

CHAPTER 6 Review of Poetry

In Book One, the authors introduced poetry. This section is an overview. It is necessary to look at a few devices normally used in poetry. They include:

- **Poetic license:** This is the freedom of choice or the privilege which the poet enjoys to depart from the normal use of grammatical order in the way that his verse may meet the freedom to use language arbitrarily.
- **Narrative poems:** These are poems which tell stories or narrate an incidence. These stories could centre on heroic deeds; they are magical or supernatural, and they involve romantic adventures, etc. Poems under narrative form include: The Epic, Ballads, Tales and Romances.

The Epic: The epic is a long narrative poem which centres on the achievement of heroes, gods and demigods which is written in an elevated style. The subject matter of an epic is always on the adventures of a hero who is usually a prominent character in a legend of a particular nation, e.g. Sundiata - Mali.

Characteristics of Epic Poems

- (a) The hero of an epic must be a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depend on the fate of a tribe, e.g. the Anglo-Saxon epic “Beowulf”.
- (b) The success of the epic hero is the success of his nation or tribe.
- (c) An epic poem is usually set in vast scope, covering great nations or the universe.
- (d) The supernaturals such as gods, demons and angels show interest in the actions of the poems and from time to time intervene.
- (e) The style of the epic poem is always sustained by elevation and grand simplicity.
- (f) There is always the use of epic simile.

Romantic Poems: These poems deal with telling wild and usually adventurous stories. Usually, they are shorter than the epic and have a simpler action and lower style. A romantic poem also tells the stories of heroic actions of knights, e.g. Edmund Spenser’s “Faerie Queen”.

Descriptive Poems: These are types of poems that appeal to our imagination and emotions largely through our senses of sight and hearing. Most times, they contain features of narrative poems. Kinds of descriptive poems include: pastoral, idyll, eclogue.

- **Pastorals:** These belong to a group of descriptive poetry which idealize the life of a shepherd among the happy and rustic innocence of rural scenes, e.g. Marlowe’s “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” and Spenser’s “The Shepherd’s Calendar”.
- **Idyll:** This is a descriptive type of poem that is short and pictorial presenting a picture of a kind of idealized life on pastoral subjects, e.g. Lord Tennyson’s “Idylls of the King”.
- **Eclogue:** This is a kind of short pastoral poem with little action or characterization in which sentiments are expressed.

Lyric: This has been defined in Book One. The following are some characteristics of lyric:

- (a) It is one of the shortest forms of poetry.
- (b) The lyric expresses a single thought or mood.
- (c) The lyric is usually about love, betrayal, disappointment.
- (d) The lyric is musical in rhythm and sound.
- (e) The lyric is personal and reveals the poet's personal emotions.

Hymns and Psalms, sonnets, odes and even elegies are forms of lyrics. An example of a lyric poem is Kwesi Brew's "The Mesh"

We have come to the cross-roads
And I must either leave or come with you
I lingered over the choice
But in the darkness of my doubts
You lifted the lamp of love
And I saw in your face
The road that I should take.

Stanza: Poems are usually written in stanzas. Stanza is usually associated with poetry. They refer to the divisions of poetry. Prose is usually written in chapters while written plays are in acts and scenes. Poetry is written in stanzas.

Types of Stanzas

Monometer: This is a line stanza.

Couplet: This is a two-line stanza.

Quatrain: This is a four-line stanza.

Quintet: This refers to a five-line stanza.

Sestet: This is used for a six-line stanza.

Septet: This is for seven-line stanza.

Octave: This refers to an eight-line stanza.

This proves that it is only in the poetry genre that we find the use of stanzas.

Mood/Tone: At the moment of composition, the state of mind of the poet is reflected in the mood/tone of the poem. Mood/tone reflects the feelings of the poet which the reader can only feel through the words of the poem. The mood of a poem could be felt through the tone which we derive through the words of the poem. Moods of a poem could be sober, sympathetic, harsh or indifferent etc.

Rhythm: This refers to the flow of metrical movement between sound and events. It flows at the same time with sound, and by the use of a good rhythmic pattern, we achieve a song-like effect. It is said that "music" without rhythm is meaningless.

Rhyme: This is an agreement in sound on word-endings, usually at the end of poetry lines. Rhyme is where the final sound of words in a poem are similar.

Forms of Rhyme

1. **Masculine rhyme:** This is used for a rhyme of one stressed syllable, e.g. watch, march, catch.
2. **Feminine rhyme:** This is used for a two-syllable rhyme, e.g. lending/tending, lighting/fighting, housing/rousing.
3. **Alternate rhyme:** These are poetry lines that rhyme alternatively, e.g.
his blue shirt
blows in the wind
4. **Half rhyme:** This is used to refer to rhyme with similar consonants but different vowels, e.g. drunkard/conquered.

Enjambment: This is also known as run-on-lines. It occurs in poetry with the idea in a line running into another as a single line and may not complete the message until the next one, e.g.

What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us,
And become portions and
Parcels of the dreadful past.
“The Lotus-Earrest”—Tennyson

Atmosphere: This refers to the prevailing mood, feelings and thought of action of people in a story. The feelings that poems evoke in our hearts form the atmosphere of a work.

Didactic Poem: This is a kind of poem which seeks to teach or instruct people on issues of morality.

Syllable: This is a unit of sound in a poem. For instance, the word “to” is pronounced as a single unit of sound, so it has one syllable. On the other hand, the word ‘kindness’ has two syllable kind/less, while the word Biblical has three syllables bi/bli/cal.

Rhyme Royal: This consists of a stanza of seven iambic pentameter rhyming ab, ab, bbc.

Anthology: This is a collection of passages of poetry.

Dramatic Poetry: This is a type of poem that uses characters and symbols to represent the speech and action of human beings, e.g. “My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning.

Selected African Poems

“Fulani Creation Story”

“At the beginning, there was a huge drop of milk.
Then Doondari came and he created the stone.

Then the stone created iron;
And iron created fire;

And fire created water;
And water created air.

Then Doondari descended the second time,
And he took the five elements
And he shaped them into man.

But Man was proud.

Then Doondari created Blindness, and blindness defeated Man.
But when blindness became too proud,
Doondari created Sleep, and sleep defeated Blindness;
But when sleep became too proud,
Doondari created Worry, and worry defeated Sleep;
But when worry became too proud,
Doondari created Death, and death defeated Worry.

But when Death became too proud,
Doondari descended for the third time,
And he came as Gueno, the Eternal One,
and Gueno defeated Death.”

Essay Questions

1. Discuss four themes in the poem.
2. Comment on the significance of the two images used in the poem.
3. Discuss two major poetic devices used in the poem.

Answer to Essay Question 1

Four Themes in the Poem “Fulani Creation Story”

Theme: This is the bedrock of the writer’s focus. In the poem “Fulani Creation Story” there are lots of themes but our focus will be to treat just four of those themes.

1. **The theme of the fall of man:** God shows the love he has for men by giving him control over other things but man becomes proud. This pride leads him to rebellion whose consequences are sorrow, pain and death.
2. **The theme of salvation:** Despite man’s rebellious nature, God’s love for him is consistent. This is why He makes efforts to restore his friendship with man, thereby restoring man’s authority over the other creations in the world. The poet’s personal comment that Doondari came down the third time in form of the external one, who defeated death, is an evidence of the salvation of man from sin and death.
3. **The theme of greatness of the creator:** There is the greatness of the creator in this poem, this creator is so great that he can create as well as destroy any creation that he feels like. This great creator is like the potter, who can break the clay, melt it, as well as mould it into whatever shape he wants. This is seen in the fact that Doondari has the great authority to create the stone when he comes down first. He comes down the second time with authority and shapes the five elements into man. With this great power, he destroys or defeats death.

4. **The theme of rebellious attitude of man:** Man is given all the attention and love but man rebels when he becomes proud. This rebellion manifests in man's choice of selfishness and ingratitude which made him rebel against God who creates everything to suit man. In the third stanza of the poem, man rebels because he is proud.

Objective Questions

1. The poem "Fulani Creation" is a _____ form of poetry.
A. narrative B. ode C. lyrical D. dirge
2. In the poem "Fulani Creation", the subject matter is _____.
A. fire B. doondari C. creation D. man
3. The more dominant device in this poem is _____.
A. images B. personification C. fall of man
D. repetition
4. Two themes treated in this poem are _____ and _____.
A. sleep and proud of man B. rebellion and fall of man
C. milk and stone D. worry and blindness
5. In line 11 of the poem, the dominant poetic device is _____.
A. metaphor B. irony C. personification D. alliteration

"Expelled"

We had traded in the market competitively perfect
till you came in the boat, and polished goodwill approval from high order
all pepper differentials, denied flag-bearers.
and cut our ribs, dried our cows
the vaccine from the lake
burst the cowshed, the drought you brought
planted on the market place, the tree of memory

I had no safe locket to keep my records
when Sodom burnt, Gomorrah fell
the debtors' records blared
the creditors tapped my rusty door

My tears flowed to flooded streams
and sources the rivulets from my human lake
from my veins, my heart, my whole
disposition of the last penny
the last sight, of my fishing-net

Everyone avoids my path; I avoid death's too
Pursuit in a dark circus
the floating garden in a gale
plants reject sea water, the sea water rejects me

I have nothing to reject
The broken lines run across my face
The auctioneer will gong his hammer
For the goods left behind.

Essay Questions

1. Comment on the subject matter of the poem.
2. Discuss the language and style of the poem.
3. Comment on four themes in the poem.

Answer to Essay Question 2

The language and style of the poem ‘Expelled’ is very imaginative. Language use in poems is like “the palm oil with which the poet eats his yams”. The language in the poem appeals to the reader’s emotions and captures the attention of the reader through the use of imagery and symbols. His language is direct and clear to capture the feelings of the oppressed. His language is hard and later changed to anger and pity.

Style: The poet adopts a style that does not distance him from the oppressed. He adopts such a style that makes him a victim and a direct representative of his people. The poet adopts such a style that reflects the depressed feelings created by the oppression.

Objective Questions

6. The subject matter of the poem “Expelled” is _____.
A. tears B. Sodom and Gomorrah C. colonial justice
D. hunger
7. In the first stanza of the poem, what message does the poet convey?
A. A perfect order before the foreigners arrived
B. A sage society because of the foreigners’ arrival
C. Sodom and Gomorrah
D. Market
8. The second stanza of the poem gives a message of _____.
A. of Sodom B. of Gomorrah C. bad treatment
D. disorder
9. Line 2 of the second stanza used a poetic device known as _____.
A. metaphor B. simile C. irony D. allusion
10. The mood of this poem is _____.
A. happy B. angry C. depressed D. pity
11. The tone of the poem is _____.
A. harsh and calm B. doom and harsh
C. anger and laughter D. anger and pity
12. The dominant image used in the poem is that of _____.
A. commence B. industry C. land D. sea

Slowly he moves
To and fro, to and fro,
Then faster and faster
He swishes up and down

His blue shirt
Billows in the breeze
Like a tattered kite.

The world whirls by:
East becomes west
North turns to south
The four cardinal points
Meet in his head.

Mother!
Where did I come from?
When will I wear long trousers?
Why was my father jailed?

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the poem as a protest poem?
2. How effective is the poet's use of symbols and imagery?
3. How is poverty and suffering treated in the poem?

Answer to Essay to Question 1

The poem is a protest, in fact, a radical protest poem against the apartheid system in South Africa. Apartheid is a system of harsh and oppressive government where the white government discriminate and oppress the blacks. The poem "Boy on a Swing" is a reaction and protest to that racial policy in South Africa.

The poet presents his protest in two stages. At stage one, the South African society and people are innocent and can play on the swing before the uninvited invasions of the whites. At the second stage, the boy discovers as he becomes conscious of his environment that there is a missing part of his life. At the stage of innocence, South Africa is not aware of the dangers of oppressive rule.

The last stanza gives the real protest with the rhetorical questions:

Where did I come from?
When will I wear long trousers?
Why was by father jailed?

These are questions that come out of protest. For instance, "Where did I come from? When will I wear long trousers?" could have come out of discrimination, racial dehumanization and injustice.

"Why was my father jailed?" comes out of a young man who has matured to ask reasons why his father was jailed, which could be out of injustice and racial prejudice.

Objective Questions

13. In the poem “Boy on a Swing”, the subject matter is _____.
A. jail B. oppression C. idea D. stages in age
14. The expression ‘The four cardinal points meet on his head’ is an example of _____.
A. personification B. irony C. oxymoron D. hyperbole
15. The expression “He swishes up and down” is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. irony C. onomatopoeia
D. personification
16. What type of poem is “Boy on a Swing”?
A. Sonnet B. Lyric C. Ballad D. Epic
17. The poetic device used in the last stanza of the poem “Boy on a Swing” is _____.
A. enjambment B. oxymoron C. repetition
D. rhetorical question
18. “The world whirls by” is an example of _____.
A. personification B. metaphhor C. irony
D. oxymoron
19. “Where did I come from?” is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. irony C. alliteration
D. rhetorical question
20. “Like a tattered kite” is an example of _____.
A. assonance B. irony C. alliteration D. simile

“Ambassadors of Poverty”

Ambassadors of poverty are
The corrupt masters of the economy
With their head abroad
And anus at home
Patriots in reverse order
Determined merchants of loot
Who boost the economy of the colonial order
To impoverish brothers and sisters at home

Ambassadors of poverty are
The ‘saviours’ of the people
Office loafers in the guise of workers
Barons of incompetence
With kleptomaniac fingers
And suckling filaments
Position occupants and enemies of service
Locked in corrosive war of corruption
With their people’s treasury
And killing their future

Ambassadors of poverty are

The dubious sit-tight 'patriots'
Frustrating the corporate will of their followers
The beleaguered, hungry and famished
owners of the land
People, priced out of their conscience and power
Incapacitated by their destitution
Unable to withstand the temptation
Of crisp mind and food aroma

Ambassadors of poverty are
The political elite
In air conditioned chambers
And exotic cars
With tearful stories of rip-off
Tucked away from
their impoverished constituencies
Lying prostrate
With death traps for roads
Mud for water, candle for light
Underneath trees for schools
Rats for protein
Fasting as food
And alibi as governance
Ambassadors of poverty are
The rancorous elite
In battle for supremacy
For the control of power
And their people's wealth
Moving down their own
With white man's machine
Oiled by the prosperity of black patronage
Counterpoised by deprivations
As the corpses of their able bodied men
Women and children lie unmourned
In shallow graves
In their fallow farmlands
Long abandoned

Ambassadors of poverty are
The round of trippers,
The elusive importers
Of unseen goods and services
Sand inclusive

Who trip the economy down
By tricking Form M
For harvest of dollars as import
When their people see neither money nor food

Ambassadors of poverty are
The able-bodied men on the streets
Without motive, without vision, without mission
Men fit for the farms
But glued to the city
Hungry and desperate
Constituting willing tools in the hands
Of political overlords
For mission of vendetta
Against political foes
In their fight for power

Ambassadors of poverty are
Those whose actions and in-action
Reduce their people's expectations to nothingness
Those whose antecedents
Have lost the spark to inspire
While their people lie in surrender
Having been defeated by poverty

Ambassadors of poverty are
All of us whose in-actions
Steal our collective job
Because of what we should do
Which we never do
As we bargain away
Our conscience in the marketplace
Under the weight of poverty
To assuage our hunger
And our Master's will.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the style of the poem.
2. Comment on how the poem presents the problem of corruption in the society.
3. Discuss the theme of exploitation and embezzlement in the poem.

Answer to Essay Question 2

Class struggle has always been a problem of the society, from the classical era to the present generation. Men like Karl Marx had their views on this problem, which is the struggle between the have and the have-not or what he

called the upper class and the lower class.

In the poem, the corrupt men are presented as “Ambassadors of Poverty”, as those leaders who are only good at looting the resources of the masses. According to the poet, they are “The corrupt masters of the economy” who do not only divert their looted money to their local accounts, but also hoard it in foreign banks, and by so doing boosting the economy of the colonial and impoverishing their brothers and sisters at home (Lines 7-8).

The next class in the poem are those who seem to be “saviours” of the people, yet they are killers and destroyers of the commoners. They tend to proffer solution, while they are creating and compounding the problems. According to the poet, “They are barons of incompetence with kleptomaniac fingers”, which is their habit of stealing. They loot people, loot treasury and work in offices with ineffective output in their administration.

Another set is called the “dubious-sit tight patriots”. This refers to those who sit-tight in their positions in offices, and when they get to retirement age, they change their age. They are “presidents for life”; no one comes around but they and only they. They eat and eat what belongs to all. Others around them die of hunger.

Even in politics, there is corruption. The electorates are bought over to vote for the politicians.

People are priced out of their conscience and power.

Incapacitated by their destitution (Lines 24-25)

Offer of money lures the poor to vote into power these criminals.

The corruption extends to the political elite, those who sit in air conditioned offices and flashy cars. They embezzle funds mapped out for their state and constituency development while their towns suffer from bad roads, lack of power supply, unhealthy drinking water, no hospitals, no drugs, and workers salaries are not paid, etc. Due to their corrupt practices, the people are suffering from malnutrition which results from “fasting” (Line 40).

The next set are those who kill themselves with “white man’s machines” (guns) because of rancour and gluttony. They are in constant battle with other power-drunk miscreants, who want to control power and syphon people’s wealth; as a result, they end up killing themselves with “white man’s machines”.

Another set are those who the poet calls “round trippers” who travel outside the country for trade and bilateral relationship but their aim is to embezzle public funds in the pretext of travelling to negotiate for our betterment with other countries. As they come back, they claim to have imported some goods with their fake and forged “Form M” (Line 62).

The next set are those “able-bodied men on the street without motive, vision and mission”. These men could have been useful for farming but they are seen living in hunger and desperation in the town:

Men fit for the farms

But glued to the city

Hungry and desperate (Lines 68-70)

The bad situation, which is aggravated by evil leaders, causes them to become cheap tools of thuggery in the hands of political overlords. The expression “For mission of vendetta” denotes the murderous and wicked activity men carry out against their political opponents.

The other set are those who by their actions and in-actions reduce their people’s expectations to “nothingness”. These are the wicked leaders or politicians who shatter the hope and aspirations of the people, resulting from

their abuse of office and fake promises. These set find it easy to deceive and manipulate the commoners, who are already defeated by another powerful king called poverty (Line 82).

The last set are those who refuse to carry out their civic obligations (Lines 86-87). This is because under the weight of “poverty” men could find themselves doing what they should not, thereby betraying their conscience because of money and food.

Objective Questions

21. What is the tone of the poem “Ambassadors of Poverty”?
A. Happy B. Anger C. Weak D. Strength
22. What poetic device is used in the title of the poem?
A. Irony B. Metaphor C. Personification D. Assonance
23. The word “Patriots” in line 20 is an example of _____.
A. irony B. metaphor C. personification D. alliteration
24. The last 2 lines of stanza 3 is an example of _____.
A, metaphor B. personification C. enjambment
D. refrain
25. The expression “Who boost the economy of the colonial order” in line 7 is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. personification C. assonance
D. alliteration

“Myopia”

On rainy mornings
You will see them drenched
PEASANTS! Shivering in their emaciated bone
Along the boulevards of misery

- 5 The boulevards of this country
Are railway tracks in my heart?
A train of anguish runs on them
Rage corollary of hunger
The rice pads of his country
- 10 Are putrid marshlands in my soul
Tended by no magic fertilizer

- 15 Maintain if the wind blows tomorrow,
Make me a sabre of what wind,
If the skeletons of stillborn promises
Dry up in the catacombs
Make me the incendiary bomb
If madness we must have
Let me be the hangman hanging myself,
Hanging them, hanging the day

20 Not by its neck, not by its belly
 But by its heart seen in its great betrayal

Essay Questions

1. Discuss how effective the poem reflects the social conditions of the poor masses.
2. Comment on the misery of poor masses.
3. Comment on the language use and style of the poem.

Answer to Essay Question 2

The misery of the poor masses is presented in the poem in various ways. In fact, the essence of the poem is the plight of the poor masses. The first three lines of the poem expose the reader to the wretched state of the masses; because of the lack of good governance, the peasants are left drenched and shivering. Millions of the poor die as a result of low living standard which is common in most African states.

The reason for this poverty is not the lack of human and material resources, but the wickedness which centres on bad governance.

The rainy mornings,
You will see them drenched

They are either without shelter or they have gone to look for food; after all, they say “no food for lazy man”.

They are shivering not just in the body but in their emaciated bone. Their bones are emaciated because of suffering. The poor in this poem are presented as “rage corollary of hunger” (Line 8).

Objective Questions

26. What type of poem is “myopia”?
A. Sonnet B. Lyric C. Epic D. Ode
27. The expression “the boulevard of misery” is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. irony C. allusion D. paradox
28. The expression “the boulevards of this country are railway tracks” is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. irony C. allusion D. paradox
29. Let me be the hangman hanging myself, hanging them, hanging the day. This is an example of _____.
A. alliteration B. irony C. pun D. paradox
30. ‘If the skeletons of stillborn promises dry up in the catacombs’. This is an example of _____.
A. allusion B. enjambment C. pun D. alliteration

“Homeless, not Hopeless”

We are the natives of the street
Holed-up under bridges
We are necessary
We are part of your existence
Major fragments of the globe

As the day chameleons to night
 You slump in the warmth of your beds
 And the heat of loved ones
 We also embrace the cozy
 10 Cardboard beds laid on stinks
 As the night injects us with cool breeze
 And endurance
 We sleep and dream
 And have conferences with
 15 The indigenes of the elusive world
 When it's day, in bundle
 We pack our belongings
 And move on with our days
 Standing, kneeling and bending
 20 To beg for alms just for the day
 Necessary part of your society
 Translators of your dreams
 Carriers of your burdens
 Angles, we open gates
 25 Of your blessings
 We are the lack
 That take you lack
 We are homeless, not hopeless
 This makes rite at hereafter
 30 When death opens the gate
 To the second phase.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the theme of hope and contentment in the poem.
2. Comment on four poetic devices used in the poem.
3. Comment on the uses of symbols in the poem.

Answer to Essay Question 1

The theme of hope and contentment in the poem "Homeless, not Hopeless" comes from the title of the poem. The poet emphasises the worth and plight of the downtrodden in the society. He raises a philosophical statement that poor people die without honour yet they are so important in the society that the rich can easily depend on them for their blessing. They are poor but not poor beggars. They are a source of blessing to the rich in the society.

They are poor yet they are role models in the sense that they appreciate and value the little they have, part of which is life. While the rich normally live an unsatisfactory life, even with all that they have acquired, the poor are always happy and satisfied with their little.

This gives a sense of hope and contentment in the life of the poor.

Objective Questions

31. What is the tone of the poem?
A. Harsh and angry B. Apologetic C. Romantic
D. Dialogue
32. According to the poem, the poet's relationship with the homeless is that he is _____.
A. their friend B. one of them C. their teacher
D. a sympathizer
33. "We are the natives of the street" is an example of _____.
A. irony B. allusion C. metaphor D. simile
34. "When death opens the gate" is an example of _____.
A. irony B. allusion C. personification D. metaphor
35. "We embrace the cozy cardboard bed laid on stinks." This is an example of _____.
A. irony B. metaphor C. enjambment D. allusion

"Agbor Dancer"

See how caught in the throb of a drum
Tippling from hide-brimmed stem
Down lineal veins to ancestral core
Opening out in her supple tan
Limbs like fresh foliage in the sun.

See how entangled in the magic
Maze of music
In trance she trades the intricate
Pattern rippling crest after crest
To meet the green clouds of the forest.

Tremulous beats wake trenchant
In the heart descant
Tingling quick to her finger tips
And toes virginal habits long
Too atrophied from pen or tongue.

Could I, early sequestered from my tribe
Free a lead-tethr'd scribe
I should answer her communal call
Lose myself in her warm caress
Intervolving earth, sky and flesh.

Essay Questions

1. In what ways does the poem celebrate the African culture?
2. Comment on the quest for identity in the poem.
3. Discuss four poetic devices.

Answer to Essay Question 3

The poetic devices used in the poem “Agbor Dancer” are many. Here, our concern will be to discuss just four of these devices. They are as follows:

- (i) **Repetition:** This is a poetic device used in poems for emphasis. In the first lines of the first two stanzas, the word “see” is repeated to provoke a sense of discovery and appreciation in the poem. It also adds beauty and aesthetic values in the poem.
- (ii) **Rhetorical question:** This is a poetic device in a poem where the poet asks some questions without expecting a direct answer. It is used to add beauty, colour and aesthetic values to a poet’s creative enterprise. In the poem “Agbor Dancer”, a rhetorical question is seen when the poet asked “Could I, early sequester’d from my tribe ... freed a lead – tether’d scribe”.
- (iii) **Simile:** This is a poetic device, which is used in comparing two things in a direct manner using the comparing elements such as *like, as, as if, as though*, etc. In the last line of stanza one, we see the use of simile “limbs like fresh foliage in the sun” which the poet uses to compare her value for African culture with fresh foliage in the sun.
- (iv) **Personification:** This is another poetic device used in comparing. In personification, non-human or inanimate beings are compared by giving them the attributes or qualities of a human being.

In line I, stanza 3:

“Tremulous beats wake trenchant ...”

All these devices are used in the poem “Agbor Dance” to add beauty to a poetic work of art.

Objective Questions

- 36. The metaphor “Agbor dancer” represents _____.
A. music B. Africa C. drums D. the poet
- 37. What type of stanza is used in the poem?
A. Monometer B. Couplet C. Sestet D. Quintet
- 38. “Limbs like fresh foliage in the sun” is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. simile C. personification D. hyperbole
- 39. The first and last two lines of each stanza in the poem could be called _____.
A. dirge B. couplet C. code D. enjambment
- 40. “Agbor dancer” is what kind of poem?
A. Lyric B. Sonnet C. Dirge D. Romance

Selected Non African Poems

“DAFFODILS”

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills
When all at once I saw a crowd.
A host of golden daffodils;

- 5 Besides the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine

And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretch'd in never- ending line

10 Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their hair in sprightly dance.
The waves besides them danced; but they
Out - did the sparking waves in glee:

15 A poet could not but gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed and gazed but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft, when on my couch I lie

20 In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Essay Questions

1. Comment on the subject matter of the poem.
2. Comment on the effectiveness of the use of language in “Daffodils”.
3. Explain the significance of techniques used in the poem.

Answer to Essay Question 2

Language is a very significant device in poetry. The ability to comprehend any poem depends on the language. The language of “Daffodils” is simple and narrative. The poet uses the first person singular pronoun “I”. It is as if he is telling a story, for example:

“I wander’d lonely as a cloud”
“When all at once I saw a crowd”
“Ten thousand saw I at a glance”
“I gaze - gazed ...”

These quotations show a simple narration of what happens and how it happens. The poet also uses contracted forms to enhance the rhythmic flow of diction. These include ‘wonder’d’, ‘ov’r’, ‘stretch’d’.

One significant thing that improves the effectiveness of the language is the predominance of end rhymes. The first stanza is graphically illustrated in the following way:

[Line 1]	cloud
[Line 2]	hills
[Line 3]	crowd
[Line 4]	daffodils

[Line 5] trees
[Line 6] breeze

This shows that lines one and three rhyme, two and four rhyme, while five and six form a rhyming couplet. This pattern is sustained in the rest of the stanzas. The aesthetic value of the poem comes from the simplicity of the diction and the musical rhyming.

Objective Questions

1. "I wandered lonely as a cloud" is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. simile C. irony D. personification
2. "Besides the Jake, beneath the trees." This device is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. personification C. alliteration D. assonance
3. "Fluttering and dancing in the breezes" is an example of _____.
A. alliteration B. assonance C. personification D. irony
4. In line 11 of the poem, what poetic device is used?
A. Alliteration B. Assonance C. Metaphor
D. Personification
5. "The waves besides them danced, but they." What device is used in this expression?
A. Oxymoron B. Personification C. Metaphor
D. Irony

"STRANGE MEETING" – WILFRED OWEN

- It seemed that out of the battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which Titanic wars had groined
Yet also there encumbered sleeper groaned,
- 5 Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes
Lifting distressful hands as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall;
- 10 With a thousand fears that vision's face was grained;
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground.
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
"Strange friend," I said. Here is no cause to mourn.
"None," said the other, save the undone years,
- 15 The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
But mocks the steady running of the hour,
- 20 And if it grieves, grieves richer than here,

For by my glee might many men have laughed?
And of my weeping something has been left,
Which must die now, I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the war distilled,

25 Now men will go content with what we spoiled,
Or, discontent, boil blood, and be spilled,
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress,
Courage was mine, and I had mystery;

30 Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery;
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,

35 Even with truths that lie too deep for taint,
I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war,
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were,
I am the enemy you killed, my friend,

40 I knew you in this dark; for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold
Let us sleep now...

Essay Questions

1. How is the theme of war treated in the poem?
2. Examine the effectiveness of the poetic devices used in the poem.
3. Discuss the language used in the poem.

Answer to Essay Question 2

Many poetic devices are used in the poem “Strange Meeting” to give maximum effect. Among these devices is personification. This can be found in the following:

... Nations trek from progress,
The pity war distilled
The steady running of the hour

The above lines are good examples of personification used in the poem.

There is also the use of hyperbole which comes with the tone that is heightened with some exaggerated statements such as: “By his dead smile, I knew we stood in hell”. “... with a thousand pain ...”. All these illustrate the use of hyperbole in the poem.

Another device is the use of alliteration. This provides music and rhythm in the poem. The consonant sound “s” is repeated in the following: since scooped; the sound “b” is repeated in be/bestirred; “t” is repeated in the truths; with what we for “w”, all these and more are used to provide rhythm or sounds in the poem.

There is also enjambment, which accounts for the systematic flow of ideas in a poem. Such effective manipulation of words with similar sounds creates sound effects at the end of each line which achieve near rhyme situation, such as “escaped/scooped”, “groined/groaned”, “bestirred/states”, “eyes/bless”, “hall/hell” etc. All these create sound and rhythm in the poem.

Objective Questions

6. “And if it grieves, grieves richlier than have.” The device used here is _____.
A. repetition B. assonance C. alliteration D. irony
7. “With a thousand pain fears that vision’s...” is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. hyperbole C. irony D. oxymoron
8. “I am the enemy you killed, my friend” is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. personification C. paradox
D. oxymoron
9. “They will be swift with swiftness of the” is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. irony C. paradox D. hyperbole
10. “And no guns thumped” is an example of _____.
A. paradox B. metaphor C. onomatopoeia
D. irony

“UPON AN HONEST MAN’S FORTUNE”

You that can look through Heav’n and tell the star,
Observe their kind conjunctions, and their wars;
Find out new lights and give them where you please,
To those men honours, pleasures, to those ease;

- 5 You that are God surveyors, and can shew
How far, and when, and why the wind doth blow;
Know all the charges of the dreadful thunder,
And when it will shoot over, or fall under;
Tell me, by all your art I conjure ye,
- 10 Yes, and by truth, what shall become of me
Find out my star, if each one as you say,
Have this peculiar angel, and his way
Observe my fate, next fall into your dreams,
Sweep clean your houses, and new-line your schemes,

15 Then say your worst! Or have I none at all?
Or is it burnt out lately? Or did fall?
Or am I poor?-Not able, no full flame?
My star, like me, unworthy of a name?
Is it, your art can only work on those

20 That deal with dangers, dignities, and cloches?
With love, or new opinions? You all lie!
A fish-wife hath a fate, and so have I:
But far above your finding! He that gives,
Out of his providence, to all that lives,

25 And no man knows his treasure, no, not you!
He that made Egypt blind, from whence you grew
Scabby and lousy that the world might see
Your calculations are as blind as ye;
He that made all the stars you daily read,

30 And from thence filch a knowledge how to feel.
Hath hid this from you; your conjectures all
Are drunken things, not how, but when they fall:
Man is his own star, and the soul that can
Render an honest and a perfect man,

35 Commands all lights, all influence, all fate;
Nothing to him falls early, or too late.
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still;
And when the stars are labouring, we believe

40 It is not that they govern, but they grieve
For stubborn ignorance; all things that are
Made for our general uses, are at war.
E'en we among ourselves; and from the strife,
Your first unlike opinions got a life.

45 Oh, man! Thou image of thy Maker's good,
What canst thou built fear, when breath'd into thy blood
His spirit is, that built thee? What dull sense
Makes thee suspect, in need, that providence
Who made the morning who place dup the night

50 Guide to thy labours; who call'd up the night,
And bid her fall upon thee like sweet showers

In hollow murmurs, to lull up the powers;
Who gave thee knowledge, who so trusted thee,
To let thee grow so near himself, the tree;

55 Must he then be distrusted? Shall his frame
Discourse with him, why thus and thus I am?
He made the angels thine, they fellows all,
Nay even thy servants, when devotions call.
Oh, canst thou be so stupid then, so dim,

60 To seek a saving influence, and lose him?
Can stars protect thee? Or can poverty
Which is the light to Heav'n put out his eyes
He is my star, in him all truth I find,
All influence, all fate! And when my mind

65 Is furnish'd with his fullness, my poor story
Shall out-line all their age all their glory!
The hand of danger cannot fall amiss,
When I know what, and in whose power it is:
A holy hermit is a mind alone,

70 Doth not experience teach us, all we can,
To work ourselves into a glorious man?
The matter spent, and then the fool's fire dies!
Were I in love and could that bright star bring
Increase to wealth, honour and everything;

75 Were she as perfect good as we can aim,
The first was so, and yet she lost the game
My mistress, then, be knowledge and fair truth!
So I enjoy all beauty and all youth.
And though to time her lights and laws she lends;

80 She knows no age that to corruption bends:
Friend's promises may lead me to believe,
But he that is his own friend knows to live;
Afflictions, when I know it is but this,
A deep allay, whereby man tougher is

85 To bear the hammer, and the deeper still
We will arise more image of his will:
Sickness, an humorous cloud 'twist us and light
And death, at longest, but another night!

Man is his own star, and that soul that can

90 Be honest, is the only perfect man.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the theme of supremacy in the poem.
2. Comment on the tone and mood of the poet in the poem.
3. Discuss how effective is the use of the poetic devices used in the poem.

Answer to Essay Question 1

The beginning of the poem x-rays doubt and aspersion on the self acclaimed star reader. He is not convinced that any man has got the power to look through heaven and tell the star. This is why he says:

You that can look through Heav'n and tell the star,
...Find out new lights and give them where you please,
You that are God surveyors ...
Tell me, by all your art I conjure ye,
Yes, and by truth, what shall become of me?

He wants to know what his own star holds for him, and what peculiar angel assigned to take charge of his fate is up to. He wants to know if he is destined to be poor or if his star like him is unworthy and without a name. But he insists that beyond all these games of change and error reigns the supremacy of God, he affirms:

But far above your finding! He that gives,
Out of his providence, to all that lives,
... He that made all the stars you daily read,
... Hath hid this from you; your conjectures all

He affirms his belief in the supremacy of God, saying:

“Oh, man! Thou image of thy Maker's good,
... when breath'd into thy blood
His spirit is, that built thee? What dull sense

He wonders what man will gain, chasing after shadows and losing his soul: “Oh, canst thou be so stupid then ... to seek a saving influence, and lose him? Can stars protect thee?” For the poet all, truth, influence and fate are form or such the stars do not govern man. The divine providence of God rules over the affairs of men.

Objective Questions

11. The expression “To those men honours, pleasures to those ease, what poetic device is used here?
A. Assonance B. Metaphor C. Alliteration D. Irony
12. “Commands all lights, all influence, all fate” is an example of _____.
A. repetition B. metaphor C. irony D. oxymoron
13. “Oh, man! Thou image of thy maker's good” is an example of _____.
A. apostrophe B. metaphor C. allusion D. irony
14. “He that made Egypt blind” is an example of _____.
A. allusion B. metaphor C. imagery D. irony
15. “Can stars protect thee” is an example of _____.

A. metaphor

B. repetition

C. rhetorical question

D. climax

“THE SOUL’S ERRAND”

Go, soul the body's guest,
Upon a thankless arrant;
Fear not to touch the best;
The truth shall be thy warrant:

5 Go, since I need must die,
And give the world the He.
Go, tell the Court it glows
And shines like rotten wood;
Go, tell the church it shows.

10 What's good, and doth no good;
If church and court reply,
Then give them both the lie.
Tell potentates they live
Acting by others' actions.

15 Not loved unless they give,
Not strong but by their factions:
If potentates reply,
Give potentates the lie.
Tell men of high condition.

20 That rule affairs of state,
Their purpose is ambition,
Their practice only hates;
And if they once reply,
Then give them all the lie.

25 Tell zeal, it lacks devotion;
Tell love, it is but lust;
Tell Time, it is but motion;
Tell Flesh, it is but dust;
And wish them not reply.

30 For thou must give the lie.
Tell Age, it daily wasteth;
Tell Honour, how it alters;
Tell Beauty, how she blasteth;
Tell Favour, how she falters.

35 And, as they shall reply,

Give each of them the lie.
Tell Fortune of her blindness;
Tell Nature of decay;
Tell Friendship of unkindness;

40 Tell Justice of delay;
And if they dare reply,
Then give them all the lie.
And when thou hast, as I
Commanded thee, done blabbing.

45 Although to give the lie
Deserves no less than stabbing,
Yet, stab thee, who will,
No stab the soul can kill.
“When I am dead,

50 Let not the day be writ,”
Nor bell be tolled;
“Love will remember it”
When hate is cold.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss how effective the poet used poetic devices.
2. What is the thematic pre-occupation in the poem?
3. How are the issues of deception, truth, conscience presented in the poem.

Answer to Essay Question 2

“The Soul’s Errand” has its thematic pre-occupation as the emptiness or nothingness of life. The poem is an address to the soul which is on a quest. The soul is the guest of the human body. The human body can be overtaken by death and decay, and the soul will one day roam freely. The first stanza of the poem is a delegation of duty, the soul is giving the responsibility. Whatever is done well or badly is determined by conscience or the soul. Thus, it is only the soul that rightly delivers the message. The soul is giving the responsibility of going into the world and telling everyone where they have erred.

The count glows but it is rotten wood. The church does not practice the virtues they preach daily. Every facet of human existence needs to be told of what they should do. Not only are the institutes in need of change, the disciplines, law, physics, arts and even the schools have all their peculiar problems. Love is lust, honour is altered daily while age is daily being dissipated for nothing.

There is neither truth nor justice, vice is preferred over virtue, and faith has taken a leave. All these show that life is vanity and nothing. The soul themselves should go and point out all these shortcoming to man.

Objective Questions

16. What poetic device did the poet used in line I of the poem?

- A. Simile B. Irony C. Assonance D. Metaphor
17. "Go tell the court it glows" is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. assonance C. alliteration
D. personification
18. "Love is lust" is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. irony C. personification D. hyperbole
19. "Tell friendship of unkindness" is an example of _____.
A. hyperbole B. irony C. oxymoron D. allusion
20. "And shines like rotten wood" is an example of _____.
A. euphemism B. hyperbole C. paradox D. oxymoron

"THE SUN RISING"

- Busy old fool, unruly sun
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lover's seasons run?
- 5 Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late schoolboys and sour prentices,
Go tell court huntsmen that the king will ride
Call country ants to harvest offices;
Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
10 Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.
Thy beams, so reverend and strong
Why shouldst thou think?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I will not lose her sight so long;
- 15 If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou rest them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
20 And thou shalt hear, all here in one bed lay.
She is all states and all princes I,
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compared to this,
All honors' mimic, all wealth alchemy.
- 25 Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus;
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
30 This bed thy center is, these walls thy sphere.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss how effective the poet has used language.
2. Comment on the poetic devices used in the poem.
3. Discuss the thematic pre-occupation of the poem.

Answer to Essay Question 1

Tell me a metaphysical poet and I will tell you about John Donne. His language even the one in “The Sun Rising” is always engulfed with symbolism and metaphor. In the poem, he uses the old English expression which makes his diction and language difficult to understand. The complexity of the language derives from the use of symbols and imagination. The title “sun” is a symbol of light, energy and life. The sun can be adverse to life as it is to the covers in the poem. He says:

Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, all here in one bed lay.

[Lines 19-20]

These lines symbolise the demise of kings. Again, “bed” is a symbol of a resting place and since the sun shines on the bed, the ‘bed’ here represents the world on which the sun shines.

The imagery of the sun, the kings, the ants and the sun passing through the windows and curtains can be visualised. The poem takes the form of monologue, an address to the sun as if it is animate, questioning its influence and its grandeur. The language is embellished with provoking imagery, while bringing to the fore a philosophical representation of the sun. With these beautiful rhythmical patterns, the poetic language becomes rhythmical and musical.

Objective Questions

21. “No motion has she now, no force” is an example of _____.
A. alliteration B. personification C. metaphor D. assonance
22. “A slumber did my spirit seal” is an example of
A. assonance B. metaphor C. personification
D. alliteration
23. The word “force” in the poem is an example of _____.
A. rhyme scheme B. imagery C. subject matter
D. personification
24. The poem suggests _____.
A. death is inevitable B. human fears C. rock and stones
D. return to nature
25. The rhyme scheme of the poem is _____.
A. abab, cdcd B. abcd, cdcd C. abcc, ddcc
D. abab, ccde

“The Negro Speaks of Rivers”

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world

and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I 've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I 've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Essay Questions

1. Comment on four poetic devices used.
2. Discuss how irony is used in the poem.
3. Comment on the significance of style of the poet.

Answer to Essay Question 2

Irony as a poetic device in the poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” could be seen in the title of the poem. The word “Negro” is a derogatory named used to abuse the blacks and Africans in America. In this poem, “Negro” is used with a sense of pride, which is the direct opposite of what it means. The poet personal speaks proudly about the history of the Negro people which presents a sense of pride and dignity.

Objective Questions

26. What is the tone of the poem ‘The Negro Speaks of Rivers’?
A. Peace B. Angry C. Disappointed D. Longing
27. “I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln...” is an example of _____.
A. metaphor B. allusion C. assonance D. irony
28. What does the symbol “river” signify in the poem?
A. Africa B. Source of life C. Source of wealth
D. Source of power