

CHAPTER 5 Review of Prose

Prose is a type of writing that is not in form of stanza or dialogue. Stanza belongs to poetry while dialogue belongs to drama. Prose is written in sentences, paragraphs and chapters. Out of the three branches or genres of Literature, prose is the commonest form. It is the most useful of the three branches of Literature because everyone can write and understand prose. It is used in everyday communication, business and academics. It would be very difficult if examinations, newspapers and other forms of communication are done in verses and stanzas.

Prose has been treated in Books One and Two. Let us revise some topics. We have fictional and non-fictional works. Fiction involves novels, novellas, pamphlets and short stories, fables, fairy tales and others. Non-fiction includes true life experiences like biography, autobiography, memoir and journal.

Let us quickly discuss and revise the following important topics in prose.

Types of Novels

The types of novels keep on increasing. Remember that the novel is described as a long narrative about imaginary characters and their actions. The characters and their actions are made to look *like real life situations*. The length of the novel is placed at 25,000 words and above. Examples of the novel are **Things Fall Apart** by Chinua Achebe, **The Interpreters** by Wole Soyinka, **A Woman in Her Prime** by Samuel Asare Konadu and numerous others.

1. **The social novel:** This type deals with the social and economic conditions of an area and how they affect events and characters. The social novel recommends politicians and social reforms.
2. **Historical novel:** This is a realistic novel that makes use of actual events and people from history to add interest to the story.
3. **The regional novel:** It emphasises the custom and way of life of a locality. It discusses the conditions affecting the character's feeling, behaviour and thinking.
4. **Novel of character:** It is called the psychological novel. It follows the development of the protagonist and his motives for action.
5. **Epistolary novel:** It is written in form of a letter. It is made up of one long letter or a collection of letters.

Other types of novels include:

- **The detective novel:** This deals with the investigation and solution of criminal cases by popular detectives.
- **Romance:** It tells long, exciting and passionate stories of love.
- **Thriller:** This is a novel that emphasises danger and excitement. Young people love it.
- **Didactic novel:** Another name for this is education novel. Its main aim is to teach moral lessons.

Characters and characterization

Characterization is the writer's presentation of characters in a work of art. Characters are agents of action and events in prose. They are the persons or animals or objects represented in the narrative or story. The characters

interact with one another while playing their different roles. There are different types of characters. Some characters play more important roles than others.

Types of Character

- **Round Character:** This is a fully drawn character. He is capable of change and can surprise the reader. He is complex. The round character often carries or shows the central theme of the work.
- **Flat Character:** It is also called the simple character. The flat character is not fully developed. He remains the same throughout the story.
- **Major Character:** The story revolves around him. Some stories have more than one major character. We regard as major characters all those that act important parts and contribute to the development of the story.
- **Minor Character:** He plays a minor role and contributes very little to the development of the play.
- **Dynamic Character:** He undergoes changes through experiences he gathers in the course of the story.
- **Static Character:** He experiences little or no changes.
- **Protagonist or Central Character:** He is also called the hero or heroine. He is the protagonist of the story. The story revolves around him.
- **Antagonist:** He opposes the protagonist and plots against him.
- **Comic or Humorous Character:** The writer uses him to cause laughter. He is sometimes called a clown.

Let us also look at how to do other prose exercises and assignments that we may come across in our studies. There are some questions that test our ability to handle context questions and unseen prose and poetry questions. These questions are set to test our comprehension or understanding of given passages. We give answer to such questions in prose form.

When you are given a passage to answer questions on, you should take the following steps:

1. Read the passage carefully many times to understand what it is really about.
2. Do not panic if you do not understand the passage at first.
3. Take a closer look or do another reading of the passage to get more details.
4. Do not worry about unfamiliar words. Their meanings will come as you start understanding the passage better.
5. Know what each paragraph is all about.
6. Attempt answering the questions on the passage.
7. Start with questions you know the answers to.
8. Go back to the questions you found difficult at first.
9. Never leave any question unanswered. The answer you think is wrong might actually be very correct.

Passage 1

Now read the following passage carefully and answer the questions on it.

“Speak, Moni-Mambou. Everything you ask will be granted,” the king said.

“I am asking you for two things, Majesty. First, that you free all the prisoners condemned for disobedience and for not paying taxes. Second, that you swear never again to torture your people as you have after this last robbery at the palace.”

The king stared at me, first in anger, then in surprise. He wondered why I had dared to speak to him in such a way. After a moment, he said, "You are really courageous, Moni-Mambou. Indeed, you have in you a kind of blessing from God. I will do as you wish."

The listeners cheered frantically and sang out my name I blushed. Then looking at the crowd I said, "You all heard the king promising to grant what I requested. If after I am gone he goes back on his promise, come and find me wherever I am. I will remind him of his promises."

They cheered again. The king, to prove that he would remain true to his word, had the prison opened. All the prisoners were freed.

Essay Questions

1. What is the name of the speaker in this passage?
2. Replace the word majesty with another suitable expression or word.
3. What two offences did the prisoners commit?
4. Mention the thing the king swore never to do again.
5. What was the king's reaction to the demands?
6. What was the speaker's reaction to cheers from the listeners?
7. What does the speaker's demand show about the king?
8. What will make the speaker come back to the king?
9. How many times did the listeners cheer the speaker?
10. "You are really courageous, Moni-Mambou. Indeed you have in you a kind of blessing from God. I will do as you wish." Repeat this speech in one single sentence.

Passage 2

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow it.

Five hundred years ago, voyages were very dangerous. People from Europe had no maps and did not know where the rocks and dangerous places were or where to get water. Fresh food soon went bad and sailors had to live on dried fish, very old bread and salted meat. Many sailors died or were drowned in storms. They were greatly afraid. Some of them thought the world was flat. They believed that if they sailed far, they would come to the edge and sail into a great hole full of rocks and waves. Many sailors thought they would come to seas of fire and boiling water of black skies and all kinds of evil things.

Around 1460, they traded with the Africans who lived in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. The Portuguese sold them cloth, glass and brass rings and chains. The Africans used gold, ivory and prisoners to pay for these goods. These prisoners had been taken in wars. They were taken to Portugal and sold as slaves. Today, this might seem wrong to us but in the olden days, the Europeans thought it was kind to take slaves to Europe.

Essay Questions

Give two reasons why voyages were dangerous about 500 years ago.

What two things were eaten by sailors?

What happened to many sailors?

Give another word to take the place of 'voyages' in line 1.

What did the sailors think might happen to them?

In what part of Africa are Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone?

From what country were the European sailors?

What did these sailors bring to Africa?

What did they take away from Africa?

What is a man from Portugal called?

Passage 3

My homeland was in the Congo Kingdom in Mpemba province, near the mouth of the big river we called *nzadi*.

In Mpemba province, the laws have to be strictly obeyed. I'll just quote you some to give you an idea.

It was strictly forbidden for a young man while still unmarried to look at a woman unless she was a relative. So the women had to run and hide when the men came near. It was forbidden to tell lies or spread rumours. The property of others were sacred. A man who stole something would have his right hand cut off or would die a ghastly death, depending on the gravity of his crime. Disrespect for the elders was a very grave fault and a person who rebelled against parental authority ran the risk of imprisonment or of being sold as a slave. So there you are! Criminals were often put to death. They were buried sometimes alive at the site of a big market far from the towns and villages.

You may interpret these laws as you wish, but I can tell you that one of them got me condemned to prison for life. I had simply disobeyed my uncle who after my father's death became by guardian. I refused to accept a handicapped girl for my wife. My uncle according to custom had gone to a nearby village to choose a girl for me to marry. My fiancée however had only one eye so I didn't want to go near her.

My uncle was very angry. First he beat me, then he brought me before the Elder's court where I had to explain my rebellion. The trial lasted a whole day but I persisted in my refusal. You should have heard the indignation of the judges. Their verdict was swift: 'prison for life'.

Essay Questions

1. Where is the writer's country?
2. The laws mentioned in this passage could be customary laws or statutory laws. Which one do you think they are?
3. What was the punishment for disrespecting the Elders or rebelling against parental authority?
4. Which of the offences attracts death?
5. Why did the writer go to prison?
6. Where did the uncle get the girl for him to marry?
7. Why did the writer reject the girl?
8. How did the writer's uncle react to this rejection?
9. How long did the trial last?
10. What was the verdict of the judges?

Let us revise some of the novels (prose texts) we studied in Book One and Book Two.

Review of *A Woman in Her Prime* by Samuel Asare Konadu

Pokuwaa enjoys a happy childhood and eventually marries her childhood friend, Kofi Daafu. The marriage is childless and she has to divorce him. She marries a second time to Kwaku Fosu and does not get a child again. She divorces him too. Her third husband, Kwadwo Fordwo, already has a wife and children. At first, Pokuwaa thinks she is pregnant, she later has a miscarriage. This leads to series of sacrifices and fetish worship in search of a baby.

After a long time without success, she decides to stop taking treatment. Ironically, that is when she discovers that she is pregnant.

Essay Questions

1. Give the full name of the author of *A Woman in Her Prime*.
2. In what country was he born?
3. What is the setting of the book? Discuss this in term of place and time.
4. Discuss two themes of *A Woman in Her Prime*.
5. Discuss the effects of childlessness on a woman according to *A Woman in Her Prime*.
6. What part did Pokuwaa's mother play in her daughter's search for a baby?
7. Discuss the effect of childlessness on the men, using Pokuwaa's three husbands for illustration.
8. The people of Brenhoma are superstitious. Give two reasons to support or disagree with this statement.
9. In the traditional community, what affects one person affects the others. Illustrate this saying with two examples from the novel.
10. Recount the story of the confusion caused by the son of a chief priest.

Objective Questions

You are not an unforgiving God,

God of our forefathers.

Your assistance is not temporary

You are almighty

Let all evil men fall before you

1. Who is making this prayer?
A. Koramoa B. Pokuwaa C. Disemi D. Maame
2. On what day of the week was this prayer made?
A. Friday B. Saturday C. Sunday D. Monday
3. What was the person asking God to do? He/She wanted God to give him/her _____.
A. a husband B. a wife C. a child D. Riches
4. What items was Pokuwaa told to bring for sacrifice?
A. A pure white hen and eggs
B. A jet-black hen with eggs
C. A brown hen with eggs
D. A red hen with eggs
5. What town did Pokuwaa go to for her sacrifice?
A. Ninting B. Pokuwaa C. Domakwe D. Tanofie
6. Kwadwo divides his time between his two wives. How many days does he stay away from Pokuwaa?

- A. Three days B. Four days C. Five days D. Two days
7. Koramo's husband's name is _____.
A. Kofi Daafu B. Kofi Dede C. Ampe D. Asogoro
8. How long was Pokuwaa married to Kwaku Fosu?
A. Two years B. Three years C. Four years D. Five years
9. How many brothers does Pokuwaa have?
A. Five B. Four C. Three D. Six
10. Afua Fofie was very rude to Pokuwaa when her baby visited Pokuwaa because
A. they had quarrelled.
B. they were bad neighbours.
C. Afua was Kwadwo's first wife's friend.
D. Afua was jealous of Pokuwaa.

***So Long a Letter* by Mariama Ba**

This is the story of Ramatoulaye and Aissatou as seen from Ramatoulaye's letter to Aissatou. Ramatoulaye is recently widowed. In her letter informing her friend, she remembers everything about their childhood together, their courtship and eventual marriages and other important happenings in their lives and that of their community.

Essay Questions

1. When was *So Long a Letter* written?
2. We have different types of novels. What type is *So Long a Letter*?
3. *So Long a Letter* is also described as a feminist novel. Why? Give a brief explanation.
4. *So Long a Letter* celebrates friendship. Briefly give reasons to support this statement.
5. "Modou, good brother, good husband, good Muslim ..." Do you agree with this statement?
6. How long is the mourning period in Ramatoulaye's Senegal?
7. List the category of debtors that called after Mawdo's death.
8. Discuss some of the expensive presents Mawdo Fall gave to Bineton and her mother.
9. "Mawdo bit more than he could chew. No wonder he had a heart attack." Discuss this assertion.
10. Comment on Mawdo Ba's marriage to Aissatou: It was doomed to fail from the start. Give reasons for this situation.

Objective Questions

11. Daouda Dieng wanted to marry Ramatoulaye when she was only _____.
A. 20 B. 17 C. 18 D. 21
12. Mawdo Fall's sisters pitied Ramatoulaye because
A. they felt she worked too hard.
B. they made life difficult for her.
C. her husband does not respect her.
D. she came from a poor family.
13. Aissatou was not respected by her husband's family because
A. she was always rude to them.
B. she was from a poor home.
C. Mawdo trained her with his money.

14. According to Ramatoulaye, teachers were always _____.
A. well paid B. praised C. decorate D. treated badly
15. Mawdo Ba married a second wife because
A. he wanted to do so. B. he loved the girl.
C. he wanted to please his mother. D. Moslem religion forced him.
16. One of the themes of *So Long a Letter* is that
A. we need to obey our parents always.
B. we should cut off from African way of life.
C. we should do away with oppressive cultures.
D. we should not marry from poor families.
17. Mawdo Fall stopped visiting Ramatoulaye and her twelve children because
A. he was angry with them.
B. his new wife did not want him to.
C. he had no money to give them.
D. it was against his religion to do so.
18. Mawdo Fall's marriage to Bineton lasted for _____.
A. ten years B. four years C. five years D. seven years
19. What helped sustain Ramatoulaye when her husband abandoned her?
A. Her new car B. Her children's love and support
D. Her husband's family D. Hardwork
20. Some of Ramatoulaye's daughters became difficult to control because they _____.
A. kept bad friends.
B. did not help their mother with house chores.
C. visited the cinema.
D. smoked.