproductivity despite having his bosom friends as his staff. Dotun alongside his hardworking staff proves their worth and they perform well. The author makes this known to the readers when he says*:they had finally been given the chance to prove their worth and they performed well. Dotun Atoyebi worked as if he ran a race against time. And his efforts paid off. This was evident in the size of the companys band account and the kind of clients they attracted*

Furthermore, a handful of concerned researchers who are still bent on finding a cure for Sickle Cell Anemia further foreground the thematic preoccupation of diligence in the story. The author makes it known to the readers that a U.S based Nigerian, Dr. Sunday, a microbiologist, discovers a drug named NXO699 which is meant to reverse the symptoms of Sickle Cell Anemia. At the Sickle Cell Conference, a researcher reels out progress made in gene therapy, another group of researchers also provide information on two drugs that were ongoing clinical trials: Poloxamer 118 and Fructose 1-6 Diphosphate. Both drugs are reported to reduce sicklers' sufferings. Thus, it can be seen that a lot of work has been ongoing into finding an effective and efficient treatment for Sickle Cell Anemia.

However, all the researches mention on finding a treatment for Sickle Cell in the story suggests that this work has been done majorly by the white man who is not really affected by the disease. On the contrary, Africans who have a higher population of people with Sickle Cell Anaemia have not done enough research to find a tangible way of treating the disease. With this, the author seems to juxtapose the diligence of the white man with that of the African people. As an illustration, in page 74 of the text, a mother of a Sickler comments:

*If Sickle Cell had been a disease of the white man, efforts would have been intensified to find a cure*

A medical doctor rebuts what she says instantly by saying: *come to think of it, what have we done?* *Our people say, the man with a torn in his foot should be the one to hop to the man who has a razor. I ask you*, *what investigation has been done into our own Orin Ata? Isn't it rumored to be a possible cure...?* *Let's all call a spade by its real name".*

This theme can also be seen in the way Sanya Fadipe is presented in the story. He is presented as always busy. He is ever diligently trying to meet his deadlines at work on projects he is assigned to. On his visits to Funmiwo's house, the author often makes it known that Sanya has a hectic day at work.

In the light of the foregoing, this theme of diligence cannot be overemphasized in the story as all the characterization either implicitly or expressly shows this.

**REFERENCE**

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**Question:**

**Evaluate character and characterization in the novel, *Dazzling Mirage* by Olayinka Abimbola Egbokhare.**

About the author

Olayinka Abimbola Egbokhare was born in Ibadan, Oyo State. Her love for writing was brought to the fore by Mrs Ubah, one of her English teachers at the Federal Government Girls College, New-Bussa, Niger State. Yinka holds a PhD in Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan where she teaches writing skills, advertising message development amongst other courses.

Her novel, *Dazzling Mirage* was adapted into a movie by Tunde Kelani’s Mainframe Productions. She makes her home in Ibadan with her husband, Francis and children. It is safe to say that the writing of this text shows her love for sensitization and the book serves as a formidable tool for social awareness on Sickle Cell Anemia.

Background/Backdrop of the novel

*Dazzling Mirage* was written in partial fulfillment for the Bachelor of Arts Degree in the Department of Communication and language Arts, University of Ibadan. It was submitted as the author’s long essay in her final year in 1999. The subject matter – Awareness on Sickle Cell Anemia emanated from her desire to retract misconceptions, stereotypical beliefs and sensitize the public on the disease.

The novel’s creation was also influenced by her interaction with a girl suffering from the illness in her (the author’s) early years. Apart from the girl’s yellow eyes and the limp on her leg, there was nothing to give her away as a Sickle Cell patient. Her research work on the disease was achieved in Jaja Clinic where she interviewed patients and even professionals who suffered from the illness. She then deduced that life really is what you make out of it and to some, living with the illness is nothing but a mirage because it is deceptive- the more you look, the less you see.

Setting

The Setting of this novel is largely African. It is geographically centered in West Africa, Nigeria to be precise. This is seen in various excerpts such as “Ibadan”, and “Ilorin” which are real places in Nigeria. Its temporal setting is the post- colonial era where civilization and education has set in in full force. Occupationally, white collar jobs are mostly emphasized.

Introduction/synopsis of the text

*Dazzling Mirage* a first by Yinka Egbokhare expounds the challenges faced by a sickler in a contemporary African Society such as Nigeria. It centers on the protagonist Funmiwo, a sickler, and her struggles with the disease, her journey through finding love and stability in life. The novel focuses on her experiences, that of the characters that come into her life and the importance of love and sheer willpower, a will to live, love and not give up.

As descriptive and didactic as the plot is, it sheds light on the series of situations Funmiwo faces as an adopted sickle cell child of two medically inclined patients. It is indeed ironic that the author choses to expound the protagonist’s story using two medically inclined parents who very well know the financial and emotional implication of having a child with an SS genotype.

Funmiwo chooses life. Indeed she is a pure example of a dazzler who has demystified the popular idea of life being for the healthy alone. She shows that no illness should affect a person’s outlook or expectation. This further explains the tittle of the text. Funmiwo is dazzling the Mirage of her predicament. Even in chapter 1, {page 19}, she’s described as “*Funmiwo Dazzler*”

**Essay**

A character is any animal, person or figure represented in a literary work. However, this definition might create a hasty generalization that the “*big hairy dog*” stated in Chapter1, page 10 is a character. Hence, altering the definition above, it is not just any animal, person or figure used in a literary work but must be an object of importance to the development of the plot of any literary work particularly drama and prose. By this addition, the dog cannot be considered to be a character because it does not play a significantly important role in the development of the play. Characters could be round, flat, static or dynamic in nature.

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**OLUFUNMIWO**

Funmiwo is the central character in the story. The plot of the story revolves round her. She is also referred to as Ebuoluwa and Iretiayo respectively. Clearly these are symbolic names. She is the 23 year old adopted daughter of Dr Femi and Alice Adebayo. She is portrayed as a sickle cell patient who lives at the mercies of DF118 and exuberant medical care. She is equally the protagonist of the novel.

Having “born, bread and buttered” in Illorin, she is a very promising young chap who is a source of joy and pride to her parents. According the the text,

“*Her presence had filled their lives with love and laughter.”{Chapter1, page 1}*

Details of her birth mother are given in the text; *“She was merely a child of 21, an unmarried mother, a nursing student”* *{Chapter1, page 27}. Her birth mum is said to have died during child birth.*

She is considered to have several qualities including “*quiet nature, pleasant disposition, childlike trust and open-eyed credulity*”*.{Chapter1, Page 19}*

Despite her health situation, she graduates from University of Ilorin and contrary to her parents wish, she moves to Ibadan after 6 months to take up a job in an advertising firm {Advert Merchant Nigeria Limited] for so many reasons including Sanya, her love interest. This is seen as in the text below

**“***Actually, Sanya was one of the reasons why Funmiwo took up this job in Ibadan”{chapter 4 page 83]*

This character experiences an emotional breakdown when her love interest-Sanya deserts her, however, she falls in love with her colleague an boss (Dotun), **marries him** and has a child with him named Damilola.

Symbolically, she represents a “Dazzler”. The author effectively uses her character to portray a woman of determination. Judging by the background of this text, it is possible that the life of Funmiwo is directed to show strong will in the face of difficulties. She stands as a beacon of strength, will power and how love; true love prevails in the end.

**SANYA**

Sanya is considered a dark handsome man with masculine grace.

He is Funmiwo’s boyfriend at the earlier chapters of the text before their break up. He was the antidote to Funmiwo’s pain as whenever she feels endless pain within her bone marrow, she thinks of him. *“All that mattered then was that Sanya was there and that he loved her” { Chapter1, page 32}.* Following his excerpt, their love seemed real.

Cooking isn’t one of the favorable qualities he has. His only edible feat is *“popped melon and French fries”* Sanya works at the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) as a laboratory staff. The nature of his job makes him busy and always up and doing.

He is the character who Funmiwo remarks as easily being controlled by his mother. He breaks up with her because of her situation and because his mother did not like her. He eventually got married to his research assistant- Tade.

He is a direct contrast to Dotun. He would have been all that Funmiwo needed as an anaemic to be free from social stereotype but he wasn’t. Dotun on the other hand turned out to be all that every sickle cell patient needs; tender love and care.

He represents a fraction of the society who would change their views and opinions as a result of a popular view.

**DOTUN ATOYEBI**

Adedotun Atoyebi is a man of many parts! He is a 29 year old hardworking and vibrant man with the carriage of an older man and the looks of a young man. His 6ft 2 height coupled with his athletic and trim physique and his carriage made him a total package.

To some, he is a proud man. To others, a brilliant chap. Though perceived as a bossy person, he is a gentleman to the core. However, an undeniable attribute he has is his quest to get things done.

Adedotun is the second son in a family of six. His attachment to his mum is undeniable and unbreakable. He is considered as symbol for brilliance. His gift to comprehend easily often exuded a feeling of arrogance with teaching others particularly girls. He opines that *“Most girls have cotton wool in place of their brains” {Chapter2, page 43}.* Well, this opinion doesn’t hold much weight as he meets Ejiowuro. Ejias he fondly calls her becomes the love of his life. His marriage proposal to her is however rejected. For a long time after his rejection, he made no deep mutual connection with any woman.

He is Funmiwo and Lanre’s boss. He is the owner of the advertising firm where Funmiwo works, that is, Advert Merchant Nigeria Limited. He is portrayed as being a respectful man who cares about his mother but is not under her control.

He is emotionally fragile, as exemplified by how he refused to be emotionally invested in any other woman after Ejiwuro, his colleague in the University. He eventually falls in love with Funmiwo. His emotional side is seen in her battle with illness when she becomes pregnant. To his delight and relief, Funmiwo survives.

Other characters worthy of note are;

**DR FEMI AND ALICE ADEBAYO**

They are the loving parents of Funmiwo. Dr Femi is often playfully called “damaging director”. From the actions in the play, Alice is likely to be very persuasive in matters relating to her daughter, Funmiwo. She persuades her husband to go with her to visit Funmiwo in Ibadan. They equally happen to be very concerned fellows on their daughter’s health.

They are equally medical practioners. In order to fulfill their love, they decide to get married irrespective of their medical incompatibility. This happens after three and half years of courtship. Unable to give birth due to medical incompatibility, they adopt a child- Funmiwo and give her all the necessities of life including a wholesome education up to Universty Degree level.

Their love for Funmiwo knows no bounds. They play a major role in the story by being part of the exception to societal misconceptions and stereotypical beliefs about being a sickler. They are symbols and sources of stability for Funmiwo, their love and sacrifices that keep her going throughout the novel.

The author fully uses his power to characterize to create two personalities that defer all odds at Funmiwo’s survival. It is ironic that medically inclined people take Funmiwo as a daughter. However, this goes to show that society needs to provide basic neceesities for the anemic and ensure that they are brought up in the right environment void of stigma.

**LANRE DAWOLU**

He is Funmiwo’s colleague in Advert Merchant Nigeria Limited. He is a dedicated worker at Advert Merchant and refuses to let his work clash with her private life.

He is Dotun’s friend and following the plot of the story, they happen to be best of friends. Lanre is equally Dotun’s Confidante and Colleague at work. He was the first person Dotun opens up to about his interest in Funmiwo. He frequently teases Dotun about his bachelor status and many girls he has on his ranks.

He is a symbol of loyalty and friendship and he stood by the Ayotebis’ throughout their period of distress. He plays a making role bring the two lovers together. He is also a very comical character, providing comic relief throughout the story.

**BUKOLA OSOLALE**

She is the best friend of Fumiwo. She does not fancy Sanya much as it annoys her that she calls her ‘Bukky’. She gets engaged to Kunle as seen in page 65 of the text, with Toye as his bestman.

She is a loving fun character who loves Funmiwo very much, as she proves this by how she stood by her ordeal at childbirth.

**DAOLU**

He is a young boy who grew close to Funmiwo after they met at a sickle cell event. She views Funmiwo as a confidante who understands him

**MRS FADIPE**

She is Sanya’s controlling mother and can be credited for the breakup of her son with Funmiwo. She is a controlling and arrogant character with the way she views sickle cell patients.

Symbolically, she represents the fraction of the society that places unwarranted stigma on the anemic

**ADUN AND ODUNOLA**

They are the children of Funmiwo’s landlord. They love Funmiwo and she shares the same affection with them.

**ALLI**

He is Funmiwo’s gateman, he is a comical character and was integral towards saving Funmiwo’s life after she broke down during her breakup with Sanya.

**MRS ATOYEBI**

This is Dotun’s mother. She loves her son, but is not controlling. Unlike Mrs Fadipe, She is enlightened about Sickle Cell and she loves and supports Funmiwo throughout the course of the story

Symbolically, she represents the supportive and educated unit of the society.

**DAMILOLA**

This is the daughter of Funmiwo and Dotun Atoyebi. She is a doting child and a source of joy to her parents. She is the result of the love between them.

**DR AYODELE**

This is Funmiwo’s Doctor and he was there since she was a child up until she gave birth. He is an important character as he brings stability to her life.

**Other characters of Angela , Tade and Ejiwuro also help propel the plot of the novel.**

**CONCLUSION**

The work *Dazzling Mirage* remains a text with a strong plot. Centred on the life of Funmiwo as a sickle cell patient, the author addresses the stigma and sterotype of sickle cell and medical issues generally using the tools of character and characterization.

Little do we wonder why Remi Raji, a Professor of African Literatures and Creative Writing considers the novel a tool for gaining information about the medical condition commonly known as Sickle Cell Disease. Indeed, *“this is a story worth telling and is told well.”*