

# CHAPTER 3 Review of Literary Terms

## 1. Meaning of Literature and Literary Appreciation

The term ‘literature’ in a general sense refers to any written document on a subject area; but in a restricted sense, the term usually refers to written works of imagination. The three major genres or types of literature are: prose, drama and poetry.

- (a) **Prose:** Prose usually refers to a work of imagination that is mainly narrative in form. It involves a conscious cultivated writing which does not have regularity of rhythm like poems, and its ideas are arranged in some logical and grammatical order. Prose also reflects the style of the writer. Prose is written in paragraphs and chapters.
- (b) **Drama:** Drama refers to a story that is meant to be acted by actors that impersonate the characters of the story on stage. It is written in the form of a dialogue in acts and scenes.
- (c) **Poetry:** Poetry is the imaginative expression of strong feeling. Usually rhythmical, it is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility. Poems are written in stanzas.

## 2. Some Literary Devices

Writers employ different literary devices in their works. These devices cut across the genres of literature. Many of them have been explained in Books 1 and 2 of this series, but we need to refresh our memories about them.

- **Allegory:** An allegory is a kind of fable or story in which persons, objects and actions are equated with meanings outside the story itself. An example of an allegory is Golding’s **Lord of the Flies**.
- **Alliteration:** This is a device that writers use often whereby certain consonant sounds are repeated, following each other on a line. Examples: (a) The fly flew away from the fan. (b) She sent the student to the centre.
- **Allusion:** To make an allusion is to make a reference in a work of literature to a person, place or event in another literary work. For example, if we talk about the “widow’s mite”, we are making an allusion to the story of the widow in the Bible.
- **Antithesis:** This is a literary device used to give a contrast. Examples: (a) James was sober, John was drunk. (b) The girl was strong in English but weak in Mathematics.
- **Antonym:** The antonym of a word is another word that has an opposite meaning. For example, ‘good’ is the antonym of ‘bad’, while ‘dull’ is the antonym of ‘bright’.
- **Apostrophe:** This is a figure of speech in which the writer addresses a person or thing directly in an emotional way. The person or thing addressed is usually absent. Examples: (a) Oh! King, you will live forever! (b) Death, you shall die!
- **Assonance:** This is a poetic device that involves the repetition of the same vowel sound in a line of the work. Examples: (a) The team achieved their dream. /i:/ (b) The fat man ran after the rat. /æ/
- **Biography:** A biography is a written account of a person’s life written by another person. If the account is written by the person himself, it is an autobiography.
- **Climax:** This is the highest moment of tension in a drama or a story. In Shakespeare’s **Julius Caesar**, for example, the climax of the play is the moment when Caesar is murdered and Mark Anthony steps in to make a funeral oration. In Achebe’s **Things Fall Apart**, the climax is the moment when the elders gather to take a decision on how to address the challenges posed by the intruding whitemen. As they were about

to deliberate on the matter, the whitemen's security men come to disperse the crowd and in the process of doing so, Okonkwo beheads one of the men, and goes on to hang himself.

- **Characters:** These are the participants in a literary work. Characters are supposed to be well developed by the writer in such a way that they behave like real men and women.
- **Comedy:** This is a lighter form of drama whose aim is to amuse the audience. A comedy always ends happily. An example of a comedy is Shakespeare's **Twelfth Night**.
- **Diction:** This refers to the use of words in a written or oral work of literature. Good diction requires apt selection of words to convey desired meanings.
- **Euphemism:** This is a polite word or expression used instead of a more direct unpleasant one in order to avoid a shock. For example, when somebody is said to be economical with the truth, it means that the person lies. The expression 'to pass away' is a euphemism for 'to die'.
- **Fable:** A fable is a story whose characters may be human beings, animals and objects. These characters are used to convey a moral message. George Orwell's **Animal Farm** is a good example of a fable.
- **Hero:** A hero is the central character in a fiction or drama. For example, Ezeulu is the hero of Achebe's **Arrow of God**. Similarly, Odewale is the hero of Ola Rotimi's **The Gods are not to Blame**.
- **Humour:** This is a literary device which writers employ often to evoke laughter.
- **Hyperbole:** This is a figure of speech that involves exaggeration, used to heighten effect or to produce humour. It is a kind of overstatement. Examples: (a) We have a mountain of work to do. (b) The young man brought his bride a trailer-load of gifts.
- **Irony:** This is a figure of speech in which the words used are intended to convey the opposite meaning. For example, if a speaker refers to a short man as the "tallest man in the hall", he has used irony to cause laughter.
- **Litotes:** This is a kind of understatement in which a thing is affirmed by stating the negative of its opposite. For example, if we say: "James was not unmindful of all the negative remarks that John had made about the new policy," it means that James had actually given careful attention to the remarks made by John.
- **Memoir:** A memoir is a writing dealing with the recollections of a prominent person who has been a part or witnessed important events. Achebe's recent **There was a country: My Personal History of Nigeria-Biafra War** is a perfect example.
- **Metaphor:** A metaphor is an implied comparison which suggests that the things compared have similar qualities. Examples: (a) John was the hero of the match. (b) Ada is an elephant of a woman.
- **Metonymy:** This is a figure of speech that involves the substitution of a term using a name that is closely associated with the name in mind for the word itself. For example, in the sentence: "Aso Rock has approved her appointment as an ambassador", 'Aso Rock' is a substitution for the President of Nigeria.
- **Mood:** The mood of a literary work reflects the emotional attitude of the writer to the theme or subject matter. The mood could be jovial, serious, sad, light and so on.
- **Onomatopoeia:** This refers to the use of a word whose pronunciation suggests its meaning. For example: 'buzz' suggests the noise of a bee; 'hiss', the sound of a snake; 'slam', the sound of a door; and 'whirr', the sound of an engine.
- **Oxymoron:** This is a figure of speech in which opposite terms are brought together in a sentence. This type of contrast makes for sharp emphasis. Examples: (a) Child birth is a 'bitter sweet' experience for women. (b) I wept for joy when I received my first salary. (c) The man is 'a cheerful pessimist'.

- **Parable:** This is a story used to illustrate moral lesson or a point. In religious books, such as the Bible and the Koran, we find many parables, such as ‘the parable of the sower’ and the ‘parable of the missing coin’.
- **Paradox:** This is a statement that seems contradictory but contains elements of truth. Examples: (a) Make haste slowly. (b) Your enemy may be your best friend.
- **Personification:** This is a figure of speech which gives human qualities to non-human beings and objects. If, for example, a writer describes ‘trees dancing in the wind’, or the sun ‘smiling at us, he has used personification.
- **Plot:** The plot of a drama or a fiction is the arrangement of the incidents in the work. The plot should consist of a beginning, a middle and the end.
- **Repetition:** This is a figure of speech in which an expression is repeated for emphasis.  
Examples: We have gathered to give you praise.  
We have gathered because you are our father.  
We have gathered because we cannot do without you.
- **Rhetorical Question:** This is a question asked for its rhetorical effect, which does not actually require an answer because the answer is obvious. Example: The team has won the championship twice, back to back: who can say it has not performed?
- **Sarcasm:** This is a kind of irony whose intention is to mock and to hurt. When, for example, you are dissatisfied with the performance of your country or your institution in a competition in which it is expected to excel but fails woefully, you could describe your country as ‘a giant for nothing’.
- **Satire:** A satire is a writing in which the writer blends his criticism with humour and with the purpose of effecting a positive change.
- **Simile:** A simile is a direct comparison between two things, using such expressions as: ‘like’ and ‘as’. Examples: (a) Amina looks like her sister. (b) She is as beautiful as her sister.
- **Style:** The style of a writer is the way he or she arranges words in his literary work to express his individuality. A writer’s style is unique to him or her.
- **Subject matter:** The subject matter of a work is what the work is about, the topic or ‘kernel’ of the work.
- **Symbol:** A symbol in literature is something which stands for itself as well as something else. For example, ‘apple’ is a fruit but it also stands for something attractive or desirable. A peacock is a bird but it also stands for the concept of ‘pride’.
- **Synecdoche:** This is a type of metaphor in which a part signifies the whole. For example, “We need more hands in my place of work” means that we need more workers.
- **Synonym:** The synonym of a word is another word that can be used in its place. For example, the synonym of ‘kind’ is ‘generous’, the synonym for ‘lazy’ is ‘indolent’.
- **Theme:** The theme refers to the message or messages that the writer sends across through his work. A work may have one or more themes. Examples: (a) War is destructive. (b) Hardwork has its rewards.

## Revision Questions

### Objective Questions

1. Which are the three major genres of literature?  
A. Farce, comedy, tragedy B. Drama, sonnet, folktales

- C. Poetry, drama, prose D. Satire, novel, play
2. The two kinds of literature in terms of medium are:  
A. oral literature and aural literature.  
B. written literature and oral literature.  
C. African literature and European literature.  
D. children's literature and adult literature.
3. Examples of oral literature are \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. folksongs, folktales, myths  
B. novels, short stories, riddles  
C. diaries, sonnets, drama  
D. legends, novella, prose
4. One important feature of oral literature is  
A. it is written.  
B. the authorship is generally known.  
C. it is not participatory.  
D. it is flexible in narration because it is told by word of mouth.
5. Which of these are types of poetry?  
A. Novella, farce, essay, dialogue  
B. Satire, article, letter, fable  
C. Lyric, ode, sonnet, ballad  
D. Allegory, verse, stanza, ballet
6. Some of the features that contribute to the beauty of a poem are  
A. message, length, diction.  
B. figures of speech, rhymes, melody.  
C. emotions, density, character.  
D. stanzas, lines, topic.
7. The privilege given to a poet to use words in a special way in order to produce a particular meaning or effects is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. poetic licence B. poetic privilege C. writing licence  
D. poetic permission
8. Which of these do you consider the most acceptable definition of poetry?  
A. A genre of literature that is short and dense.  
B. A type of literature in rhythmic form which may be oral or written expressing deep feelings on a subject matter.  
C. A rhythmic expression about love.  
D. A type of literature that follows no rules.
9. Which of these do you consider the most acceptable definition of drama?  
A. A type of literature that involves dancing and singing.  
B. A genre of literature that involves costumes.  
C. A form of literature where the audience participate.  
D. A form of literature acted on stage or a theatre.
10. Which of these is a major feature of drama?  
A. It is presented in dialogue form.

- B. It is presented in verse form.  
C. The actors must dress well.  
D. The actors must be very strong.
11. Fiction can be defined as  
A. writing without any control.  
B. a type of literature that has characters.  
C. a work of imagination that is mainly narrative in form.  
D. a genre of literature that does not involve imagination.
12. The three main examples of fiction are  
A. diary, prose, lecture.  
B. novel, novella, short story.  
C. long story, short story, sermon.  
D. biography, memoir, autobiography.
13. Examples of non-fictional prose include  
A. address, novel, drama.  
B. lecture, sermon, novella.  
C. short story, essay, seminar.  
D. memoir, biography, autobiography.
14. A book or story in which persons, objects and actions are used as symbols to express meanings outside the story itself is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. farce B. a burlesque C. an allegory D. a satire
15. “Man proposes, God disposes.”  
The above statement is an example of a literary device called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. antithesis B. contradiction C. antonym D. synonym
16. An author of plays is called a \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. writer B. playright C. playwright D. playwriter
17. In a tragedy, the chief character is usually referred to as the \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. tragic soul B. tragic player C. tragic hero D. chief hero
18. A drama which presents light atmosphere of laughter and ends happily is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. tragedy B. comedy C. tragic-comedy D. satire
19. The connection between drama and theatre is that  
A. drama finds life in the theatre where it is put on stage for an audience to see.  
B. drama involves a lot of action.  
C. a theatre has a stage.  
D. drama and theatre involve characters.
20. The inner musings of an actor is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. monologue B. soliloquy C. mutterings D. reflections
21. The conversation between actors on a stage is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. discussion B. chatting C. dialogue D. speech
22. When an actor is alone on stage talking to the audience he is engaged in a \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. dialogue B. discussion C. soliloquy D. monologue
23. The part of the play which shows that the knotty issues have all been resolved is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. denouement B. interlude C. climax D. scenery

24. The way a reader responds to and interprets a literary work is referred to as \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. literary response B. literature judgement  
C. literary appreciation D. literature interpretation
25. A person who appreciates and analyses a literary work is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. an appreciator B. a critic C. an interpreter  
D. an analyst
26. The overall content and issues being discussed in a literary work is known as the \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. theme B. summary C. synopsis D. subject matter
27. The message or lesson that a writer sets out to convey to the reader in a literary work is called the \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. theme B. subject matter C. style D. intention
28. The elements and techniques employed by a writer to compose a literary work constitute the writer's \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. idiolect B. style C. dialect D. grammar
29. The device which writers often use to recall what happened in the past is known as \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. flashback B. look back C. reference D. allusion
30. A novel in which the narrative is carried forward by letters written by one or more of the characters is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. a literary novel B. an epistolary novel  
C. a narrative novel D. a novella
31. A short essay, usually on a current topic and issued as a separate publication, is known as \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. booklet B. short story C. pamphlet D. leaflet
32. A concluding statement in a literary composition is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. prologue B. epilogue C. conclusion D. summary
33. When a writer deliberately makes a statement which is opposite in meaning to the message he actually wants to convey, he has used the literary device called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. irony B. exaggeration C. antithesis D. synthesis
34. A paradox is \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. a beautiful personality .  
B. a statement which is witty.  
C. a statement which appears self contradictory.  
D. a genre of literature.
35. In the statement: "I have only given my widow's mite", the speaker has used a literary device called \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. allusion B. understatement C. exaggeration  
D. irony
36. The prologue in a play appears \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. at the middle B. at the end C. before the end  
D. at the beginning
37. Literary work of any type usually involves \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. hard work B. imagination C. research D. honesty
38. A character in fiction or drama who stands directly opposed to the protagonist is known as \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. oppose B. antagoniser C. antagonist D. foiler

39. One important point to consider in narrative fiction is  
A. interest of the reader.  
B. the tense to be used.  
C. sequence of events.  
D. conclusion of the story.
40. While comparison is implied in the use of metaphor, it is \_\_\_\_\_ in the use of simile.  
A. direct B. simile C. clear D. unclear
41. A character who is well-developed by the writer in fiction or drama is called a \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. flat character B. rectangular character  
C. round character D. central character

### **Unseen Prose Passages**

#### **Passage 1**

Kike was puzzled with the incident in the bathroom but more at the utterances of her sister. She found it difficult to imagine how she could cause any problem for her sister by what had just happened. Just like her sister, Kike was tall, slender but unlike Biola she was slender in a healthy way. She was young, barely eighteen but tall and well developed for a young girl. Her smooth oval face with two large beautiful brown eyes and a determined yet aggressive chin gave her a penetrating look that many men found irresistible. With her large bust and marvellous mouth of pink full bodied lips, she cut a wonderfully attractive figure. So natural was her beauty that she didn't need any costumes for the fine outlines of her dark eyebrows and pink lips to be well revealed.

#### **Questions**

42. The above passage can be described as largely \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. narrative B. argumentative C. descriptive  
D. expository
43. From the above passage, why do you think Kike would constitute a problem for her sister?  
A. She was very beautiful.  
B. She was ill-mannered.  
C. She would add to the congestion in the house.  
D. She was overgrown.
44. "Just like her sister, Kike was tall ...." The figure of speech used in the above sentence is \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. metaphor B. simile C. exaggeration D. litote
45. The picture of Kike painted by the writer in the passage is that of  
A. a slender unattractive girl.  
B. a tall robust girl.  
C. an attractive irresistible girl.  
D. a girl with big lips and big bust.

#### **Passage 2**

The moment the four adults were accosted and arrested, they knew the game was up. Trying to hide behind a finger was thus out of the question. One by one, they started to talk, not out of duress, but with very little prompting.

The guard who manned the gate, the man who always had a gun, was transformed into little more than a woman once disarmed. He gave his name simply as Ibrahim, described himself as an ex-serviceman and insisted he was only doing what he was employed to do.

“Who employed you?” came the question from the police inspectors, and promptly came the response, “Chief Wale Sampson”.

“Who did you say employed you?”

“I say Chief Wale Sampson. Don’t you know him?”

46. “One by one, they started to talk, not out of duress, but with very little prompting”. A suitable synonym to replace ‘duress’ in the above sentence is \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. durex B. willingness C. desire D. force
47. “...the man who always had a gun, was transformed into little more than a woman once disarmed.” The figure of speech used in the above statement is a \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. metaphor B. simile C. irony D. paradox
48. “The police inspector and the two sergeants who were with him looked at the man, mouth agape.” Why did they look at the man ‘mouth agape’?  
A. They were yawning. B. They were surprised.  
C. They were resisting laughter. D. They were hungry.
49. From the facts in the passage, it would appear that Chief Sampson was a \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. businessman B. policeman C. criminal D. big man
50. “... they knew the game was up.” The expression ‘the game was up’ means that  
A. the arrested people had finished their game.  
B. the arrested people knew that they had eventually been found out in their crimes.  
C. their game had not finished.  
D. the people knew everything about the game.
51. Another word for ‘manned’ in the expression, ‘The guard who manned the gate ...’ is \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. managed B. worked C. kept D. watched

### Unseen Poem (I)

I went to the university  
where I wore three-piece suits  
and ate sumptuous dinner in mortar board  
the university  
where strange factories manufactured  
'rulers of tomorrow'  
the university  
where Europe's books smashed  
the gourdlets of my manhood  
and splashed the juiced in desert caves.

52. The above poem is an example of one with \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. rhymes B. alliteration C. assonance D. run on lines
53. The poet uses the device of \_\_\_\_\_ when he uses the expression ‘the university’ twice.

- A. emphasis B. enjambment C. repetition D. climax
54. We can describe the tone of the poet in the above poem as \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. ironical B. hilarious C. sober D. happy
55. In the expression “where Europe’s books smashed the gourdlets of my manhood,” there is an instance of the use of \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. hyperbole B. oxymoron C. personification D. simile
56. The use of ‘rulers of tomorrow’ is an instance of \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. assonance B. allusion C. symbolism D. elegy
57. How can you describe the attitude of the poet?  
A. Critical of university education  
B. Happy about university education  
C. Satisfied with the products of western education  
D. All of the above
58. The message of the poem seems to be  
A. university education has made the poet effeminate.  
B. university education produces the elite who oppress the people.  
C. university education is based on European culture.  
D. all of the above.

### **Unseen Poem (II)**

These eyes, these practiced eyes  
have seen buttocks bouncing  
to the rhythm of the road  
and virgin breast throbbing,  
throbbing with pounding pestles  
in a house of many yams

59. The expressions ‘buttocks bouncing’ and ‘pounding pestles’ are instances of \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. assonance    B. alliteration    C. consonance    D. rhyme
60. The word ‘throbbing’ occurs twice, each following the other. This is an instance of \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. repetition B. emphasis C. music D. imagery
61. One striking quality the above poem has is that it is \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. disjointed B. musical C. rhyming D. poetic