

# Literature in English

Senior 4

Student's Book

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## FOREWORD

**Dear Student,**

Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) is honored to present Senior Four Literature in English book for students. This book will serve as a guide to competence-based teaching and learning to ensure consistency and coherence in the learning of Literature in English. The Rwandan educational philosophy is to ensure that you achieve full potential at every level of education which will prepare you to be well integrated into society and exploit employment opportunities.

The Government of Rwanda emphasizes the importance of aligning teaching and learning materials with the syllabus to facilitate your learning process. Many factors influence what you learn, how well you learn and the competences you acquire. Those factors include the relevance of the specific content, the quality of teachers' pedagogical approaches, the assessment strategies and the instructional materials available. In this book, we paid special attention to the activities that facilitate the learning process in which you can develop your ideas and make new discoveries during concrete activities carried out individually or with peers.

In competence-based curriculum, learning is considered a process of active building and developing knowledge and meanings by the learner where concepts are mainly introduced by an activity, situation or scenario that helps the learner to construct knowledge, develop skills and acquire positive attitudes and values. For efficient use of this textbook, your role is to:

- Work on given activities which lead to the development of skills;
- Share relevant information with other learners through presentations, discussions, group work and other active learning techniques such as role play, case studies, investigation and research in the library, on internet or outside;
- Participate and take responsibility for your own learning;
- Draw conclusions based on the findings from the learning activities.

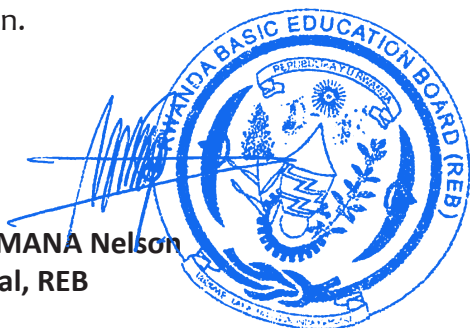
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To facilitate you in doing activities, the content of this book is self-explanatory so that you can easily use it yourself, acquire and assess your competences. The book is made of units as presented in the syllabus.

I wish to sincerely express my appreciation to the people who contributed towards the editing of this book, particularly, REB staff and teachers for their technical support.

Any comment or contribution is welcome to help in improving this text book for the next edition.

**Dr. MBARUSHIMANA Nelson**  
**Director General, REB**



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I owe gratitude to Curriculum Officers and teachers whose efforts during the editing exercise of this book were very much valuable.

Finally, my word of gratitude goes to the Rwanda Basic Education Board staff who were involved in the whole process of the in-house textbook production.



**Joan MURUNGI**

**Head of Curriculum, Teaching and learning Resources Department**

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# Table of Contents

<b>FOREWORD.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>Unit 1:Review the key aspects of prose.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. The novel .....	3
1.2. The novella.....	7
1.3.The short story.....	12
1.5. Analysing prose .....	18
<b>Unit 2: Introduction to African literary traditions.....</b>	<b>33</b>
2.1. Pre-colonial African literature .....	34
2.2. The colonial period.....	42
2.3. The post-colonial literary tradition .....	46
<b>Unit 3:Literary techniques in novels.....</b>	<b>53</b>
3.1. Introduction.....	53
3.2. Literary techniques .....	58
3.3. Imagery .....	61
3.4. Plot .....	62
<b>Unit 4: Themes and messages in a novel.....</b>	<b>76</b>
4.1. Themes and messages in a novel .....	79
<b>Unit 5: Haiku and Tanka.....</b>	<b>96</b>
5.1. Atmosphere.....	97

5.2. Theme.....	97
5.3. Message .....	97
5.4. Haiku.....	97
5.5. Tanka .....	100
5.6. Characteristics of the tanka .....	100
5.7. Writing a tanka.....	102
<b>Unit 6:Sonnet and rhyme .....</b>	<b>104</b>
6.1. Sonnet.....	104
6.2. Rhyme .....	105
6.3. Masculine rhyme.....	107
6.4. Feminine rhyme.....	107
6.5. Types of sonnets and their rhyme schemes.....	111
6.6. Poetic devices in poetry.....	114
<b>Unit 7: Epigrams.....</b>	<b>121</b>
7.1. Introduction.....	121
7.2. Epigrams from different cultures and times in history .....	124
<b>Unit 8: Different forms of drama.....</b>	<b>126</b>
8.1. Tragedy .....	126
8.2. Characters in a tragedy .....	130
8.3.Comedy .....	131
8.4. General characteristics of comedy .....	133
8.5. Tragicomedy .....	136
8.6. Melodrama .....	139
8.7. Features of Melodrama.....	139
<b>Unit 9: Key aspects of drama .....</b>	<b>141</b>
9.1. Introduction .....	141
9.2. Plot .....	149

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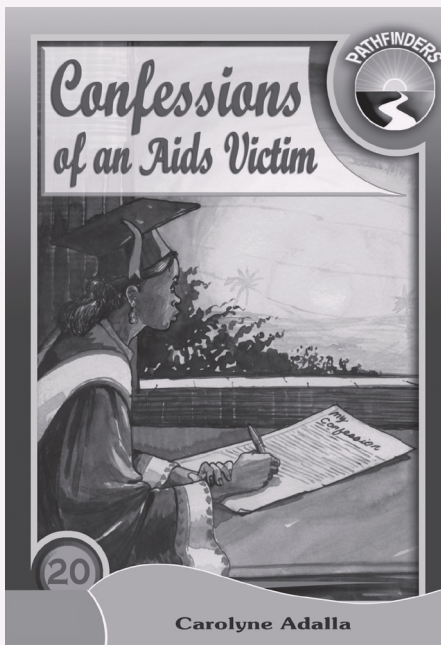
9.3. Types of plot .....	149
9.4. Setting.....	150
9.5. Theme .....	157
9.6. Plot development/plot diagram .....	165
<b>Unit 10: Periods of African drama.....</b>	<b>168</b>
10.1. Pre-colonial period.....	168
10.2. Drama in colonial Africa .....	170
10.3. Drama after colonialism/post colonial drama.....	179

# Unit 1

## Review the key aspects of prose

### Activity 1

- We had defined prose before. Discuss in your group what it is.
- In your groups take turns to read the excerpt below. Discuss the characteristics of prose within it.



### Confessions of an AIDS Victim

by *Carolyne Adallah*

I completed my university education at about this time and surprised myself with a Second Class Honours, Upper Division. Upon graduation, my parents could not contain their pride.

That evening while we were relaxing at a city hotel, Mother revisited the issue of Brian.

“I did not see your friend at the graduation?” she had started.

“Which friend?” I asked for the sake of it.

“Jimmy’s father,” she said.

“I thought you had said you never wanted to meet him,” I answered accusingly. “We are no longer friends. Besides,” I added, “he is already in America.”

Father looked up from the newspaper. We hardly involved him in our conversations partly because he was always disinterested. He was the kind of male chauvinist who believed nothing good could come out of a woman. Why, then, the sudden flicker of interest? Had the mention of America done the trick?

“What is he studying?” he asked.

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Father asking about Brian? Good heavens.

“I am not sure. All I know is that he is doing his second degree, probably in Agriculture.”

“Does he know about Jimmy?” Mother asked again.

“I haven’t communicated with him since Jimmy’s birth,” I lied.

The truth is that I had written to Brian immediately after the baby’s birth. He had only sent a card congratulating me on the baby’s birth and that was it. He had failed to correspond again despite the flow of my letters to his Stanford address.

After a while I had stopped writing too, since I could not keep up with the postal expenses.

“Are you thinking of getting married to him?” Mother continued the dry run questioning.

“You said no, and I guess it is just that.”

End of the dry run. Father picked up his paper again and shuffled through its pages, suddenly looking disinterested again. Mother resumed drinking her cup of tea with an expressionless face.

I looked across the hotel and at the same time, a young man seated at the far end smiled at me. I smiled back. He wasn’t bad looking, was he? I looked past him to the clock on the wall. It was some minutes to six in the evening. Aunt Alice would be expecting us for the dinner celebration at her place any time from then. I had been staying with her in Buruburu since I had finished my University examinations.

I finished my drink, excused myself and headed for the ladies. My move secured the anticipated result – the young man followed seconds later. We met in the corridor.

“Congrats,” he said looking at my graduation gown.

“Thanks,” I said with a big smile.

“My name is Alex, and yours?”

“Cathy,” I said.

“Those over there are your parents?”

I answered with a nod.

“Here is my card,” he said producing a white gold-printed business card. I could see he worked as a sales representative with IBM.

“Do I expect your call tomorrow morning, say, at eleven?”

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“That is fine with me.”

“Please, don’t forget to phone,” he called to my back as I walked into the ladies.

That is how Alex entered my life – as a graduation package, three years ago. Was this a suicidal move? I wonder. Through his well-known connections, he got me this job in Eldoret and we have been lovers since then.

I have seen the better days of my life with Alex. Candle lit dinners, buffet lunches and on some occasions, cocktails. Alex has been gentle and loving, and generous if I may add. He has been paying my house rent, helped furnish my house and occasionally brings me breathtaking gifts. We have been content to have an open relationship, without any mention of marriage. It is impossible to imagine how AIDS got into such tranquillity.

But I am no angel. I will be damned if I fail to mention that despite this tranquillity, Alex has not been my sole lover. Within these three years, I have had a short-lived affair with a university don, spent one weekend out of town with a prominent businessman, had a sexual experience with a gynaecologist and a secret affair with a manager in a leading textile factory here in Eldoret. The big question still remains – who could have passed on the infection to me? All these people are respectable and in dignified positions. Doesn’t AIDS care about this?

I had written to Brian again after settling into my new job. This time he was good enough to write back. He indicated he had moved in with a white American girlfriend by the name of Denise who he said, was crazy about him. They were thinking of marriage. That, I guess, partly explained why he had kept me at bay. In a recent letter he mentioned that he had secured a fellowship for his doctorate studies and would not be home for another four years.

## 1.1 The novel

The novel is a type of prose. It is a long narrative that describes fictional characters and events in form of a story. A novel contains many characters, conflicts, themes and sub-themes, making the plot much more complicated than other forms of shorter fictional prose. The language of novels is highly figurative and emotive because the writer’s interest must be sustained for a long time. Divisions in a novel are called chapters and the length of these will vary from novel to novel.

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## Features of a novel

1. The novel is a piece of fiction. It depicts imaginary characters and situations. It may, however, contain references to real events and people, but this is, in most cases, disguised. However, it is important to note that though its characters and actions are imaginary. These characters and events bear a close resemblance to real life.
2. The novel is written in prose form rather than verse. Even though, some novels may contain some poetic elements, it is important to note that much of the novel remains in prose form. This means that as opposed to, say, poetry, the novel is not structured in the form of stanzas. It has sentences that run on, one after the other.
3. The novel is a narrative. It comprises telling rather than acting the story out. This is the aspect that distinguishes it from drama.
4. A novel comprises characters whose actions are woven in a plot. In fact, a novel comprises people who do things in a given context created by the author. The characters' actions are arranged in a logical order of cause and effect. The author ensures the reader understands why or what causes characters behave to the way they do.
5. The novel is of considerable length. This is because it focuses on an issue that it investigates in order to arrive at a way of interpreting it. Many critics agree that anything shorter than thirty pages can be classified as a short story. A story that is about thirty to one hundred pages is referred to as a novella, while anything above one hundred pages a novel.

### Activity 2

#### Group work

**The excerpt below is from a novel entitled *Mine Boy*, by Peter Abrahams. Take turns to read it to the members of your group.**

“Look Di, there’s Zuma!”

Xuma turned. It was his white man. And with him was a woman. And there was laughter in his eyes and a smile on his lips.

It was the first time Xuma had seen Paddy laughing.

“Hello, Zuma!”

Paddy held out his hand. Xuma hesitated then shook it. Xuma smiled. The Red One had been drinking.

“This is my girl, Zuma. How is my taste?” Paddy laughed.

Xuma looked at the woman. She smiled at him and gave him her hand. Passing white people stopped and turned. Xuma felt unhappy and wished the Red One would take his woman away.

He took the woman’s hand. It was small and soft.

“So this is Zuma,” the woman said.

“It begins with an X, dear,” Paddy said.

“The Red One talks about you a lot, Zuma,” she said.

“We are blocking traffic,” Paddy said and took Xuma’s arm.

Paddy led him a little way down the street and turned off into a little alley.

“I live here,” Paddy told him.

“Bring him up, Red,” the woman said.

“Good idea!” Paddy exclaimed. “Come, Zuma, you will eat with us?”

“No,” Xuma said.

“Come on!” Paddy insisted and half pushed him into the lift.

They got out and the woman led the way into the flat.

“This is my home,” Paddy said.

Xuma looked around. He had never seen a place like that before. There was no fire, but it was warm.

“Sit down, Zuma,” the woman said.

Xuma sat on the edge of the chair. The woman took off her coat, and went into another room. Paddy stretched himself on a settee and smiled at Xuma.

The woman came in with three glasses.

“This will warm you,” she said, giving Xuma one.

Paddy raised his glass.



“To the best mine boy, Zuma!”

“To Zuma,” the woman said and smiled at him.

Paddy and Di emptied their glasses, Xuma sat holding his. He could still feel the woman’s hand in his. It was so small and soft.

And she was very good to look at, but he didn’t want to look at her.

“Drink yours, Zuma,” she said.

The wine warmed Xuma. She took the empty glass from him and turned on the radio.

“Everything is ready,” she said to Paddy. “Put it on the trolley and bring it in.”

Paddy went out.

Xuma thought: “Now I understand what Eliza wants. But these things are only for white people. It is foolish to think we can get them.”

He looked round the room. Yes, it was fine. Carpets on the floor, books, radio. Beautiful things everywhere. Fine, all fine, but all the white man’s things. It is all foolishness to want the white man’s things. To drink wine and keep the bottle on the table without fear of the police, how could a black person do it? And how could Eliza be like this white woman of the Red One.

Di followed his gaze round the room.

“Do you like it?”

“Heh?” He looked startled.

“I mean the room,” she said.

“It is fine,” he said and looked at her.

Her eyes looked kindly at him and dimples appeared on her cheeks when she smiled. Just like Eliza’s dimples. It seemed that her eyes understood what he was thinking. He looked away from her.

“The Red One wants you to be his friend,” she said.

Again, Xuma looked at her. And again, it seemed that she understood everything that went on in his mind. And as he watched her, a smile slowly broke over her face.

“He is white,” Xuma said.

The smile faded from her face and there was sadness in her eyes. Suddenly, Xuma felt sorry for her and was surprised at himself for feeling sorry for a white person. There was no reason for it either.

“And so you cannot be friends,” she said, and in her eyes was the same look he had seen many times in the eyes of the Red One.

Paddy came in with the food. Xuma felt ill at ease. But Paddy and Di talked and did not notice him, and soon he forgot his discomfort and ate.

When they had finished eating, they drank more wine. And Xuma and Paddy talked about the mines and the funny things that happened there and soon they were all laughing. In spots, Xuma forgot that they were white and even spoke to the woman. Then Paddy took the things away.

### Questions

- a. Identify the characteristics of a novel in the excerpt you have just read.
- b. Xuma is worried because he is with white people who have invited him in their house. What do you think is the main theme in this novel?

## 1.2. The novella

A novella is a work of narrative prose fiction, longer than a short story but shorter than a novel.

### Characteristics of a novella

1. A novella is shorter than a full-length novel. It is about 60 to 120 pages, or 7,500 to 40,000 words in length. It can be read in a sitting.
2. Usually, a novella has fewer conflicts and subplots. The main narrative does not veer off into complicated back stories, multiple points of view and meandering plot lines.
3. Novellas are sometimes not divided into chapters.
4. A novella comprises a single event concentrated on one character or just a few characters.

### Activity 3

**Read the extract below during your spare time. It is the first part of *In the Ravine*, by Anton Chekhov**

The village of Ukleevo lay in a ravine so that only the belfry and the chimneys of the printed cotton factories could be seen from the high road and the railway-station. When visitors asked what village this was, they were told: “That’s the village where the deacon ate all the caviar at the funeral.”

It had happened at the dinner at the funeral of Kostukov that the old deacon saw among the savouries some large-grained caviar and began eating it

greedily; people nudged him, tugged at his arm, but he seemed petrified with enjoyment: felt nothing, and only went on eating. He ate up all the caviar, and there were four pounds in the jar. And years had passed since then, the



**Anton Chekhov**

deacon had long been dead, but the caviar was still remembered. Whether life was so poor here or people had not been clever enough to notice anything but that unimportant incident that had occurred ten years before, anyway the people had nothing else to tell about Uklevo.

The village was never free from fever, and there was boggy mud there even in the summer, especially under the fences over which hung old willow-trees that gave deep shade. Here and there was always a smell from the factory refuse and the acetic acid which was used in the finishing of the cotton print.

The three cotton factories and the tan yard were not in the village itself, but a little way off. They were small factories, and not more than four hundred workmen were employed in all of them. The tan yard often made the water in the little river stink; the refuse contaminated the meadows, the peasants' cattle suffered from Siberian plague, and orders were given that the factory should be closed. It was considered to be closed, but went on working in secret with the connivance of the local police officers and the District Doctor, who was paid ten roubles a month by the owner.

In the whole village there were only two decent houses built of brick with iron roofs; one of them was the local court, in the other, a two-storied house just opposite the church, there lived a shopkeeper from Epifan called Grigory Petrovitch Tsybukin.

Grigory kept a grocer's shop, but that was only for appearances' sake: in reality he sold vodka, cattle, hides, grain, and pigs; he traded in anything that came to hand, and when, for instance, magpies were wanted abroad for ladies' hats, he made some thirty kopecks on every pair of birds; he

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bought timber for felling, lent money at interest, and altogether was a sharp old man, full of resources.

He had two sons. The elder, Anisim, was in the police in the detective department and was rarely at home. The younger, Stepan, had gone in for trade and helped his father: but no great help was expected from him as he was weak in health; his wife Aksinya, a beautiful woman with a good figure, who wore a hat and carried a parasol on holidays, got up early and went to bed late, and ran about all day long, picking up her skirts and jingling her keys, going from the granary to the cellar and from there to the shop. Old Tsybukin looked at her good-humouredly while his eyes glowed, and at such moments he regretted she had not been married to his elder son and not the younger one, who was deaf, and who evidently knew very little about female beauty.

The old man had always an inclination for family life, and he loved his family more than anything on earth, especially his elder son, the detective, and his daughter-in-law. Aksinya had no sooner married the deaf son than she began to display an extraordinary gift for business, and knew who could be allowed to run up a bill and who could not: she kept the keys and would not trust them even to her husband; she kept the accounts by means of the reckoning beads, looked at the horses' teeth like a peasant, and was always laughing or shouting; and whatever she did or said the old man was simply delighted and muttered: "Well done, daughter-in-law! You are a smart wench!"

He was a widower, but a year after his son's marriage he could not resist getting married himself. A girl was found for him, living twenty miles from Ukleevo, called Varvara Nikolaevna, no longer quite young, but good-looking, comely, and belonging to a decent family. As soon as she was installed into the upper-storey room everything in the house seemed to brighten up as though new glass had been put into all the windows. The lamps gleamed before the icons, the tables were covered with snow-white cloths, flowers with red buds made their appearance in the windows and in the front garden, and at dinner, instead of eating from a single bowl, each person had a separate plate set for him or her. Varvara Nikolaevna had a pleasant, friendly smile, and it seemed as though the whole house were smiling, too. Beggars and pilgrims, male and female, began to come

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into the yard, a thing which had never happened in the past; the plaintive sing-song voices of the Ukleevo peasant women and the apologetic coughs of weak, seedy-looking men, who had been dismissed from the factory for drunkenness were heard under the windows. Varvara helped them with money, with bread, with old clothes, and afterwards, when she felt more at home, began taking things out of the shop.

One day the deaf man saw her take four ounces of tea and that disturbed him.

“Here, mother’s taken four ounces of tea,” he informed his father afterwards; “where is that to be entered?”

The old man made no reply but stood still and thought a moment, moving his eyebrows, and then went upstairs to his wife.

“Varvarushka, if you want anything out of the shop,” he said affectionately, “take it, my dear. Take it and welcome; don’t hesitate.”

And the next day the deaf man, running across the yard, called to her, “If there is anything you want, mother, take it.”

There was something new, something gay and light-hearted in her giving of alms, just as there was in the lamps before the icons and in the red flowers. When at Carnival or at the church festival, which lasted for three days, they sold the peasants tainted salt meat, smelling so strong it was hard to stand near the tub. They took scythes, caps, and their wives’ kerchiefs in pledge from the drunken men; when the factory hands stupefied with bad vodka lay rolling in the mud, and sin seemed to hover thick like a fog in the air. Then it was a relief to think that up there in the house there was a gentle, neatly dressed woman who had nothing to do with salt meat or vodka; her charity had in those burdensome, murky days the effect of a safety valve in a machine.

The days in Tsybukin’s house were spent in business cares. Before the sun had risen in the morning, Aksinya was panting and puffing as she washed in the outer room, and the samovar was boiling in the kitchen with a hum that boded no good. Old Grigory Petrovitch, dressed in a long black coat, cotton breeches and shiny top boots, looking a dapper little figure, walked about the rooms, tapping with his little heels like the father-in-law in a well-known song. The shop was opened. When it was daylight a racing droshky was

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brought up to the front door and the old man got jauntily on to it, pulling his big cap down to his ears; and, looking at him, no one would have said he was fifty-six. His wife and daughter-in-law saw him off, and at such times when he had on a good, clean coat, and had in the droshky a huge black horse that had cost three hundred roubles. The old man did not like the peasants to come up to him with their complaints and petitions; he hated the peasants and disdained them, and if he saw some peasants waiting at the gate, he would shout angrily, “Why are you standing there? Go further off.” Or if it were a beggar, he would say, “God will provide!”

He used to drive off on business; his wife, in a dark dress and a black apron, tidied the rooms or helped in the kitchen. Aksinya attended to the shop, and from the yard could be heard the clink of bottles and of money, her laughter and loud talk, and the anger of customers whom she had offended; and at the same time it could be seen that the secret sale of vodka was already going on in the shop. The deaf man sat in the shop, too, or walked about the street bare-headed, with his hands in his pockets looking absent-mindedly now at the huts, now at the sky overhead. Six times a day they had tea; four times a day they sat down to meals; and in the evening they counted over their takings, put them down, went to bed, and slept soundly.

All the three cotton factories in Ukleevo and the houses of the factory owners – Hrymin Seniors, Hrymin Juniors, and Kostukov — were on a telephone. The telephone was laid on in the local court, too, but it soon ceased to work as bugs and beetles bred there. The elder of the rural district had had little education and wrote every word in the official documents in capitals. But when the telephone was spoiled he said, “Yes, now we shall be badly off without a telephone.”

The Hrymin Seniors were continually at law with the Juniors, and sometimes the Juniors quarrelled among themselves and began going to law, and their factory did not work for a month or two till they were reconciled again, and this was an entertainment for the people of Ukleevo, as there was a great deal of talk and gossip on the occasion of each quarrel. On holidays Kostukov and the Juniors used to get up races, used to dash about Ukleevo and run over calves. Aksinya, rustling her starched petticoats, used to promenade in a low-necked dress up and down the street near her

shop; the Juniors used to snatch her up and carry her off as though by force. Then old Tsybukin would drive out to show his new horse and take Varvara with him.

In the evening, after the races, when people were going to bed, an expensive concertina was played in the Juniors' yard and, if it were a moonlight night, those sounds sent a thrill of delight to the heart, and Ukleevo no longer seemed a wretched hole.

### Questions

- a. In your small group, discuss the main theme in this story.
- b. Individually, contrast Aksinya's character with that of her mother-in-law.

## 1.3. The short story

A short story is a form of prose. It is a narrative that is shorter than a novella and novel.

### Characteristics of the short story

1. The short story is shorter than a novel and novella.
2. Because of its short length, the short story usually has only one conflict or problem. This makes its plot less complicated than the plot of the novel.
3. The short story will mostly have only one setting (that is the place in which the story is set).
4. The short story covers a shorter period of time. Novels can span many days, months and years.
5. The short story tends to focus on one main character.
6. Short stories have fewer characters than novels.

### Activity 4

#### Homework

Read the short story below in your spare time.

#### A Dark Brown Dog

by Stephen Crane

A child was standing on a street-corner. He leaned with one shoulder against a high board-fence and swayed the other to and fro, all the while kicking carelessly at the gravel.

Sunshine beat upon the cobbles, and a lazy summer wind raised yellow dust which trailed in clouds down the avenue. Clattering trucks moved with indistinctness through it. The child stood dreamily gazing.

After a time, a little dark-brown dog came trotting with an intent air down the sidewalk. A short rope was dragging from his neck. Occasionally he trod upon the end of it and stumbled.

He stopped opposite the child, and the two regarded each other. The dog hesitated for a moment, but presently he made some little advances with his tail. The child put out his hand and called him. In an apologetic manner the dog came close, and the two had an interchange of friendly patting and waggles. The dog became more enthusiastic with each moment of the interview, until with



A dog

his gleeful capering, he threatened to overturn the child. At which point the child lifted his hand and struck the dog, a blow upon the head.

This thing seemed to overpower and astonish the little dark-brown dog, and wounded him to the heart. He sank down in despair at the child's feet. When the blow was repeated, together with an admonition in childish sentences, he turned over upon his back, and held his paws in a peculiar manner. At the same time with his ears and his eyes he offered a small prayer to the child.

He looked so comical on his back, and holding his paws peculiarly, that the child was greatly amused and gave him little taps repeatedly, to keep him so. But the little dark-brown dog took this chastisement in the most serious way, and no doubt considered that he had committed some grave crime, for he wriggled contritely and showed his repentance in every way that was in his power. He pleaded with the child and petitioned him, and offered more prayers.

At last the child grew weary of this amusement and turned toward home. The dog was praying at the time. He lay on his back and turned his eyes upon the retreating form.

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At the moment, he struggled to his feet and started after the child. The latter wandered in a perfunctory way toward his home, stopping at times to investigate various matters. During one of these pauses he discovered the little dark-brown dog who was following him with the air of a criminal.

The child beat his pursuer with a small stick he had found. The dog lay down and prayed until the child had finished, and resumed his journey. Then he scrambled erect and took up the pursuit again.

On the way to his home the child turned many times and beat the dog, proclaiming with childish gestures that he held him in contempt as an unimportant dog, with no value save for a moment. For being this quality of animal the dog apologised and eloquently expressed regret, but he continued stealthily to follow the child. His manner grew so very guilty that he slunk like an assassin.

When the child reached his door-step, the dog was industriously ambling a few yards in the rear. He became so agitated with shame when he again confronted the child that he forgot the dragging rope. He tripped upon it and fell forward.

The child sat down on the step and the two had another interview, during which the dog greatly exerted himself to please the child. He performed a few gambols with such abandon that the child suddenly saw him to be a valuable thing. He made a swift, avaricious charge and seized the rope.

He dragged his captive into a hall and up many long stairways in a dark tenement. The dog made willing efforts, but he could not hobble very skilfully up the stairs because he was very small and soft, and at last the pace of the engrossed child grew so energetic that the dog became panic-stricken. In his mind he was being dragged toward a grim unknown. His eyes grew wild with the terror of it. He began to wiggle his head frantically and to brace his legs.

The child redoubled his exertions. They had a battle on the stairs. The child was victorious because he was completely absorbed in his purpose, and because the dog was very small. He dragged his acquirement to the door of his home, and finally with triumph across the threshold.

No one was in. The child sat down on the floor and made overtures to the dog. These the dog instantly accepted. He beamed with affection upon his new friend. In a short time they were firm and abiding comrades.

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When the child's family appeared, they made a great row. The dog was examined and commented upon and called names. Scorn was levelled at him from all eyes, so that he became much embarrassed and drooped like a scorched plant. But the child went sturdily to the centre of the floor, and, at the top of his voice, championed the dog. It happened that he was roaring protestations, with his arms clasped about the dog's neck, when the father of the family came in from work.

The parent demanded to know what the blazes they were making the kid howl for. It was explained in many words that the infernal kid wanted to introduce a disreputable dog into the family.

A family council was held. On this depended the dog's fate, but he in no way heeded, being busily engaged in chewing the end of the child's dress.

The affair was quickly ended. The father of the family, it appears, was in a particularly savage temper that evening, and when he perceived that it would amaze and anger everybody if such a dog were allowed to remain, he decided that it should be so. The child, crying softly, took his friend off to a retired part of the room to hobnob with him, while the father quelled a fierce rebellion of his wife. So it came to pass that the dog was a member of the household.

He and the child were together at all times save when the child slept. The child became a guardian and a friend. If the large folk kicked the dog and threw things at him, the child made loud and violent objections. Once when the child had run, protesting loudly, with tears raining down his face and his arms outstretched, to protect his friend, he had been struck in the head with a very large saucepan from the hand of his father, enraged at some seeming lack of courtesy in the dog. Ever after, the family were careful how they threw things at the dog.

Moreover, the latter grew very skilful in avoiding missiles and feet. In a small room containing a stove, a table, a bureau and some chairs, he would display strategic ability of a high order, dodging, feinting and scuttling about among the furniture. He could force three or four people armed with brooms, sticks and handfuls of coal, to use all their ingenuity to get in a blow. And even when they did, it was seldom that they could do him a serious injury or leave any imprint.

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But when the child was present, these scenes did not occur. It came to be recognised that if the dog was molested, the child would burst into sobs, and as the child, when started, was very riotous and practically unquenchable, the dog had in that a protector.

However, the child could not always be near. At night, when he was asleep, his dark-brown friend would raise from some black corner a wild cry, a song of infinite lowliness and despair, that would go shuddering and sobbing among the buildings of the block and cause people to swear. At these times the singer would often be chased all over the kitchen and hit with a great variety of articles.

Sometimes, too, the child himself used to beat the dog, although it is not known that he ever had what could be truly called a just cause. The dog always accepted these thrashings with an air of admitted guilt. He was too much of a dog to try to look to be a martyr or to plot revenge. He received the blows with deep humility, and furthermore he forgave his friend the moment the child had finished, and was ready to caress the child's hand with his little red tongue.

When misfortune came upon the child, and his troubles overwhelmed him, he would often crawl under the table and lay his small distressed head on the dog's back. The dog was ever sympathetic. It is not to be supposed that at such times he took occasion to refer to the unjust beatings his friend, when provoked, had administered to him.

He did not achieve any notable degree of intimacy with the other members of the family. He had no confidence in them, and the fear that he would express at their casual approach often exasperated them exceedingly. They used to gain a certain satisfaction in underfeeding him, but finally his friend, the child, grew to watch the matter with some care, and when he forgot it, the dog was often successful in secret for himself.

So the dog prospered. He developed a large bark, which came wondrously from such a small rug of a dog. He ceased to howl persistently at night. Sometimes, indeed, in his sleep, he would utter little yells, as from pain, but that occurred, no doubt, when in his dreams he encountered huge flaming dogs who threatened him.

His devotion to the child grew until it was an inspiring thing. He wagged at his approach; he sank down in despair at his departure. He could detect the

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sound of the child's step among all the noises of the neighbourhood. It was like a calling voice to him.

The scene of their companionship was a kingdom governed by this terrible monarch, the child; but neither criticism nor rebellion ever lived for an instant in the heart of the one subject. Down in the mystic, hidden fields of his little dog-soul bloomed flowers of love and fidelity and perfect faith.

The child was in the habit of going on many expeditions to observe strange things in the vicinity. On these occasions his friend usually jogged happily along behind. Perhaps, though, he went ahead. This necessitated his turning around every quarter-minute to make sure the child was coming. He was filled with a large idea of the importance of these journeys. He would carry himself with such an air! He was proud to be the retainer of so great a monarch.

One day, however, the father of the family got quite exceptionally drunk. He came home and held carnival with the cooking utensils, the furniture and his wife. He was in the midst of this recreation when the child, followed by the dark-brown dog, entered the room. They were returning from their voyages.

The child's practised eye instantly noted his father's state. He dived under the table, where experience had taught him was a rather safe place. The dog, lacking skill in such matters, was, of course, unaware of the true condition of affairs. He looked with interested eyes at his friend's sudden dive. He interpreted it to mean, joyous gambol. He started to patter across the floor to join him. He was the picture of a little dark-brown dog *en route* to a friend.

The head of the family saw him at this moment. He gave a huge howl of joy, and knocked the dog down with a heavy coffee-pot. The dog, yelling in supreme astonishment and fear, writhed to his feet and ran for cover. The man kicked out with a ponderous foot. It caused the dog to swerve as if caught in a tide. A second blow of the coffee-pot laid him upon the floor.

Here the child, uttering loud cries, came valiantly forth like a knight. The father of the family paid no attention to these calls of the child, but advanced with glee upon the dog. Upon being knocked down twice in swift succession, the latter apparently gave up all hope of escape. He rolled over on his back and held his paws in a peculiar manner. At the same time with his eyes and his ears he offered up a small prayer.

But the father was in a mood for having fun, and it occurred to him that it would be a fine thing to throw the dog out of the window. So he reached

down and grabbing the animal by a leg, lifted him, squirming, up. He swung him two or three times hilariously about his head, and then flung him with great accuracy through the window.

The soaring dog created a surprise in the block. A woman watering plants in an opposite window gave an involuntary shout and dropped a flower-pot. A man in another window leaned perilously out to watch the flight of the dog. A woman, who had been hanging out clothes in a yard, began to caper wildly. Her mouth was filled with clothes pegs, but her arms gave vent to a sort of exclamation. In appearance she was like a gagged prisoner. Children ran whooping.

The dark-brown body crashed in a heap on the roof of a shed five stories below. From thence it rolled to the pavement of an alleyway.

The child in the room far above burst into a long, dirge like cry, and toddled hastily out of the room. It took him a long time to reach the alley, because his size compelled him to go downstairs backward, one step at a time, and holding with both hands to the step above.

When they came for him later, they found him seated by the body of his dark-brown friend.

### Questions

- Point out the characteristics of a short story from this story.
- Describe what happens from time the boy finds the dog to the time it dies.
- What do you think is the main theme in this story?

## 1.4. Analysing prose

### Activity 5

**Below is a short story. Take turns to read and discuss it in your small groups. We shall use it to discuss the analysis of prose. Therefore, read and discuss it when you have a “free lesson” or during break time.**

### Homecoming

*by Vivienne Ndlovu*

He turned the key in the lock, hoping the house might be empty, that Flora would not be there to greet him and he would be given that small space he

both wanted and feared. He shut the door firmly behind him, listening for the sounds that would tell him that either Flora or one of the children was at home, but the house was silent. Relief flooded through him, only to be swept away again by the knowledge he needed to face. He carried his travel bag upstairs and into the bedroom he and Flora had shared for the last twelve years. He had returned to it often before, but never like this.

The whole room spoke of Flora, the subtle colours, the simple furnishings – she had never liked fussy things. He would have chosen stronger colours, but this room, though they shared it, was Flora’s, he saw now. All evidence of his occupation of it was confined to the cupboards and a copy of ‘*The Heart of Change*’ which lay on the table



*Flora’s husband in their bedroom*

on his side of the bed. That one small sign of belonging briefly assuaged the dread that had been with him for the last two days, as he sat in meetings, as he went through the motions of getting on the plane, most of all when he had phoned Flora to let her know what time he would be getting in. It

had grown in intensity the closer he got to home and now he was here. He had to reach a decision. Flora might return at any moment and he still had no idea what he was going to do.

He had travelled frequently during the early years of their marriage and had taken it for granted that he would seek some woman’s company on the trips that took him away the longest. He had given no thought to how Flora would feel about it – men had needs, after all. With equal confidence he assumed that she had always been faithful to him. He had been careful, of course. He generally used protection. But when he had ended up staying in Zambia for almost two years, things got a bit out of hand. Flora had joined him only once, about halfway through his stay, because the children were still young. She had even met Sibongile – the woman had invited them to her home for supper. He hadn’t felt even a flicker of guilt at the time.

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Since then, he'd travelled a lot less and his lapses had gradually decreased, although he could not claim this was the result of any personal resolve. He remembered the night shortly after his return from Zambia when, after a rather unsatisfactory intimacy, Flora had told him she wanted him to change his work schedule to avoid these long trips away, or perhaps he could find a way for her to travel with him. A few months later still, he had overheard her talking with her sister about the marriage of a mutual friend and been surprised to hear Flora's voice, firm and uncompromising. "Well I know I wouldn't put up with his carrying on like that. Not now. Not these days."

They had established a good, comfortable marriage and that in itself had dampened his need for other women. It was a couple of years now since he had last gone astray and this was what hit him the hardest. That now, when everything was fine, when he had made the effort to be faithful; when, if he was honest, he had understood the value of having an intelligent and supportive wife (Flora had surely contributed to the consolidation of his career, with her judicious entertaining and steady urging of his ambition) now, this unwanted news seemed to threaten the whole edifice that was his life. It could all come crashing down around him.

The 'boss' inside his head kept saying he was being ridiculous, their marriage was solid. Good God, this had happened seven years ago. Surely it was just a minor mishap. Something as solid as their relationship would quickly surmount this hurdle and their life together would continue smooth and unblemished, perhaps, be even the richer for it. And anyway, why did he have to tell her? He could try to bury this mistaken, unsolicited knowledge.

Why on earth had he telephoned the woman? He had had only one more day in Lusaka – if only he hadn't made that call. He was at a loose end in the dean's office, waiting for him to come back from a meeting so that they could go out for lunch together when, paging through the paper, he saw an advert for the company she had worked for. Why didn't he just give them a call and see if by chance she was still there. Perhaps if he'd known she was there he wouldn't have done it – perhaps? But the operator answered and put him straight through to Mrs Kamuya and suddenly she was on the other end of the line.

She was clearly surprised to hear from him and then he was suggesting a drink that evening and she was agreeing to the invitation. Even then,

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perhaps he'd assumed she wouldn't be able to make it at such short notice and that she might now have a family of her own ... but she had agreed immediately.

By the time she was due to arrive at the hotel, he was looking forward to seeing her. At the back of his mind, he was even anticipating the possibility of sleeping with her again. He was mildly apprehensive that she might have run to fat, or lost her style in some other way. So it was wonderful to walk into the lobby and see her there, looking almost exactly the same. If anything, maturity had given her even greater appeal, he thought as he approached her. She greeted him with pleasure but refused his suggestion that they go up to his room and instead gestured towards the bar.

“Let's go and have a drink.”

They sat, they talked. It was good to see her. He had liked her a great deal. If he hadn't been married, the relationship might have become something more permanent. Of course she had been married then, too. He hadn't liked to cuckold another man, but Sibongile's husband was a heavy drinker and there had been hints of a violent temper. He had not wanted to know more of her relationship, lest he be somehow drawn in further. But after the waiter had brought her a second drink he thought to ask about the man. She picked up her glass, sipped her drink and setting it down again, “Sam died. Five years ago.”

It was a shock, but as he looked at her downcast face, he recognised a new diffidence that made her seem younger, more vulnerable.

“It's been a long time, now,” she said, refusing his mumbled apologies. How blithe we are in assuming that those we know and love will continue living and loving as long as we ourselves are alive. And then she had looked him in the eye and said, “He died from TB. It was HIV-related.”

As the full realisation of what she was telling him struck home, he was aware of settling his face into an expression of suitable concern and asking her how long he had been ill; and then they were talking about something else, and the moment when he should have asked her about her own status was gone.

At the end of the evening, he took down her address and phone number, told her he expected to be back in Lusaka in the coming month and heard

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himself making the unfounded promise to get in touch then. She had smiled, looking perfectly poised, and said goodbye.

And now, he was here. In this bedroom, this house where his wife lived – the woman he loved, the mother of his children. But who was she? What was her substance when faced with knowledge like this? Flora was, in the end – in argument, in conversation – herself, unfettered by labels like wife, mother, lawyer. Ultimately, she judged each situation she faced as who she was at that moment. And with this knowledge, who might she be?

Sam had died so long ago. Was it possible that Sibongile was not infected? His mind refused to deal with the issues. If she was infected, if he was infected, if he had infected Flora ... He could die. He could be responsible for Flora's death. Abruptly he had a mental picture of Flora, ill in bed with a bad flu, just a few months back. It was the first time he had ever seen her succumb to illness and allow herself to be looked after. His heart went cold. Could that have been something more serious? But she was fine now, surely, though maybe she did seem more tired than usual, especially when he had told her about this trip.

He could not fathom how something so far in his past could now return with such vicious power. Everything he believed in, had worked for, it could all be destroyed today, just because of what he knew now. If only he had not called her. How he longed for the felicity of ignorance. Could he keep silent? Could he quietly go off and have a test? Then, if it was negative, she need never know and their marriage could go on undisturbed. But what if the result was different? He knew he didn't have the courage to face that challenge alone. He needed Flora's strength for that. And he could never go backwards from that, to relive today and then, swollen with deceit and fear, go through the charade of going with Flora for the tests – for of course they would have to go for testing together. And she might still be negative ... He sat on the bed staring out of the window at the jacaranda tree he and Flora had planted when they had moved into the house. It was just past its full flowering and the tree seemed a foretelling of lost richness, lost abundance. He could not untangle the possibilities the future now thrust upon him and yet he must, for there were Flora's footsteps coming quickly up the path.

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**We can analyse the novel, the novella and the short story. We can do this by reviewing:**

1. **Plot:** This could be **linear**. This means the events in the story flow in a **chronological or sequential order**.

Plot could also be **circular**. This is when the story starts with the end and then jumps back in time, to the beginning.

The plot could have **flashbacks and foreshadowing**. Flashbacks affect the chronological flow of events. The writer interrupts this flow by taking the reader to an event that happened in the past, while foreshadowing is where a writer gives advance hint of what is to come later in the story.

While reviewing plot therefore, we must ask ourselves if the plot is linear or circular or if it has flashbacks.

The plot of the story, *Homecoming* by Vivienne Ndlovu, is circular. It starts at the end but the narrator goes back to the beginning to explain how the main character met his fate.

#### Activity 6

In a paragraph, explain how the main character could have possibly contracted

HIV/AIDS. Discuss this in groups of four.

2. **Setting:** We have to know the setting of a story in order to analyse or review it well. You already know that setting has to do with the time and place when the events happen. While reviewing a story, we must keenly study the physical details. We must also study the story's social, historical, cultural and political contexts. This way, we will understand the story, the message, themes and the author's intention better.

The setting for Vivienne Ndlovu's *homecoming* is a home – actually a bedroom – in an African country. This story takes place between 1984 and the 90s, as there is talk of HIV/AIDS. However, there is no mention of a mobile phone. Actually, the main character goes through the company switchboard in order to talk to Sibongile. This is a historical setting.

#### Activity 7

In your small groups, discuss the cultural setting of Ndlovu's short story, *Homecoming*.

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3. **Characters** develop themes. They, therefore, move the story forward. In any story, as you may be aware, we have the **major or main characters**. There are the protagonist and the antagonist.

All action revolves around the protagonist. He or she is the one that resolves the conflict or problem in the story. The antagonist is the one who causes the problems and also opposes the protagonist. The protagonist and some minor characters are **positive** characters. They help them to resolve the conflict. The antagonist and those who support him or her in most cases have **negative** character traits.

We have **minor characters** too in stories. Minor characters support major characters. The events in a story do not happen around the minor characters much. Further, minor characters do not resolve conflicts in a story.

A character can be:

- a) **simple/flat:** A flat character is an unsophisticated or plain character. The play may not reveal much about a flat character. Flat characters are not central to the story.
- b) **complex/round:** This is a fully developed character. We may relate to this kind of character as a human being since we come to know so much about him or her. The protagonists develop with the story and we are able to account for the changes that occur in their lives.
- c) **static:** This character does not grow or change or develop.
- d) **dynamic:** This is a character who grows. He or she changes his personality and attitude.

In Vivienne Ndlovu's story, *Homecoming*, the main character is a complex/round character – he develops as the story progresses. At one time he is unfaithful, but changes this habit.

### Activity 8

How else does the main character in Vivienne Ndlovu's short story, *Homecoming*, change? Discuss this with your desk mate.

4. **Theme(s):** This is the central idea in a piece of fiction. It refers to the suggestions the story makes about the life that it depicts. A theme is what the author intends to reveal in relation to the subject of the story. In other words, themes are insights of life that the story exposes to the reader. To understand the theme, it is important to look at the main conflicts or events.

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We must ask the question: what is the purpose of the story and what is it all about?

We can know a theme by how often the author or characters **repeat a certain idea**. We should also look at the **link between events**. Events in a story do not just occur; there is always **cause and effect**. One thing causes another to happen.

A story can have one theme or one **major theme** and other **supporting or minor** themes. For example, a story that has love as the major theme may also have hate as a minor theme.

The main theme in Vivienne Ndlovu's story, *Homecoming*, is unfaithfulness. The main character is unfaithful to his wife. On the other hand, Sibongile and the main character have negative character traits – they both cheat on their spouses.

#### Activity 9

In your small groups, discuss the minor themes in Vivienne Ndlovu's story, *Homecoming*.

5. **Messages:** These are the lessons that the author hopes the reader will get by engaging with the themes. Messages can be **implicit/implied** – this means they are suggested. They are not communicated directly to the reader. The reader has to think and analyse the story before he or she gets the message. Messages could also be **explicit** – this means they are stated directly.
- The message in Vivienne Ndlovu's story, *Homecoming* is that being unfaithful can destroy families. The main character might lose his family because of being unfaithful to his wife. He and the wife might die. This message is implied – it is not given to the reader directly.

#### Activity 10

Identify any other message in this story. Discuss this with your desk mate and say whether it is implied or explicit.

6. **Point of view:** This is the narrator's position in relation to the story being told. It could be:
- First person narrator:** In this instance, the author narrates the story as one of the characters. The author uses the first person pronoun 'I'. In this case, the author is part of the action that takes place in the story.

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**Second person narrator:** This form of narration brings the reader closer to the text. The author uses the pronoun ‘you’ in addressing the reader.

**Third person narrator:** This type of narration is sometimes referred to as ‘the eye of God narration’. The author refers to the characters in third person using the pronouns ‘she’ or ‘he’ or by their names. The author appears omniscient – all knowing and ever present, knowing the thoughts and feelings of the characters.

### Activity 11

Identify the point of view used in Vivienne Ndlovu’s story, *Homecoming*. Discuss this with your desk mate.

7. **Audience:** To know the audience, we should ask ourselves: who is supposed to read this book; who should get the message from this story? The audience of prose is a reader or intended target.

### Activity 12

Discuss with your desk mate who you think Vivienne Ndlovu had in mind when she wrote her short story, *Homecoming*.

8. **Atmosphere/mood:** This is the feeling that a story evokes. It is how you feel after reading a story. The atmosphere could be gloomy, happy, or tense.

### Activity 13

Individually, explain how you feel after reading Vivienne Ndlovu’s short story, *Homecoming*.

9. **Purpose:** We should ask ourselves why a story was written in order to understand its purpose. Some stories are written to inform, others entertain or explain.

### Activity 14

What do you think is the purpose of Vivienne Ndlovu’s story, *Homecoming*? Discuss this with your desk mate.

### Note:

*What we have discussed can be applied to the novel, novella and the short story.*

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## Practice Exercise 1

### Home work

Read the story below in your spare time and answer the questions that follow. Do this work as an individual.

### Scars of Earth

*by Mildred Kiconco Barya*

The journey found us. Long after it was over, I returned to the place of first love.

My mother was the first person to hug me when I reached home. She felt my flesh, my bones, my heart.

“You’ve lost so much weight, dear child!”

“It’s been a hectic life, Mama.” That’s normal justification when you live in the city.

Dad appeared from the farm gate just across the compound, carrying a large cabbage that weighed about 10 kilograms. He was wearing his usual calf-length black boots, being the farmer he’s always been. A surge of fondness welled up in me. He held me for over five minutes, until his red cotton shirt was warm and wet with my tears.

“Welcome home,” he said. But I know he did not have to say those words, for they were carried on his hands as he smoothed and flattened my back. They were said in the way he hugged me, his eyes searching for the soul in me, his heart bleeding for me.

Mama whistled and sung at the same time. She stroked my dreadlocks like I had not stormed out of the house threatening no return, tired of the country life.

Wind blows in the eucalyptus trees. I stand still in the compound, consciously smelling the honeysuckle that’s grown wildly on our fence. I inhale the sweet nectar and stretch out my arms to gather and hold as much sweetness as I can contain.

I want to cuddle the earth and holler that this is where I belong. I want to clasp time in the cold palms of my hands and not look back to wonder where my years have gone. Mama disappears into the kitchen and shortly returns with a pot of coffee.

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“I have mixed all the spices you used to love.”

“Yes, I smell the cinnamon, especially.”

“We shall sit here, outside.”

The sun is setting behind the hills. The sky wraps around herself a beautiful purple hue; it makes me want to weep. In our dreams, that’s the colour we had chosen for the wedding clothes.

I hold the coffee cup and it warms my hands. I want it to reach the ice on the outside but it does not, cannot. Mama is across the table, silent. I could sit here forever in the quiet.

“Whenever I watch the golden sunset, your face breaks right through,” she says.

“You used to threaten me that *Lakelekele*, the green monster, would kidnap me if I did not move into the house.”

“You didn’t even fear the mosquitoes. You were so loyal to that sunset you had no life indoors.”

I fight the desperate urge to cry. Just like me, sunsets were his favourite.

Sanyu, the girl who lost both her parents and ended up staying home, is laying the table for dinner. Dish after dish, she puts food on the tablemats and invites us to eat. Dad has completed his evening tasks, checking the paddocks and making sure all the farm gates are closed. He hangs his long coat on the nail in the dining room and joins us at the table.

“Lord God we thank you for your provisions that never run out, and we thank you for Nama who is with us tonight. Sanctify this food that it may nourish us, in Jesus’ name we pray.”

Dad’s prayers were always brief and to the point. “God has the whole universe crying to him, he doesn’t need an essay to answer us,” he would say, when we told him, that the reverend would call his requests ‘popcorn prayers bursting out so fast’.

“Nama, here’s your favourite dodo,” he says, giving me the vegetables I’ve long missed.

“And here, groundnuts in mushroom sauce.”

“Here, your roast pumpkin, you used to love that, remember!”

“Oh yeah, thanks.” My voice can hardly manage to audibly pass through the maze of food in my mouth.

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“And this is smoked beef in simsim paste; there’s your chicken breast; the mashed Irish potatoes you liked as a child; here’s the eggplant mixed with bitter tomatoes; sliced carrot in tender bean-pods; rice sprinkled with newly-picked peas and cardamoms, and your favourite millet bread ...” Dad keeps passing round more of this and more of that.

The feast melts my heart. Then jugs of sweet porridge, sour porridge, fermented pineapple juice, sour milk, hot African tea flavoured with ginger, and every type of tropical fruit to be found in Kigezi. Sanyu has taken care to cut the watermelon in triangular shapes, papaya in rectangular blocks, mangoes and avocados in oval shapes, oranges and guavas in crescent shapes, the berries retaining their round shapes ... they dance before my eyes, and I pray to the Lord to make me brave so I do not make a mess of myself.

The conversation is punctuated with lightness, laughter and talking spoons. Even when we discuss sad issues that are the village’s concern we connect like I haven’t been away too long, like I just slept yesterday and woke up today with no estrangement between us. We discuss the sand and bricks business that’s a trademark of our village; the neighbour’s son who drowned; the couple who are going blind with age; heavy rains that flood our gardens from time to time; the villagers who have died of AIDS ... we talk long into the night. When I finally retire to my room, I stretch out on the bed and listen to the once familiar songs of frogs croaking in the swamp nearby. The cockroaches stir the night with their melodies; the crickets make known their high stereo pitches.

Through my curtain-less window, the night is seductive. I summon the verdant green trees to be my shade. I see the moon peep to greet me with her smile. I smile back. The stars shine brilliantly and I marvel how they are held up there, without falling, while we who walk the earth where we are supposed to be from, are always in a fall.

She walks into my room unannounced. I am watching the sun rise to the sorghum fields in the horizon. She puts her hands flat on my shoulders and works out a soothing massage. Because I cannot laugh or cry, I heave a pregnant sigh of relief. Gently she caresses my neck, my face and my tangled hair.

“You love my locks?”

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She ignores the question. Her hands magically snake through the locks and squeeze my scalp. Energy flows back into me through her hands. This woman that is mother is a god. With her restorative touch, my walls come down in total release.

“His name was Selestino,” I say. “We did not set out on a trip, yet a few months later we embraced the future and talked wedding plans.”

Mama knows how near the surface my buried hurts are. She works her way, from the surface to the deep, slowly moving down my back, circling rings of spine softly but firmly. I close my eyes and relax.

“He was an economist, he loved reading my dark poetry. All is gone and a wound grows festering inch by inch.”

The hands touch parts I’d never known to feel the kind of sensation I was getting. The kind of weightlessness that comes with being a leaf floating on a wave. The kind of lightness known only when you’re touched by love.

“I remember mostly how he made me feel. With Tino, love was not the fiery passion of a bush in flames, but a calm fire kindled from beneath and brought out in soft whispers.”

Her hands remove the ache from my body, heart and mind.

“His love was not the loud hammer that shatters rocks, but the gentle falling drop of water that melts the stone.”

“Are you still clutching the past like gold nuggets that cannot be put away?” Those are Mama’s first words since the confession. I had thought she would chide me for never telling her about the relationship while it was soaring high.

“I have moved on, but I do not forget. Sometimes I call out to him like deep calls to deep. I see him in rays of the sun breaking through dawn to my day.”

“You’re throwing away the present.”

“The past was beautiful.”

“Learn to face the future.”

“I can only learn to survive the transition, to accept the interval. Years have gone with the locusts. I still seek his brown eyes to look for the soul that gave me wings.”

“I feel your pain,” Mama speaks from the depth of her kindness.

“I think love and pain have a symbiotic kind of relationship. They are intertwined like twigs in a crown of thorns. You cannot have one without the other. This I never knew.”

“There are many things we do not know,” she calmly responds.

“You and Dad have always loved each other, how do you do it?”

“We have many lifetimes in a lifetime. Like seasons, we do not take any for granted.”

So we talk about winter, summer, fall and spring. Each has a beautiful purpose for which it was created. Each sheds a different life on mother earth. Earth does not complain when spring leaves and there’s winter. Neither does she grumble when summer ends and fall sets in.

I recall how I groaned within when Tino left me. When he told me he had prayed and God advised him to cancel our relationship. It was God’s doing, not Tino’s decision per se. He always took cover in spiritualising everything.

“What else did God say in your prayer?” I had the nerve to ask.

“He showed me another woman.”

For a whole week I was a bundle of nerves and only a thin sheet of mercy held me from losing myself. Half the time, I was dizzy and suicidal, the other half of the time I was truly mad.

“I am glad you’ve come home. I am glad you’re sharing with me what happened to you.” Her hands are now making repeated performances, playing in my locks and running to and from my spine.

That day I chose to become earth. To embrace each season, each love, each friendship in its lifetime. To release each season when it goes without questioning why or when it would happen again. On nights when I look up, the sky is full of a million stars. Clouds and all, I rejoice to be part of that heavenly orbit.

On days when it rains, I open up to the softness and touch of rain and drink to my fill. When the sun comes out, I welcome the warmth, the heat. When the wind blows falling leaves over me, I receive them. I have found the joys of being mellow in spite of the scars. I have been earth since talking with Mama.

### Questions

Individually, answer the questions below.

- In your own words, write the events in this story down, chronologically.
- What is the setting of this story?
- With evidence, state the point of view used in this story.

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- d. With evidence from the story, explain the main theme in this story.
  - e. What do you think is the message in this story.
  - f. Who do you think is the target for this story?
  - g. What do you think is the purpose of this story?

### **Practice Exercise 2**



With the help of your teacher, select a short story, novella or novel for reading and prepare a summary of the plot and an analysis of setting and characters. Present your analysis in front of your class.

## Unit 2

# Introduction to African literary traditions

## What is a literary tradition?

A literary tradition refers to some common features or characteristics which define the literature of a group of people at a certain period of time. These characteristics relate to the form and meaning of the literature of the particular place or time period.

Therefore, literary texts from one literary tradition will have themes and features, which distinguish it from texts of a different literary tradition. This means that literary traditions differ from one place to another and they keep changing across time. For example, ancient Greek literature is different thematically and stylistically from medieval European literature. Similarly, African American literary traditions are different from Asian literary traditions.

It is not very easy to define African literary traditions. This is because Africa is a very diverse continent. Scholars of African literature do not always agree on when written literature first appeared in Africa. Even the very meaning of the term 'African literature' is controversial: questions about this term are many. Does it mean literature written by Africans living on the continent? What about the literature of Africans living outside the continent? Is it literature written about Africa? Is it literature written by non Africans about Africa? The answers to these questions are not clear. Nevertheless, African literary traditions can generally be divided into three. These are the pre-colonial, the colonial and post-colonial traditions.

### Activity 1

- a. In groups of four discuss what you think African literature means. How different is African literature from European literature? Present your findings to the class.
- b. Tell your group a story from your community.

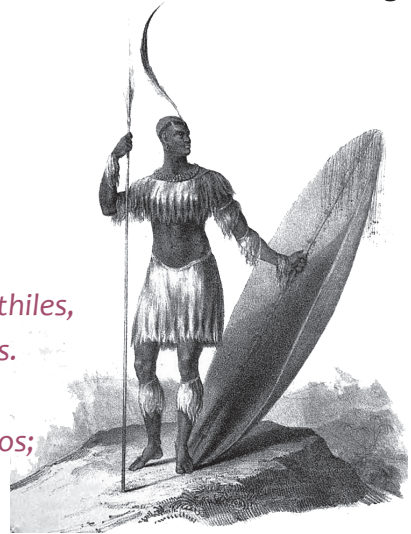
## 2.1. Pre-colonial African literature

Before the colonisation of Africa, the continent had a long history of literature. Most of the literature of this period was oral in nature. It was unwritten literature, which was passed down from generation to generation through memory and word of mouth. The literature of this period includes folk tales, myths, legends, epics, animal stories, songs, oral poems, proverbs, riddles and tongue twisters.

The epic is a good example of popular oral forms of literature in Africa. Some of the best known African epics include the Mwindo and Sundiata epics. In Rwanda, the Ubwiri is a popular form of praise poetry.

The following is quoted from a praise poem to Shaka, the Zulu warrior and king:

*Shaka went and erected temporary huts  
Between the Nsuze and the Thukela,  
In the country of Nyanya son of Manzawane;  
He ate up Mantondo son of Tazi,  
He felt him tasteless and spat him out,  
He devoured Sihayo.  
He who came dancing on the hillside of the Phuthiles,  
And he overcame Msikazi among the Ndimoshes.  
He met a long line of hah-de-dahs [ibis birds]  
When he was going to destroy the foolish Pondos;  
Shaka did not raid herds of cattle,  
He raided herds of buck.*



Shaka Zulu

### Activity 2

- Describe the character of Shaka according to this poem. Discuss this with your desk mate.
- In groups of four, take turns to tell any folktale from your community. Afterwards, on your own, write down one of the folktales in your books.

### Activity 3

**Below is the myth of Kigwa. This myth has been transmitted from generation to generation. Read it in your small groups in turns and then discuss it.**

#### The Myth of Kigwa

Nkuba, the King of Heaven, also known as Shyerezo, had several wives. One of them, named Gasani, had stopped having children. Her palace was empty

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and silent, and she was sad. One day, a seer named Imhamvu came to her palace. She told the Queen, “You are about to have a baby boy!”

“How will that come about?” Gasani replied. “I have been childless for many years now!”

“You will have your baby, and I shall get my reward!”

“What reward would you like?”

“All I ask is that you take me into your household, as a servant, and give me clothing and food and lodgings, so that I can be on hand to give you further advice.”

Gasani took Imhamvu in her service.

One fine day, Imhamvu told her Mistress, “Have a milk jug *igicuba* made from the sacred wood *umurinzi*. When it is ready, fill it with milk, and I’ll tell you what to do next”.

Now, it so happened that at that particular time, King Shyerezo was planning to extend his empire, by annexing some of the outlying areas. He convened his advisor and asked them to hold a divination session in order to indicate the best way of achieving this goal.

A divination bull was selected and prepared. The diviners collected the royal saliva as divination seed, fed it to the bull, and whispered the divination question into its ear. Then they put it to sleep, opened it up, and proceeded to check the inner organs for signs.

When the diviners had completed their readings, they went into the palace to give their report to the King. At that moment, the lady Imhamvu told the Queen, “Go to the consultation area, take the heart of the divination bull, and place it in the milk jug you have prepared. But make sure nobody sees you.”

Gasani did as she was told. She brought the heart over, dropped it into the *erythrina* milk jug, fitted some woven netting around it, and suspended it above the churning gourd table.

Imhamvu then recommended that the jug should be hidden away at all times, and the Queen should never let anyone come near it. She was to add a little warm milk every morning and evening at milking time.

Nine moons elapsed. In the tenth moon, Imhamvu told Gasani to open the jug. And lo and behold! A baby boy was found floating on milk curds. The whole household was alerted, and all shouted out joyfully, “Gasani *yabyaye!* Gasani’s baby is born! Let all rejoice and make sounds of ululation!”

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Gasani named her son Sabizeze, short for “Saba Imana zeze”: pray to the gods at their moment of favour. Little Sabizeze was indeed a gift of the gods, having been born of the heart of a divine bull, which had swallowed the seed of the King of Heaven. He was a very beautiful baby.

A messenger went to King Shyerezo to announce the birth of his little son, but the King dismissed the news and sent the messenger away. On the eighth day, the King failed to come over and take his son into his arms and give him a name, as was the custom. In fact, he refused to have anything at all to do with the baby and his mother. And when his aides insisted, he ordered them to have the child thrown away instead: “I don’t want that child in my kingdom,” he said.

When Gasani and her servant, the Wise Imhamvu, heard that King Shyerezo wanted the baby eliminated, they resolved to hide him away. Whenever the King would send his people over, the Queen would be secretly informed, and she would hide the child.

As the child grew up, he became more beautiful and intelligent, and was loved and admired by all.

News of the child’s loveliness eventually reached King Shyerezo. “Lord,” people would say, “your son is the most beautiful boy in all your kingdoms! None like him has ever been seen!” But he persisted in denying him. “Did I not order that child to be killed? Why is he still alive? Take him away and kill him! I don’t want him,” he said. But none consented to killing him, for he grew more and more handsome, and began to look more and more like his father.

One day, a group of Elders came to the palace of Queen Gasani, and told her, “Lady Gasani, your son’s beauty has become a byword, and we have come to see for ourselves. Please allow us to see him.”

The Queen called the boy in. When the Elders saw him, they marvelled at his looks and demeanour, for by then he was the spitting image of the King of Heaven Himself. They went to the King, and said to him, “Lord, we know you have ordered your son to be killed. However, the boy is so wonderfully like you that killing him would be like killing Your Majesty.”

The Elders were so convincing that eventually the King consented to go over to Gasani’s place and see this little boy for himself. As soon as he set his eyes on little Sabizeze, all desire of killing him suddenly left the King, and

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instead, he recognised him, took him into his arms, lifted him high up, then set him on his knee, and gave him a name: Imana, Divinity.

Although his Father had given the boy the name Imana, everyone around went on calling him by the name his mother had given him: Sabizeze. Soon, everyone realised he was very different from all the other royal children. Then a rumour about his unusual birth began to circulate in the royal household. “No wonder his Father had refused to recognise him,” people whispered. But Gasani never said a word about the matter.

Years later, however, Gasani’s mother came to see her, and enquired about her son’s birth and the strange rumours she had heard. Then Gasani resolved to tell her the full story.

While the Queen was recounting Sabizeze’s “processing”, one of his companions happened to overhear the whole story. He ran to his friend, and blurted the whole story out, “Son of my Lord, now I know why you are so different from the rest of us! You were born in a different way! You actually developed in a milk jug, from the heart of a sacred bull which had swallowed your Father’s Seed! Your mother found you swimming about in milk curds! I heard her tell the story to your grandmother! Very strange indeed!”

When Sabizeze heard that, he became very angry with his mother, and said, “*Ubonye Gasani ngo arambyarura!* How can my mother disown me in this manner! What a shame! I cannot stay here any longer!” And he resolved never to return to his mother’s house, but instead, to leave home and go and settle as far as possible, to the farthest end of his Father’s Empire, and beyond, if possible.

Sabizeze immediately began making preparations to leave his heavenly home. He went into his room, took his bow and quiver, called his hunter dogs, Ruzunguzungu and Ruguma (“Circling” and “Stay-put”). He went into his Father’s smithy, and took the Royal Hammer Nyarushara, and a little fire from the furnace. Then he went to find his brother Mututsi, and his sister Nyampundu, and persuaded them to come away with him.

Then Sabizeze went to the royal stables, pens, and hen houses, selected a couple of each of the royal animals and birds, including the bull – Rugira and his cow – Ingizi, the ram – Mudende and his sheep – Nyabuhoro, the goat – Rugeyo and his mate, the Rooster – Mugambira and his hen, the

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Cattle Bird – Inyange and his mate, and many others. His Pigmee Aide-de-Camp, Mihwabaro and his wife joined the party. They drove the animals and birds out of the gate, to a spot which Sabizeze had identified. Then using the Hammer, he made a hole in the ground, pushed the animals and birds through it, and then followed on with his companions.

At that time, the Hammer, Nyarushara, fell from Sabizeze’s hands, spun down and landed in the northwest of Rwanda, causing a great commotion, which rocked all the surrounding areas. It fell at the foot of the volcano Muhabura, where it made a great depression, which later filled with water, thus creating the pool Gipfuna.

The party touched down on a large rock named Ikinani, in the province of Mubali, to the north-east of Rwanda. After their landing, the Heavenly Exiles began to explore their new surroundings. They found comfortable shelters under the Rock, lit two fires, one for themselves, and another for their animals, and settled in.

The rocky promontory was in a clearing surrounded by dense forest. There appeared to be no people around, apart from the forest animals.

Over the next few days, the people of Mubali noticed smoke floating over the treetops. They were greatly surprised, and said to each other, “What can that be?” Some suggested it may be a hunting party, but none of their community ever went that deep into the forest ....

The people of Mubali went to their king, Kabeja, and told him about the strange sighting, and he sent a scouting party into the forest. When they came to the rock, they were at first afraid of what they saw, but the Heavenly Ones reassured them and welcomed them.

“Don’t be afraid. We are humans. We come from heaven. We are peaceful visitors, and we want to live with you as good neighbours. We hope you will be hospitable to us.”

The scouts went back to report to their king, and they told him all they had learnt.

The king of Mubali welcomed the Visitors, and encouraged his people to extend all hospitality to them. The local people called them Ibimanuka (descents), and named Sabizeze “Kigwa” (Fallen). The Children of Heaven called the locals “Abasangwabutaka” (Found on the land). But the proper name of the people of Mubali was “Abazigaba”.

The Ibimanuka lived with Kabeja and his people for a long time, teaching them many things, beginning with the various uses of the fire they had brought from heaven, which proved to be a great attraction to the locals. Soon, more and more people gathered around the Ibimanuka, and became their pupils.

One day, Kigwa, as he must now be called, told his brother Mututsi, “See, all the animals have reproduced and multiplied, while we remain as we came from heaven. Let us marry our sister, so that we too may have children.”

But Mututsi refused to marry his sister. He said to his brother, “Go ahead, if you so wish, but I do not want to marry.”

Then Kigwa married his sister Nyampundu, and they had a lovely baby girl, whom they named Sukiranya. Later, they had a son, and named him Muntu.

When Sukiranya had grown into a beautiful young woman, Kigwa suggested that his brother marry her, for it was not proper that he should remain single and childless.

“My brother, you have now been single and childless for a whole generation. Now that our beautiful daughter Sukiranya is grown up, why don’t you marry her?”

“What! Marry my own niece? Never!”

“I’ll tell you how we can resolve the issue. Go over across the valley, and settle on that hillside opposite ours. After a while, you’ll come to ask for my daughter’s hand. When I ask you for your ancestry, you’ll reply, ‘I am an Umwega from across the valley’.”

Mututsi agreed. In due course, he married Sukiranya, and they had three sons, whom they named Serwega, Muha, and Mukono.

*(sourced at: <http://dlblanc.com/Gakondo/en/Myths/Kigwa.php>)*

### Questions

- a. What is this myth talking about?
- b. Tell your group any myth or oral narrative that you know.
- c. Why is there need to write myths today?
- d. Myths usually have a supernatural dimension. What aspects of this story relate to the supernatural?
- e. Describe the character of:
  - i) Kigwa
  - ii) Gasani
  - iii) Imhamvu

- f. What does this story reveal about the political organisation of the pre-colonial Rwandan society?
- g. From what you know about short stories, what features of the short story genre are shared with this myth?
- h. Make a list of the non-English words in this story. What do you think is the importance of retaining them in the translated story?
- i. Although this is an example of an oral literature text, it has the potential to perform the same functions as written literature. What functions do you think this story can perform in the modern Rwandan society?

Although the oral literary tradition belongs to the pre-colonial times, it must be remembered that oral literary forms continue to flourish in Africa today. For example, performances of oral tales are featured on radio, television, and in films. African schools continue to teach oral literature, and students often engage in storytelling and oral performances in their schools.

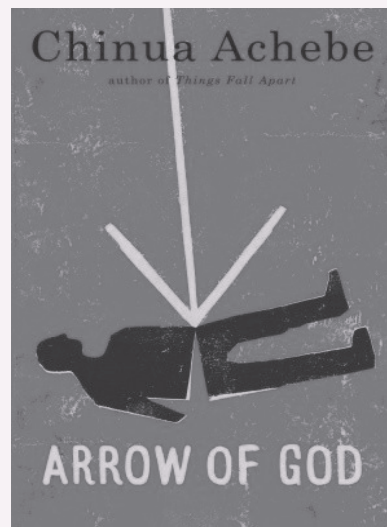
In addition, the oral literary tradition has been carried over into contemporary written African literature. Writers such as Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o rely heavily on oral forms of literary expression in their novels and short stories.

#### Activity 4

**Read the excerpt below from Chinua Achebe's novel, *Arrow of God*, and then pick out examples of oral literature features.**

The last man to speak that day was the oldest man from Akukalia's village. His voice was now shaky but his salute to the assembly was heard clearly in all corners of the *Nkwo* – marketplace. The men of Umuaro responded to his great effort with the loudest *Hem!* of the day. He said quietly that he must rest to recover his breath, and those who heard laughed.

“I want to speak to the man we are sending to Okperi. It is now a long time since we fought a war and many of you may not remember the custom. I am not saying that Akukalia needs to be reminded. But I am an old man, and an old man is there to talk. If the lizard of the homestead



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neglects to do the things for which its kind is known, it will be mistaken for the lizard of the farmland.

“From the way Akukalia spoke I saw that he was in great anger. It is right that he should feel like that. But we are not sending him to his motherland to fight. We are sending you, Akukalia, to place the choice of war or peace before them. Do I speak for Umuaro?”

They gave him power to carry on.

“We do not want Okperi to choose war; nobody eats war. If they choose peace we shall rejoice. But whatever they say you are not to dispute with them. Your duty is to bring word back to us. We all know you are a fearless man but while you are there put your fearlessness in your bag. If the young men who will go with you talk with too loud a voice you must cover their fault. I have in my younger days gone on such errands and know the temptations too well. I salute you.”

Ezeulu who had taken in everything with a sad smile now sprang to his feet like one stung in the buttocks by a black ant.

“Umuaro kwenu!” he cried.

“Hem!”

“I salute you all.” It was like the salute of an enraged Mask. “When an adult is in the house the she-goat is not left to suffer the pains of parturition on its tether. That is what our ancestors have said. But what have we seen here today? We have seen people speak because they are afraid to be called cowards. Others have spoken the way they spoke because they are hungry for war. Let us leave all that aside. If in truth the farmland is ours, Ulu will fight on our side. But if it is not you will soon know. I would not have spoken again today if I had not seen adults in the house neglecting their duty.

“Ogbuefi Egonwanne, as one of the three oldest men in Umuaro, should have reminded us that our fathers did not fight a war of blame. But instead of that he wants to teach our emissary how to carry fire and water in the same mouth. Have we not heard that a boy sent by his father to steal does not go stealthily but breaks the door with his feet? Why does Egonwanne trouble himself about small things when big ones are overlooked? We want war. How Akukalia speaks to his mother’s people is a small thing. He can spit into their face if he likes. When we hear a house has fallen do we ask if the ceiling fell with it? I salute you all.”

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## 2.2. The colonial period

The colonial period in African literature is often associated with literacy. However, you must note that written literature existed in parts of Africa before colonialism. For example, written works of literature discovered in Ethiopia are older than medieval European literature. The spread of Islam in North and West Africa also established a written tradition in these regions.

Along the East African Coast, narrative poetry in Swahili has been recovered from as early as the Eighteenth Century. In West Africa, literature in Arabic verse has been dated to the Fourteenth Century.

In addition, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Olaudah Equiano, who was a slave published his book titled *The Interesting Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. This was one of the earliest forms of African written literature to be known in Europe.

With increased literacy in Africa during the colonial period, many writers emerged on the continent. These include Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Sembene Ousmane, Cyprian Ekwensi, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Okot p'Bitek, Ferdinand Oyono and Amos Tutuola.

### Characteristics of literature of the colonial period

The following are the characteristics of the literature of the colonial period.

1. The texts reacted against colonial oppression and expressed African nationalism.
2. The texts sought to praise and glorify Africa's past.
3. The texts depicted the clash between African cultures and Western/European cultures.
4. The texts expressed optimism in Africa's future.
5. Stylistically, the texts incorporated African forms of expression; that is, they used oral literature features.

#### Activity 5

**The following passage comes from Chinua Achebe's novel, *No Longer at Ease*, which is an example of colonial literature. Read it carefully.**

Obi's serious talks with his father began after the family had prayed and all but the two of them had gone to bed. The prayers had taken place in Mother's room because she was again feeling very weak, and whenever she was

unable to join the others in the parlour her husband conducted prayers in her room.

The devil and his works featured prominently in that night's prayers. Obi had a shrewd suspicion that his affair with Clara was one of the works. But it was only a suspicion; there was nothing yet to show that his parents had actually heard of it. Mr Okonkwo's easy capitulation in the afternoon on the matter of heathen singing was quite clearly a tactical move. He let the enemy gain ground in a minor skirmish while he prepared his forces for a great offensive.

He said to Obi after prayers: 'I know you must be tired after the great distance you have travelled. There is something important we must talk about, but it can wait until tomorrow, till you have had time to rest.'

'We can talk now,' said Obi. 'I am not too tired. We get used to driving long distances.'

'Come to my room then,' said his father, leading the way with the ancient hurricane lamp.

There was a small table in the middle of the room. Obi remembered when it was bought. Carpenter Moses had built it and offered it to the church at harvest. It was put up for auction after the Harvest Service and sold. He could not now remember how much his father had paid for it, eleven and three pence perhaps.

'I don't think there is kerosene in this lamp,' said his father, shaking the lamp near his ear.

It sounded quite empty. He brought half a bottle of kerosene from his cupboard and poured a little into the lamp. His hands were no longer very steady and he spilt some of the kerosene. Obi did not offer to do it for him because he knew his father would never dream of letting children pour kerosene into his lamp; they would not know how to do it properly.



*A novel by Chinua Achebe*

‘How were all our people in Lagos when you left them?’ he asked. He sat on his wooden bed while Obi sat on a low stool facing him, drawing lines with his finger on the dusty top of the Harvest table.

‘Lagos is a very big place. You can travel the distance from here to Abame and still be in Lagos.’

‘So they said. But you have a meeting of Umuofia people?’

It was half-question, half statement.

‘Yes. We have a meeting. But it is only once a month.’ And he added: ‘It is not always that one finds time to attend.’ The fact was he had not attended since November.

‘True,’ said his father. ‘But in a strange land one should always move near one’s kinsmen.’ Obi was silent, signing his name in the dust on the table. ‘You wrote to me some time ago about a girl you had seen. How does the matter stand now?’

‘That is one reason why I came. I want us to go and meet her people and start negotiations. I have no money now, but at least we can begin to talk.’ Obi had decided that it would be fatal to sound apologetic or hesitant.

‘Yes,’ said his father. ‘That is the best way.’ He thought a little and again said yes, it was the best way. Then a new thought seemed to occur to him. ‘Do we know who this girl is and where she comes from?’

Obi hesitated just enough for his father to ask the question again in a different way. ‘What is her name?’

‘She is the daughter of Okeke, a native of Mbaino.’

‘Which Okeke? I know about three. One is a retired teacher, but it would not be that one.’

‘That is the one,’ said Obi.

‘Josiah Okeke?’ Obi said, yes, that was his name.

His father laughed. It was the kind of laughter one sometimes heard from a masked ancestral spirit. He would salute you by name and ask you if you knew who he was. You would reply with one hand humbly touching the ground that you did not, that he was beyond human knowledge. Then he might laugh as if through a throat of metal. And the meaning of that laughter was clear: ‘I did not really think you would know, you miserable human worm!’

Obi’s father’s laughter vanished as it had come – without warning, leaving no footprints. ‘You cannot marry the girl,’ he said quite simply.

‘Eh?’

‘I said you cannot marry the girl.’

‘But why, Father?’

‘Why? I shall tell you why. But first tell me this. Did you find out or try to find out anything about this girl?’

‘Yes.’

‘What did you find out?’

‘That they are *osu*.’

‘You mean to tell me that you knew, and you ask me why?’

‘I don’t think it matters. We are Christians.’

This had some effect, nothing startling though. Only a little pause and a slightly softer tone. ‘We are Christians,’ he said. ‘But that is no reason to marry an *osu*.’

‘The Bible says that in Christ there are no bond or free.’

‘My son,’ said Okonkwo, ‘I understand what you say. But this thing is deeper than you think.’

‘What is *this thing*? Our fathers in their darkness and ignorance called an innocent man *osu*, a thing given to idols, and thereafter he became an outcast, and his children, and his children’s children forever. But have we not seen the light of the Gospel?’

Obi used the very words that his father might have used in talking to his heathen kinsmen. There was a long silence. The lamp was now burning too brightly. Obi’s father turned down the wick a little and then resumed his silence. After what seemed ages he said: ‘I know Josiah Okeke very well.’ He was looking steadily in front of him. His voice sounded tired. ‘I know him and I know his wife. He is a good man and a great Christian. But he is *osu*. Naaman, captain of the host of Syria, was a great man and honourable, he was also a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper.’ He paused so that this great and felicitous analogy might sink in with all its heavy and dreadful weight. ‘*Osu* is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg of you, my son, not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children’s children unto the third and fourth generations will curse your memory. It is not for myself I speak; my days are few. You will bring sorrow on your head and on the heads of your children. Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters will your sons marry? Think of that, my son. We are Christians, but we cannot marry our own daughters.’

‘But all that is going to change. In ten years things will be quite different to what they are now.’

The old man shook his head sadly but said no more. Obi repeated his points again. What made an *osu* different from other men and women? Nothing but the ignorance of their forefathers. Why should they, who had seen the light of the Gospel, remain in that ignorance?

He slept very little that night. His father had not appeared as difficult as he had expected. He had not been won over yet, but he had clearly weakened. Obi felt strangely happy and excited. He had not been through anything quite like this before. He was used to speaking to his mother like an equal, even from his childhood, but his father had always been different. He was not exactly remote from his family, but there was something about him that made one think of the patriarchs, those giants hewn from granite. Obi’s strange happiness sprang not only from the little ground he had won in the argument, but from the direct human contact he had made with his father for the first time in his twenty-six years.

### Practice Exercise 1



- a. State the difference between the excerpt you have just read with the myth of Kigwa.
- b. Using evidence from the excerpt, explain how reading of the Bible affected literature of the colonial period.
- c. According to the passage, what is the meaning of *osu*?
- d. Literature of the colonial period expressed a clash between Christian and African values. Explain this with evidence from the excerpt you have just read.
- e. In what ways does Obi represent the new and emerging African values?
- f. Describe Obi’s father’s character according to this excerpt.

## 2.3. The post-colonial literary tradition

After the end of colonialism in Africa, many African writers continued to write about the issues that concerned the continent. As explained earlier, most African writers continued to use oral forms of literature in their texts. Thematically, most post-independent African writing expresses disillusionment with African countries and leadership. Their writing expresses the betrayal of the dreams that African people had at independence.

## Activity 6

Read the following short story by Chinua Achebe. Compare the theme in this story with the theme in the excerpt from his novel, *No Longer at Ease*, which you read earlier.

### Civil Peace

by Chinua Achebe

Jonathan Iwegbu counted himself extraordinarily lucky. ‘Happy survival!’ meant so much more to him than just a current fashion of greeting old friends in the first hazy days of peace. It went deep to his heart. He had come out of the war with five inestimable blessings – his head, his wife Maria’s head and the heads of three out of their four children. As a bonus he also had his old bicycle – a miracle too but naturally not to be compared to the safety of five human heads.

The bicycle had a little history of its own. One day at the height of the war it was commandeered ‘for urgent military action’. Hard as its loss would have been to him, he would still have let it go without a thought had he not had some doubts about the genuineness



of the officer. It wasn’t his disreputable rags, nor the toes peeping out of one blue and one brown canvas shoes, nor yet the two stars of his rank done obviously in a hurry in biro, that troubled Jonathan; many good and heroic soldiers looked the same or worse. It was rather a certain lack of grip and firmness in his manner. So Jonathan, suspecting he might be amenable to influence, rummaged in his raffia bag and produced the two pounds with which he had been going to buy firewood which his wife, Maria, retailed to camp officials for extra stockfish and maize meal, and got his bicycle back. That night he buried it in the little clearing in the bush where the dead of the camp, including his own youngest son, were buried. When he dug it up again a year later after the surrender all it needed was a little palm-oil greasing.

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‘Nothing puzzles God,’ he said in wonder.

He put it to immediate use as a taxi and accumulated a small pile of Biafran money ferrying camp officials and their families across the four-mile stretch to the nearest tarred road. His standard charge per trip was six pounds and those who had the money were only glad to be rid of some of it in this way. At the end of a fortnight he had made a small fortune of one hundred and fifteen pounds.

Then he made the journey to Enugu and found another miracle waiting for him. It was unbelievable. He rubbed his eyes and looked again and it was still standing there before him. But, needless to say, even that monumental blessing must be accounted also totally inferior to the five heads in the family. This newest miracle was his little house in Ogui Overside. Indeed nothing puzzles God! Only two houses away, a huge concrete edifice some wealthy contractor had put up just before the war was a mountain of rubble. And here was Jonathan’s little zinc house of no regrets built with mud blocks quite intact! Of course the doors and windows were missing and five sheets off the roof.

But what was that? And anyhow he had returned to Enugu early enough to pick up bits of old zinc and wood and soggy sheets of cardboard lying around the neighbourhood before thousands more came out of their forest holes looking for the same things. He got a destitute carpenter with one old hammer, a blunt plane and a few bent and rusty nails in his tool bag to turn this assortment of wood, paper and metal into door and window shutters for five Nigerian shillings or fifty Biafran pounds. He paid the pounds, and moved in with his overjoyed family carrying five heads on their shoulders.

His children picked mangoes near the military cemetery and sold them to soldiers’ wives for a few pennies, real pennies this time, and his wife started making breakfast akara balls for neighbours in a hurry to start life again. With his family earnings, he took his bicycle to the villages around and bought fresh palm-wine which he mixed generously in his rooms with the water which had recently started running again in the public tap down the road, and opened up a bar for soldiers and other lucky people with good money.

At first he went daily, then every other day and finally once a week, to the offices of the Coal Corporation where he used to be a miner, to find out what was what. The only thing he did find out in the end was that that little house

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of his was even a greater blessing than he had thought. Some of his fellow examiners who had nowhere to return at the end of the day's waiting just slept outside the doors of the offices and cooked what meal they could scrounge together in Bournvita tins. As the weeks lengthened and still nobody could say what was what, Jonathan discontinued his weekly visits altogether and faced his palm-wine bar.

But nothing puzzles God. Came the day of the windfall when after five days of endless scuffles in queues and counter-queues in the sun outside the Treasury he had twenty pounds counted into his palms as exgratia award for the rebel money he had turned in. It was like Christmas for him and for many others like him when the payments began. They called it – since few could manage its proper official name, egg-rasher.

As soon as the pound notes were placed in his palm, Jonathan simply closed it tight over them and buried fist and money inside his trouser pocket. He had to be extra careful because he had seen a man a couple of days earlier collapse into near-madness in an instant before that oceanic crowd because no sooner had he got his twenty pounds than some heartless ruffian picked it off him. Though it was not right that a man in such an extremity of agony should be blamed, yet many in the queues that day were able to remark quietly on the victim's carelessness, especially after he pulled out the innards of his pocket and revealed a hole in it big enough to pass a thief's head. But of course he had insisted that the money had been in the other pocket, pulling it out too to show its comparative wholeness. So one had to be careful.

Jonathan soon transferred the money to his left hand and pocket so as to leave his right free for shaking hands should the need arise, though by fixing his gaze at such an elevation as to miss all approaching human faces, he made sure that the need did not arise until he got home.

He was normally a heavy sleeper but that night he heard all the neighbourhood noises die down one after another. Even the night watchman who knocked the hour on some metal somewhere in the distance had fallen silent after knocking one o'clock. That must have been the last thought in Jonathan's mind before he was finally carried away himself. He couldn't have been gone for long, though, when he was violently awakened again.

'Who is knocking?' whispered his wife lying beside him on the floor.

'I don't know,' he whispered back breathlessly.

The second time the knocking came it was so loud and imperious that the rickety old door could have fallen down.

‘Who is knocking?’ he asked then, his voice parched and trembling.

‘Na tief-man and him people,’ came the cool reply. ‘Make you hopen de door.’ This was followed by the heaviest knocking of all.

Maria was the first to raise the alarm, then he followed and all their children.

‘Police-o! Thieves-o! Neighbours-o! Police-o! We are lost! We are dead! Neighbours, are you asleep? Wake up! Police-o!’

This went on for a long time and then stopped suddenly. Perhaps they had scared the thief away. There was total silence. But only for a short while.

‘You done finish?’ asked the voice outside. ‘Make we help you small. Oya, everybody!’

‘Police-o! Tief-man-o! Neighbours-o! We done loss-o! Police-o! ...’

There were at least five other voices besides the leader’s.

Jonathan and his family were now completely paralysed by terror. Maria and the children sobbed inaudibly like lost souls. Jonathan groaned continuously.

The silence that followed the thieves’ alarm vibrated horribly. Jonathan all but begged their leader to speak again and be done with it.

‘My frien,’ said he at long last, ‘we don try our best for call dem but I tink say dem all done sleep-o ... So wetin we go do now? Sometaim you wan call soja? Or you wan make we call dem for you? Soja better pass police. No be so?’

‘Na so!’ replied his men. Jonathan thought he heard even more voices now than before and groaned heavily. His legs were sagging under him and his throat felt like sandpaper.

‘My friend, why you no de talk again. I de ask you say you wan make we call soja?’

‘No’.

‘Awrighto. Now make we talk business. We no be bad tief. We no like for make trouble. Trouble done finish. War done finish and all the katakata wey de for inside. No Civil War again. This time na Civil Peace. No be so?’

‘Na so!’ answered the horrible chorus.

‘What do you want from me? I am a poor man. Everything I had went with this war. Why do you come to me? You know people who have money. We ...’

‘Awright! We know say you no get plenty money. But we sef no get even anini. So derefore make you open dis window and give us one hundred pound and we go commot. Orderwise we de come for inside now to show you guitar-boy like dis...’

A volley of automatic fire rang through the sky. Maria and the children began to weep aloud again.

‘Ah, missisi de cry again. No need for dat. We done talk say we na good tief. We just take our small money and go nwayorly. No molest. Abi we de molest?’

‘At all!’ sang the chorus.

‘My friends,’ began Jonathan hoarsely. ‘I hear what you say and I thank you. If I had one hundred pounds ...’

‘Lookia my friend, no be play we come play for your house. If we make mistake and step for inside you no go like am-o. So derefore ...’

‘To God who made me; if you come inside and find one hundred pounds, take it and shoot me and shoot my wife and children. I swear to God. The only money I have in this life is this twenty-pounds egg-rasher they gave me today ...’

‘OK. Time de go. Make you open dis window and bring the twenty pound. We go manage am like dat.’

There were now loud murmurs of dissent among the chorus: ‘Na lie de man de lie; e get plenty money ... Make we go inside and search properly well ... Wetin be twenty pound? ...’

‘Shurrap!’ rang the leader’s voice like a lone shot in the sky and silenced the murmuring at once. ‘Are you dere? Bring the money quick!’

‘I am coming,’ said Jonathan fumbling in the darkness with the key of the small wooden box he kept by his side on the mat.

At the first sign of light as neighbours and others assembled to commiserate with him he was already strapping his five-gallon demijohn to his bicycle carrier and his wife, sweating in the open fire, was turning over akara balls in a wide clay bowl of boiling oil. In the corner his eldest son was rinsing out dregs of yesterday’s palm wine from old beer bottles.

‘I count it as nothing,’ he told his sympathizers, his eyes on the rope he was tying. ‘What is egg-rasher? Did I depend on it last week? Or is it greater than other things that went with the war? I say, let egg-rasher perish in the flames! Let it go where everything else has gone. Nothing puzzles God.’

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## Questions

- a. The phrase “nothing puzzles God” is used repeatedly in this story. It emphasises the resilience of Jonathan Iwegbu and his family. List down the things that Jonathan and his family do which show their resilience.
- b. Discuss some of the problems facing post independent African countries as revealed by this story.
- c. Identify the use of non-standard English. Why do you think Achebe uses pidgin in this story?
- d. Although this is a story that deals with serious issues, the author tells it humorously. Pick out examples of humour and discuss how it makes an otherwise serious story light-hearted.
- e. *Civil Peace* is based on the civil war which took place in Nigeria after independence. From your general knowledge of Africa, which other countries have experienced civil war after independence?
- f. Why do you think this story is titled *Civil Peace* instead of *Civil War*?

## Unit 3

# Literary techniques in novels

### 3.1. Introduction

#### Activity 1

In groups of four, discuss how you can make a story interesting.

As we noted in Unit 1, the novel is one of the major genres of prose fiction. The goal of a novelist is to communicate a given message and to express this in a beautiful way. To achieve beauty, novelists use language in a unique manner to make their works artistically rich. This unique use of language is referred to as style in literature. Style is the quality that gives a work of literature its individual personality. It entails the use of various literary techniques, which include figurative language, symbolism, irony, contrast and dialogue.

#### Activity 2

**In groups of four, discuss the following statements. Individually, write down what kind of devices each one of them is. Why do we use such statements in a story?**

- a. Amalinze the Cat
- b. The flutes sang
- c. As slippery as a fish
- d. Like a bush-fire
- e. When he slept, his wives and children in their houses could hear him breathe
- f. He seemed to walk on springs
- g. He who brings kola brings life
- h. His own flute weaving in and out of them, decorating them with a colourful and plaintive tune
- i. Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten
- j. His voice rang out clear as the *ogene*

- k. Tears stood in his eyes
- l. The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them
- m. If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings

**Below is Chapter One from Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*. Read it carefully – pay attention to the words in bold. We shall refer to this as we discuss literary techniques.**

## CHAPTER ONE

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing **Amalinze the Cat**. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights.

The drums beat and **the flutes sang** and the spectators held their breath. Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was **as slippery as a fish** in water. Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their backs and their thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point. In the end Okonkwo threw the Cat.

That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during this time Okonkwo's fame had grown **like a bush-fire** in the harmattan. He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very severe look. He breathed heavily, and it was said that, **when he slept, his wives and children in their houses could hear him breathe**. When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to **walk on springs**, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a



*A novel by Chinua Achebe*

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slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had had no patience with his father.

Unoka, for that was his father's name, had died ten years ago. In his day he was lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow. If any money came his way, and it seldom did, he immediately bought gourds of palm-wine, called round his neighbours and made merry. He always said that whenever he saw a dead man's mouth he saw the folly of not eating what one had in one's lifetime. Unoka was, of course, a debtor, and he owed every neighbour some money, from a few cowries to quite substantial amounts.

He was tall but very thin and had a slight stoop. He wore a haggard and mournful look except when he was drinking or playing on his flute. He was very good on his flute, and his happiest moments were the two or three moons after the harvest when the village musicians brought down their instruments, hung above the fireplace. Unoka would play with them, his face beaming with blessedness and peace. Sometimes another village would ask Unoka's band and their dancing *egwugwu* to come and stay with them and teach them their tunes. They would go to such hosts for as long as three or four markets, making music and feasting. Unoka loved the good hire and the good fellowship, and he loved this season of the year, when the rains had stopped and the sun rose every morning with dazzling beauty. And it was not too hot either, because the cold and dry harmattan wind was blowing down from the north. Some years the harmattan was very severe and a dense haze hung on the atmosphere. Old men and children would then sit round log fires, warming their bodies. Unoka loved it all, and he loved the first kites that returned with the dry season, and the children who sang songs of welcome to them. He would remember his own childhood, how he had often wandered around looking for a kite sailing leisurely against the blue sky. As soon as he found one he would sing with his whole being, welcoming it back from its long, long journey, and **asking it if it had brought home any lengths of cloth.**

That was years ago, when he was young. Unoka, the grown-up, was a failure. He was poor and his wife and children had barely enough to eat. People laughed at him because he was a loafer, and they swore never to lend

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him any more money because he never paid back. But Unoka was such a man that he always succeeded in borrowing more, and piling up his debts.

One day a neighbour called Okoye came in to see him. He was reclining on a mud bed in his hut playing on the flute. He immediately rose and shook hands with Okoye, who then unrolled the goatskin which he carried under his arm, and sat down. Unoka went into an inner room and soon returned with a small wooden disc containing a kola nut, some alligator pepper and a lump of white chalk.

“I have kola,” he announced when he sat down, and passed the disc over to his guest.

“Thank you. **He who brings kola brings life.** But I think you ought to break it,” replied Okoye, passing back the disc.

“No, it is for you, I think,” and they argued like this for a few moments before Unoka accepted the honour of breaking the kola. Okoye, meanwhile, took the lump of chalk, drew some lines on the floor, and then painted his big toe.

As he broke the kola, Unoka prayed to their ancestors for life and health, and for protection against their enemies. When they had eaten they talked about many things: about the heavy rains which were drowning the yams, about the next ancestral feast and about the impending war with the village of Mbaino. Unoka was never happy when it came to wars. He was in fact a coward and could not bear the sight of blood. And so he changed the subject and talked about music, and his face beamed. He could hear in his mind’s ear the blood-stirring and intricate rhythms of the *ekwe* and the *udu* and the *ogene*, and he could hear his own flute **weaving in and out** of them, **decorating** them with a colourful and plaintive tune. The total effect was gay and brisk, but if one picked out the flute as it went up and down and then broke up into short snatches, one saw that there was sorrow and grief there.

Okoye was also a musician. He played on the *ogene*. But he was not a failure like Unoka. He had a large barn full of yams and he had three wives. And now he was going to take the *Idemili* title, the third highest in the land. It was a very expensive ceremony and he was gathering all his resources together. That was in fact the reason why he had come to see Unoka. He cleared his throat and began: “Thank you for the kola. You may have heard of the title I intend to take shortly.”

Having spoken plainly so far, Okoye said the next half a dozen sentences in proverbs. Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and **proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten**. Okoye was a great talker and he spoke for a long time, skirting round the subject and then hitting it finally. In short, he was asking Unoka to return the two hundred cowries he had borrowed from him more than two years before. As soon as Unoka understood what his friend was driving at, he burst out laughing. He laughed loud and long and his voice rang out **clear as the ogene**, and **tears stood in his eyes**. His visitor was amazed, and sat speechless. At the end, Unoka was able to give an answer between fresh outbursts of mirth.

“Look at that wall,” he said, pointing at the far wall of his hut, which was rubbed with red earth so that it shone. “Look at those lines of chalk,” and Okoye saw groups of short perpendicular lines drawn in chalk. There were five groups, and the smallest group had ten lines. Unoka had a sense of the dramatic and so he allowed a pause, in which he took a pinch of snuff and sneezed noisily, and then he continued: “Each group there represents a debt to someone, and each stroke is one hundred cowries. You see, I owe that man a thousand cowries. But he has not come to wake me up in the morning for it. I shall pay you, but not today. Our elders say that **the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them**. I shall pay my big debts first.” And he took another pinch of snuff, as if that was paying the big debts first. Okoye rolled his goatskin and departed.

When Unoka died he had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt. Any wonder then that his son Okonkwo was ashamed of him? Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father. Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. And so although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, **if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings**. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders. And that was how he came to look after the doomed lad who was sacrificed to the village of Umuofia by their neighbours to avoid war and bloodshed. The ill-fated lad was called Ikemefuna.

### Group discussion

- a. In your small groups, discuss all the words in bold type.
- b. How do these words help make the story more colourful?
- c. What are these expressions called?

## 3.2. Literary techniques

Literary techniques are also known as narrative techniques or literary devices. These are the methods a writer uses to convey his or her message properly. Literary techniques help the reader visualise what the author is saying. This is what we call style. For instance, Achebe uses imagery in the chapter that we just read. Umofians refer to Amalinze as “**Amalinze the Cat**” because his back never touched the ground. We know that even if you throw a cat, it never falls on its back. This **image** therefore, helps us to visualise how Amalinze wrestled. It also helps us to understand why Okonkwo was so famous.

### Activity 3

- a. Discuss with your desk mate what a simile is.
- b. Pick a simile from the story and individually, construct a sentence using it.

In this Unit, we shall look at: **tone, irony, satire, symbolism** and other aspects of prose like, **plot, character and purpose**.

**Tone:** This is the writer’s attitude towards a subject – how the author approaches what he or she is talking about. Tone is conveyed through the author’s choice of words. An author can be formal, informal, comical or sad. He or she can also be positive or negative. For instance, Unoka makes light of his situation when he says: “Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them.” Though you may sympathise with Okoye who had come to ask Unoka to pay him, you would also laugh because of Unoka’s wit. Generally, Chapter One of Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* has an informal tone.

### Activity 4

**Read the paragraph below with your desk mate, and explain its tone. One of you should listen as the other reads.**

Unoka, for that was his father’s name, had died ten years ago. In his day he was lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow. If

any money came his way, and it seldom did, he immediately bought gourds of palm-wine, called round his neighbours and made merry. He always said that whenever he saw a dead man's mouth he saw the folly of not eating what one had in one's lifetime. Unoka was, of course, a debtor, and he owed every neighbour some money, from a few cowries to quite substantial amounts.

**Irony:** The word irony comes from a Greek character, Eiron who was weaker and used his wit to overcome a stronger character. This word therefore means “hypocrisy”, “deception”, or “feigned ignorance”. It is a literary device in which there is a difference between what one says or does and what one means. For example: A man is found by a woman, urinating in public and the woman says, “You are such an intelligent man.” You notice that there is a disagreement between what is done and how the individual is described. You cannot be described as intelligent if you urinate in public!

### Activity 5

In pairs, discuss and come up with an ironical statement describing Unoka. Refer to the passage in Activity 3.

We detect irony when we notice a difference between what someone would reasonably expect to happen and what actually does happen.

For instance, Unoka knows very well he owes Okoye. He therefore did not have to wait for Okoye to explain himself to know why he had paid him a visit. Yet the narrator says: “As soon as Unoka understood what his friend was driving at, he burst out laughing.” This is the opposite of what we would expect. Surely, Unoka was well aware of the fact that he owed Okoye 200 cowries.

There are three types of irony: verbal irony, dramatic irony and situational irony.

**Verbal irony** refers to a situation where an author says one thing and means something else.

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In other words, verbal irony is saying something different from what you mean. Sometimes we detect irony through the tone of the voice, which could show that you mean the opposite.

**Dramatic irony** mainly occurs in dramatic texts in which the writer allows a reader to know more about a situation than a character does. This creates a discrepancy between what the character says and thinks and what the reader knows is true. The reader is able to perceive something that a character in the literature does not know.

**Situational irony** is detected where there is contradiction between the expected result and actual results, or what appears and what is true.

### Activity 6

**In groups of four, discuss this dialogue**

**Man:** Who said smoking kills? I am forty and have been smoking for five years.

**Woman:** How wise! You are forty yet you look like a ninety-year-old. Besides, your cough is music to my ears.

**Satire:** This is criticising something wrong using humour or exaggeration. It is expected that as the reader or audience laughs, they can learn something and correct the wrong. For instance, the narrator in *Things Fall Apart* says: “He always said that whenever he saw a dead man’s mouth he saw the folly of not eating what one had in one’s lifetime.” This is a rebuke to the lazy. We laugh as we read because we know Unoka was a debtor, therefore he and his family never had enough to eat. This is clearly stated in Chapter One, thus: “He was poor and his wife and children had barely enough to eat.” Achebe is basically saying that if you want the good life you must work hard and earn it.

### Activity 7

- What do the following symbols represent: a cross, a crown. Discuss this with your desk mate.
- What do you think Amalinze represents in our lives? Discuss this in groups of four.

**Symbolism:** A symbol is a sign, a shape or object that is used to signify something else. For instance, green colour signifies life while blue signifies

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water. Symbolism therefore is the use of symbols in stories to represent ideas. For instance In Chapter One of *Things Fall Apart*, we are told that when Unoka died, he had taken no title. A title in this case is a symbol of achievement.

If an image is repeatedly used, it begins to carry several meanings. It may be significant enough to be called a symbol. You will notice that various characters are symbolic in the sense that they stand for certain ideals.

Authors may also use the following literary devices:

### 3.3. Imagery

#### Activity 8

- In pairs discuss the meaning of this statement: My mother is a rock.
- In groups of four, name animal characters from oral narratives, who speak.
- In groups of four, discuss the meaning of exaggeration.

Imagery entails the use of words and phrases that create mental pictures in the reader's mind. Imagery enables us to see, hear, smell, taste and touch what the author says – in our minds. This is done using similes, metaphors, personification, allusion and hyperbole.

**Metaphors** are comparisons that show how two things, that are not alike, in most ways, are similar in one important way; for instance, “Amalinze the Cat”. Here Amalinze's ability or technique is compared to that of a cat. Here is another example: She is an angel.

The use of metaphors makes the writing vivid. We are made to see what is being described as if it is a picture. Metaphors reveal aspects of people, objects and situations. Generally, a metaphor describes one subject as being equal to a second object.

The metaphor consists of two parts: the tenor and vehicle. The tenor is the subject to which attributes are ascribed. The vehicle is the subject from which the attributes are borrowed. For example: in “Amalinze the Cat” Amalinze is the tenor on which qualities of a cat are attributed. As you can see from this example, to understand a metaphor, you have to deviate from the dictionary definition.

**A simile** is closely related to a metaphor. It is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things. Similes are usually introduced by the words 'like' or 'as'. For example, “... Okonkwo was **as slippery as a fish ...**” Here is another example As green as grass.

### Activity 9

Write one simile from Chapter One of *Things Fall Apart* that uses the word 'like'.

Both similes and metaphors are forms of comparison. The difference between a simile and metaphor is that similes allow the two ideas to remain distinct in spite of the similarity. But metaphors equate two ideas despite their difference.

**Personification** is giving non-human things human qualities. For example, “... **the flutes sang ...**”. A flute never sings, yet here it is given the human ability of singing.

“... **asking it if it had brought home any lengths of cloth ...**”. Here the kite, which is an animal, is looked at as if it is a merchant who had gone to faraway places and is expected to bring back lengths of cloth.

“... he could hear his own flute **weaving in and out** of them, **decorating** them ...” Here, the flute is given human abilities – to be able to weave and decorate.

“... **tears stood in his eyes.**” All of us know that human beings can stand, but can tears stand? Certainly not.

**Hyperbole** is exaggeration; making subjective claims that are exaggerated. For instance, it is said that when Okonkwo slept, “**his wives and children in their houses could hear him breathe.**”

## 3.4. Plot

### Activity 10

Tell the members of your group what happened since you left your home until you got to school.

By now you know that plot refers to the unfolding of events in a piece of prose. As you read the next two chapters of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, you will see what causes Okonkwo to become who he is. However, in Chapter One, we can see that Okonkwo became famous because he defeated Amalinze in a wrestling match. On the other hand Unoka died poor without a title because he was lazy. Plot has to do with cause and effect; one thing causes the other. The result of the cause and effect is what creates conflict and as the main character tries to solve the conflict, the story moves forward.

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The plot in *Things Fall Apart* is made up of **episodes**, which are single, related events. For example, Chapter One opens with the wrestling action, which introduces Okonkwo to the reader and explains why he, Okonkwo, was famous. This flows into the next episode, which introduces Unoka and gives reasons Okonkwo was impatient with him.

The episodes in this novel are parallel. **Parallel episodes** are events that have something in common. For example, we are introduced to Okonkwo the famous man in the first episode. Thereafter, we are introduced to Unoka – the father to Okonkwo – who is a lazy man.

### Activity 11

The common thing in the two episodes between Okonkwo and Unoka is enterprise. Give evidence from Chapter One of *Things Fall Apart* to justify this statement.

**Character:** Character refers to traits or manners and at the same time to the fictional human being, animal or thing in a story. For instance, Okonkwo is a character in *Things Fall Apart*. At the same time, Okonkwo exhibits a certain character – he behaves in a particular way.

Remember: Character traits can be presented:

**Directly:** Where the author or other characters talk about a particular character. For example, the character of Unoka: “In his day **he was lazy** and **improvident** and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow.”

**Indirectly:** When we get hints that make us think about a character and make conclusions about his or her character. For instance, “Having spoken plainly so far, Okoye said the next half a dozen sentences in proverbs.” This makes the reader think of Okoye as being persuasive.

In order to identify character traits we look at:

1. The physical description of the character in terms of size, colour and general appearance.
2. What the character says about himself or herself and about other issues affecting society.
3. The actions of the character in his or her interaction with other characters.
4. What other characters say about the character.
5. The character’s thoughts, desires, dreams and wishes.

Characters are usually described by single adjectives such as loving, cruel, intelligent, naïve, hardworking, lazy, humorous and so on. Consequently, one does not say character A cares about people but rather, character A is caring. One should also avoid ambiguous words when describing a character. For example, rather than saying character B is not disciplined, one should be more specific and say he or she is rude or dishonest. Characters can have both positive and negative traits.

### Activity 12

Now that you have read the first chapter of *Things Fall Apart*, in groups of four, describe:

- i) Okonkwo
- ii) Unoka

**Purpose** is the reason for writing a novel. What do you think is the purpose of writing *Things Fall Apart*?

### Practice Exercise 1

#### Homework

The following are chapters two and three of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Read them and then answer the questions that follow.

## CHAPTER TWO

Okonkwo had just blown out the palm-oil lamp and stretched himself on his bamboo bed when he heard the *ogene* of the town crier piercing the still night air. Gome, gome, gome, gome, boomed the hollow metal.

Then the crier gave his message, and at the end of it beat his instrument again. And this was the message. Every man of Umuofia was asked to gather at the market place tomorrow morning. Okonkwo wondered what was amiss, for he knew certainly that something was amiss. He had discerned a clear overtone of tragedy in the crier's voice, and even now he could still hear it as it grew dimmer and dimmer in the distance.

The night was very quiet. It was always quiet except on moonlight nights. Darkness held a vague terror for these people, even the bravest among them. Children were warned not to whistle at night for fear of evil spirits. Dangerous animals became even more sinister and uncanny in the dark. A

snake was never called by its name at night, because it would hear. It was called a string. And so on this particular night as the crier's voice was gradually swallowed up in the distance, silence returned to the world, a vibrant silence made more intense by the universal trill of a million million forest insects.

On a moonlight night it would be different. The happy voices of children playing in open fields would then be heard. And perhaps those not so young would be playing in pairs in less open places, and old men and women would remember their youth. As the Ibo say: "When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk."

But this particular night was dark and silent. And in all the nine villages of Umuofia a town crier with his *ogene* asked every man to be present tomorrow morning. Okonkwo on his bamboo bed tried to figure out the nature of the emergency — war with a neighbouring clan? That seemed the most likely reason, and he was not afraid of war. He was a man of action, a man of war. Unlike his father he could stand the look of blood. In Umuofia's latest war he was the first to bring home a human head. That was his fifth head and he was not an old man yet. On great occasions such as the funeral of a village celebrity he drank his palm-wine from his first human head.

In the morning the market place was full. There must have been about ten thousand men there, all talking in low voices. At last Ogbuefi Ezeugo stood up in the midst of them and bellowed four times, "Umuofia kwenu," and on each occasion he faced a different direction and seemed to push the air with a clenched fist. And ten thousand men answered "Yaa!" each time. Then there was perfect silence. Ogbuefi Ezeugo was a powerful orator and was always chosen to speak on such occasions. He moved his hand over his white head and stroked his white beard. He then adjusted his cloth, which was passed under his right arm-pit and tied above his left shoulder.

"Umuofia kwenu," he bellowed a fifth time, and the crowd yelled in answer. And then suddenly like one possessed he shot out his left hand



*An image of the Ogene*

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and pointed in the direction of Mbaino, and said through gleaming white teeth firmly clenched: “Those sons of wild animals have dared to murder a daughter of Umuofia.” He threw his head down and gnashed his teeth, and allowed a murmur of suppressed anger to sweep the crowd. When he began again, the anger on his face was gone, and in its place a sort of smile hovered, more terrible and more sinister than the anger. And in a clear unemotional voice he told Umuofia how their daughter had gone to market at Mbaino and had been killed. That woman, said Ezeugo, was the wife of Ogbuefi Udo, and he pointed to a man who sat near him with a bowed head. The crowd then shouted with anger and thirst for blood.

Many others spoke, and at the end it was decided to follow the normal course of action. An ultimatum was immediately dispatched to Mbaino asking them to choose between war on the one hand, and on the other the offer of a young man and a virgin as compensation.

Umuofia was feared by all its neighbours. It was powerful in war and in magic, and its priests and medicine men were feared in all the surrounding country. Its most potent war-medicine was as old as the clan itself. Nobody knew how old. But on one point there was general agreement – the active principle in that medicine had been an old woman with one leg. In fact, the medicine itself was called *agadi-nwayi*, or old woman. It had its shrine in the centre of Umuofia, in a cleared spot. And if anybody was so foolhardy as to pass by the shrine after dusk he was sure to see the old woman hopping about.

And so the neighbouring clans who naturally knew of these things feared Umuofia, and would not go to war against it without first trying a peaceful settlement. And in fairness to Umuofia it should be recorded that it never went to war unless its case was clear and just and was accepted as such by its Oracle – the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. And there were indeed occasions when the Oracle had forbidden Umuofia to wage a war. If the clan had disobeyed the Oracle they would surely have been beaten, because their dreaded *agadi-nwayi* would never fight what the Ibo call a fight of blame.

But the war that now threatened was a just war. Even the enemy clan knew that. And so when Okonkwo of Umuofia arrived at Mbaino as the proud and imperious emissary of war, he was treated with great honour and respect, and two days later he returned home with a lad of fifteen and a young virgin.

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The lad's name was Ikemefuna, whose sad story is still told in Umuofia unto this day.

The elders, or *ndichie*, met to hear a report of Okonkwo's mission. At the end they decided, as everybody knew they would, that the girl should go to Ogbuefi Udo to replace his murdered wife. As for the boy, he belonged to the clan as a whole, and there was no hurry to decide his fate. Okonkwo was, therefore, asked on behalf of the clan to look after him in the interim. And so for three years Ikemefuna lived in Okonkwo's household.

Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children. Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and of the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo's fear was greater than these. It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father. Even as a little boy he had resented his father's failure and weakness, and even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was *agbala*. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that *agbala* was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title. And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion – to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness.

During the planting season Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cock-crow until the chickens went to roost. He was a very strong man and rarely felt fatigue. But his wives and young children were not as strong, and so they suffered. But they dared not complain openly. Okonkwo's first son, Nwoye, was then twelve years old but was already causing his father great anxiety for his incipient laziness. At any rate, that was how it looked to his father, and he sought to correct him by constant nagging and beating. And so Nwoye was developing into a sad-faced youth.

Okonkwo's prosperity was visible in his household. He had a large compound enclosed by a thick wall of red earth. His own hut, or *obi*, stood immediately behind the only gate in the red walls. Each of his three wives had her own hut, which together formed a half moon behind the *obi*. The barn

was built against one end of the red walls, and long stacks of yam stood out prosperously in it. At the opposite end of the compound was a shed for the goats, and each wife built a small attachment to her hut for the hens. Near the barn was a small house, the “medicine house” or shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god and of his ancestral spirits. He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food and palm-wine, and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives and eight children.

So when the daughter of Umuofia was killed in Mbaino, Ikemefuna came into Okonkwo’s household. When Okonkwo brought him home that day he called his most senior wife and handed him over to her.

“He belongs to the clan,” he told her. “So look after him.”

“Is he staying long with us?” she asked.

“Do what you are told, woman,” Okonkwo thundered, and stammered. “When did you become one of the *ndichie* of Umuofia?”

And so Nwoye’s mother took Ikemefuna to her hut and asked no more questions.

As for the boy himself, he was terribly afraid. He could not understand what was happening to him or what he had done. How could he know that his father had taken a hand in killing a daughter of Umuofia? All he knew was that a few men had arrived at their house, conversing with his father in low tones, and at the end he had been taken out and handed over to a stranger. His mother had wept bitterly, but he had been too surprised to weep. And so the stranger had brought him, and a girl, a long, long way from home, through lonely forest paths. He did not know who the girl was, and he never saw her again.

### CHAPTER THREE

Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men usually had. He did not inherit a barn from his father. There was no barn to inherit. The story was told in Umuofia, of how his father, Unoka, had gone to consult the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves to find out why he always had a miserable harvest.

The Oracle was called Agbala, and people came from far and near to consult it. They came when misfortune dogged their steps or when they had

a dispute with their neighbours. They came to discover what the future held for them or to consult the spirits of their departed fathers.

The way into the shrine was a round hole at the side of a hill, just a little bigger than the round opening into a henhouse. Worshippers and those who came to seek knowledge from the god crawled on their belly through the hole and found themselves in a dark, endless space in the presence of Agbala. No one had ever beheld Agbala, except his priestess. But no one who had



*An entrance to a cave*

ever crawled into his awful shrine had come out without the fear of his power. His priestess stood by the sacred fire which she built in the heart of the cave and proclaimed the will of the god. The fire did not burn with a flame. The glowing logs only served to light up vaguely the dark figure of the priestess.

Sometimes a man came to consult the spirit of his dead father or relative. It was said that when such a spirit appeared, the man saw it vaguely in the darkness, but never heard its voice. Some people even said that they had heard the spirits flying and flapping their wings against the roof of the cave.

Many years ago when Okonkwo was still a boy, his father, Unoka, had gone to consult Agbala. The priestess in those days was a woman called Chika. She was full of the power of her god, and she was greatly feared. Unoka stood before her and began his story.

“Every year,” he said sadly, “before I put any crop in the earth, I sacrifice a cock to Ani, the owner of all land. It is the law of our fathers. I also kill a cock at the shrine of Ifejioku, the god of yams. I clear the bush and set fire to it when it is dry. I sow the yams when the first rain has fallen, and stake them when the young tendrils appear. I weed” – “Hold your peace!” screamed the priestess, her voice terrible as it echoed through the dark void. “You have offended neither the gods nor your fathers. And when a man is at peace with

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his gods and his ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arm. You, Unoka, are known in all the clan for the weakness of your machete and your hoe. When your neighbours go out with their axe to cut down virgin forests, you sow your yams on exhausted farms that take no labour to clear. They cross seven rivers to make their farms, – you stay at home and offer sacrifices to a reluctant soil. Go home and work like a man.”

Unoka was an ill-fated man. He had a bad *chi* or personal god, and evil fortune followed him to the grave, or rather to his death, for he had no grave. He died of the swelling which was an abomination to the earth goddess. When a man was afflicted with swelling in the stomach and the limbs he was not allowed to die in the house. He was carried to the Evil Forest and left there to die. There was the story of a very stubborn man who staggered back to his house and had to be carried again to the forest and tied to a tree. The sickness was an abomination to the earth, and so the victim could not be buried in her bowels. He died and rotted away above the earth, and was not given the first or the second burial. Such was Unoka’s fate. When they carried him away, he took with him his flute.

With a father like Unoka, Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men had. He neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife. But in spite of these disadvantages, he had begun even in his father’s lifetime to lay the foundations of a prosperous future. It was slow and painful. But he threw himself into it like one possessed. And indeed he was possessed by the fear of his father’s contemptible life and shameful death.

There was a wealthy man in Okonkwo’s village who had three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children. His name was Nwakibie and he had taken the highest but one title which a man could take in the clan. It was for this man that Okonkwo worked to earn his first seed yams.

He took a pot of palm-wine and a cock to Nwakibie. Two elderly neighbours were sent for, and Nwakibie’s two grown-up sons were also present in his *obi*. He presented a kola nut and an alligator pepper, which were passed round for all to see and then returned to him. He broke the nut saying: “We shall all live. We pray for life, children, a good harvest and happiness. You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me. Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break.”

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After the kola nut had been eaten Okonkwo brought his palm-wine from the corner of the hut where it had been placed and stood it in the centre of the group. He addressed Nwakibie, calling him “Our father.”

“*Nna ayi*,” he said. “I have brought you this little kola. As our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness. I have come to pay you my respects and also to ask a favour. But let us drink the wine first.”

Everybody thanked Okonkwo and the neighbours brought out their drinking horns from the goatskin bags they carried. Nwakibie brought down his own horn, which was fastened to the rafters. The younger of his sons, who was also the youngest man in the group, moved to the centre, raised the pot on his left knee and began to pour out the wine. The first cup went to Okonkwo, who must taste his wine before anyone else. Then the group drank, beginning with the eldest man. When everyone had drunk two or three horns, Nwakibie sent for his wives. Some of them were not at home and only four came in.

“Is Anasi not in?” he asked them. They said she was coming. Anasi was the first wife and the others could not drink before her, and so they stood waiting.

Anasi was a middle-aged woman, tall and strongly built. There was authority in her bearing and she looked every inch the ruler of the womenfolk in a large and prosperous family. She wore the anklet of her husband’s titles, which the first wife alone could wear.

She walked up to her husband and accepted the horn from him. She then went down on one knee, drank a little and handed back the horn. She rose, called him by his name and went back to her hut. The other wives drank in the same way, in their proper order, and went away.

The men then continued their drinking and talking. Ogbuefi Idigo was talking about the palm-wine tapper, Obiako, who suddenly gave up his trade.

“There must be something behind it,” he said, wiping the foam of wine from his moustache with the back of his left hand. “There must be a reason for it. A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing.”

“Some people say the Oracle warned him that he would fall off a palm tree and kill himself,” said Akukalia.

“Obiako has always been a strange one,” said Nwakibie. “I have heard that many years ago, when his father had not been dead very long, he had gone

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to consult the Oracle. The Oracle said to him, 'Your dead father wants you to sacrifice a goat to him.' Do you know what he told the Oracle? He said, 'Ask my dead father if he ever had a fowl when he was alive.'" Everybody laughed heartily except Okonkwo, who laughed uneasily because, as the saying goes, an old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb. Okonkwo remembered his own father.

At last the young man who was pouring out the wine held up half a horn of the thick, white dregs and said, "What we are eating is finished."

"We have seen it," the others replied. "Who will drink the dregs?" he asked. "Whoever has a job in hand," said Idigo, looking at Nwakibie's elder son Igwelo with a malicious twinkle in his eye.

Everybody agreed that Igwelo should drink the dregs. He accepted the half-full horn from his brother and drank it. As Idigo had said, Igwelo had a job in hand because he had married his first wife a month or two before. The thick dregs of palm-wine were supposed to be good for men who were going in to their wives.

After the wine had been drunk, Okonkwo laid his difficulties before Nwakibie.

"I have come to you for help," he said. "Perhaps you can already guess what it is. I have cleared a farm but have no yams to sow. I know what it is to ask a man to trust another with his yams, especially these days when young men are afraid of hard work. I am not afraid of work. The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did. I began to fend for myself at an age when most people still suck at their mothers' breasts. If you give me some yam seeds I shall not fail you."

Nwakibie cleared his throat. "It pleases me to see a young man like you these days when our youth has gone so soft. Many young men have come to me to ask for yams but I have refused because I knew they would just dump them in the earth and leave them to be choked by weeds. When I say no to them they think I am hard hearted. But it is not so. Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching. I have learned to be stingy with my yams. But I can trust you. I know it as I look at you. As our fathers said, you can tell a ripe corn by its look. I shall give you twice four hundred yams. Go ahead and prepare your farm."

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Okonkwo thanked him again and again and went home feeling happy. He knew that Nwakibie would not refuse him, but he had not expected he would be so generous. He had not hoped to get more than four hundred seeds. He would now have to make a bigger farm. He hoped to get another four hundred yams from one of his father's friends at Isiuzo.

Share-cropping was a very slow way of building up a barn of one's own. After all the toil one only got a third of the harvest. But for a young man whose father had no yams, there was no other way. And what made it worse in Okonkwo's case was that he had to support his mother and two sisters from his meagre harvest. And supporting his mother also meant supporting his father. She could not be expected to cook and eat while her husband starved. And so at a very early age when he was striving desperately to build a barn through share-cropping Okonkwo was also fending for his father's house. It was like pouring grains of corn into a bag full of holes. His mother and sisters worked hard enough, but they grew women's crops, like cocoyams, beans and cassava. Yam, the king of crops, was a man's crop.

The year that Okonkwo took eight hundred seed-yams from Nwakibie was the worst year in living memory. Nothing happened at its proper time, it was either too early or too late. It seemed as if the world had gone mad. The first rains were late, and, when they came, lasted only a brief moment. The blazing sun returned, more fierce than it had ever been known, and scorched all the green that had appeared with the rains. The earth burned like hot coals and roasted all the yams that had been sown. Like all good farmers, Okonkwo had begun to sow with the first rains. He had sown four hundred seeds when the rains dried up and the heat returned. He watched the sky all day for signs of rain clouds and lay awake all night. In the morning he went back to his farm and saw the withering tendrils. He had tried to protect them from the smouldering earth by making rings of thick sisal leaves around them. But by the end of the day the sisal rings were burned dry and grey. He changed them every day, and prayed that the rain might fall in the night. But the drought continued for eight market weeks and the yams were killed.

Some farmers had not planted their yams yet. They were the lazy easy-going ones who always put off clearing their farms as long as they could. This year they were the wise ones. They sympathised with their neighbours with

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much shaking of the head, but inwardly they were happy for what they took to be their own foresight.

Okonkwo planted what was left of his seed-yams when the rains finally returned. He had one consolation. The yams he had sown before the drought were his own, the harvest of the previous year. He still had the eight hundred from Nwakibie and the four hundred from his father's friend. So he would make a fresh start.

But the year had gone mad. Rain fell as it had never fallen before. For days and nights together it poured down in violent torrents, and washed away the yam heaps. Trees were uprooted and deep gorges appeared everywhere. Then the rain became less violent. But it went from day to day without a pause. The spell of sunshine which always came in the middle of the wet season did not appear. The yams put on luxuriant green leaves, but every farmer knew that without sunshine the tubers would not grow.

That year the harvest was sad, like a funeral, and many farmers wept as they dug up the miserable and rotting yams. One man tied his cloth to a tree branch and hanged himself.

Okonkwo remembered that tragic year with a cold shiver throughout the rest of his life. It always surprised him when he thought of it later that he did not sink under the load of despair. He knew that he was a fierce fighter, but that year had been enough to break the heart of a lion.

“Since I survived that year,” he always said, “I shall survive anything.” He put it down to his inflexible will.

His father, Unoka, who was then an ailing man, had said to him during that terrible harvest month: “Do not despair. I know you will not despair. You have a manly and a proud heart. A proud heart can survive a general failure because such failure does not prick its pride. It is more difficult and more bitter when a man fails alone.”

Unoka was like that in his last days. His love of talk had grown with age and sickness. It tried Okonkwo's patience beyond words.

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## Questions

- a. Describe the narrator's tone in the following paragraph:

*But the year had gone mad. Rain fell as it had never fallen before. For days and nights together it poured down in violent torrents, and washed away the yam heaps. Trees were uprooted and deep gorges appeared everywhere. Then the rain became less violent. But it went from day to day without a pause. The spell of sunshine which always came in the middle of the wet season did not appear. The yams put on luxuriant green leaves, but every farmer knew that without sunshine the tubers would not grow.*

- b. State at least two main episodes in these two chapters. Explain how they relate to each other.
- c. "The night was very quiet." What literary device is this? Give reasons for your answer.
- d. "Do you know what he told the Oracle? he said, 'Ask my dead father if he ever had a fowl when he was alive.'" Is this irony or satire? Give reasons for your answer.
- e. In your own words summarise the plot of the first three chapters of Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*.

## Unit 4

# Themes and messages in a novel

### Activity 1

- In pairs discuss the meaning of ‘the moral of a story.’
- Tell your group a story that you have read before. Discuss the moral of that story

As you have noted, novels are stories about life. They are stories about human experience. Novels are written in different contexts – situations. It could be a historical, economic or social context. The context or existing environment, affects the themes that an author chooses to address. One could choose to write about love, war or independence, depending on the existing situation. For example, *Things Fall Apart* is set in pre-colonial Nigeria – this is the historical context. Umofia is a conservative African village where tradition and belief in deities is expected of all Umofians – this is the social context. These contexts enabled Chinua Achebe to talk about yams, wrestling matches, war among other concerns.

### Activity 2

**Read the following chapter from Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s novel, *The River Between*, and in your small groups discuss the questions that follow.**

## CHAPTER ONE

The two ridges lay side by side. One was Kameno, the other was Makuyu. Between them was a valley. It was called the valley of life. Behind Kameno and Makuyu were many more valleys and ridges, lying without any discernible plan. They were like many sleeping lions which never woke. They just slept, the big deep sleep of their Creator.

A river flowed through the valley of life. If there had been no bush and no forest trees covering the slopes, you could have seen the river when you stood on top of either Kameno or Makuyu. Now you had to come down. Even

then you could not see the whole extent of the river as it gracefully, and without any apparent haste, wound its way down the valley, like a snake. The river was called Honia, which meant cure, or bring-back-to-life. Honia River never dried; it seemed to possess a strong will to live, scorning droughts and weather changes. And it went on in the same way, never hurrying, never hesitating. People saw this and were happy.

Honia was the soul of Kameno and Makuyu. It joined them. And men, cattle, wild beasts and trees, were all united by this life-stream.

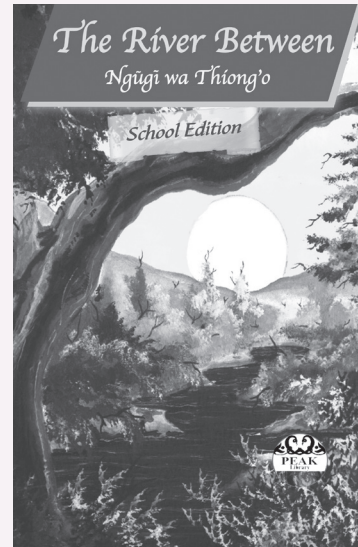
When you stood in the valley, the two ridges ceased to be sleeping lions united by their common source of life.

They became antagonists. You could tell this, not by anything tangible but by the way they faced each other, like two rivals ready to come to blows in a life-and-death struggle for the leadership of this isolated region.

It began long ago. A man rose in Makuyu. He claimed that Gikuyu and Mumbi sojourned there with Murungu on their way to Mukurwe wa Gathanga. As a result of that stay, he said, leadership had been left to Makuyu. Not all the people believed him. For had it not always been whispered and rumoured that Gikuyu and Mumbi had stopped at Kameno? And had not a small hill grown out of the soil on which they stood south of Kameno? And Murungu had told them: “This land I give to you: O man and woman. It is yours to rule and till, you and your posterity.”

The land was fertile. It was the whole of Gikuyu country from one horizon embracing the heavens to the other hidden in the clouds. So the story ran in Kameno. Spiritual superiority and leadership had then been left there.

Kameno had a good record to bear out this story. A sacred grove had sprung out of the place where Gikuyu and Mumbi stood; people still paid homage to it. It could also be seen, by anyone who cared to count, that Kameno threw up more heroes and leaders than any other ridge. Mugo wa Kibiro, that great Gikuyu seer of old, had been born there. And he had grown up, seeing visions of the future and speaking them to the many people who



A novel by Ngugi wa Thiong'o

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came to see and hear him. But a few, more cynical than their neighbours, would not go to him. They called him an impostor. Then one night; when people were asleep, he vanished from the hills. He was soon heard of in the land beyond; in Nyeri, Kiambu, Murang'a; in fact all over the Gikuyu country. And he still spoke aloud his message and cried: "There shall come a people with clothes like butterflies." These were the white men.

Or there was that great witch, Kamiri, whose witchery bewildered even the white men at Murang'a. His witchery and magic, before he was overcome by the white men with smiles and gifts, had won him resounding fame. He too, it was said, had been born at Kameno. Like Mugo before him, he had disappeared from the hills to the country beyond. He could not be contained by the narrow life of the ridges.

Another was Wachiori, a great warrior, who had led the whole tribe against Ukabi. As a young man he had killed a lion, by himself. When he died, at the hands of a straying white man, he left a great name, the idol of many a young warrior.

The ridges were isolated. The people there led a life of their own, undisturbed by what happened outside or beyond. Men and women had nothing to fear. The Ukabi would never come here. They would be lost in the hills and the ridges and the valleys. Even other Gikuyu from Nyeri or Kiambu could not very well find their way into the hills. And so the country of many ridges was left alone, unaffected by turbulent forces outside. These ancient hills and ridges were the heart and soul of the land. They kept the tribe's magic and rituals pure and intact. Their people rejoiced together, giving one another the blood and warmth of their laughter. Sometimes they fought. But that was amongst themselves and no outsider need ever know. To the stranger, they kept dumb, breathing none of the secrets of which they were the guardians. *Kagutui ka mucii gatihakagwo ageni*: the oilskin of the house is not for rubbing into the skin of strangers.

Leaders of the land rose from there, for though the ridges were isolated, a few people went out. These, who had the courage to look beyond their present content to a life and land beyond, were the select few sent by Murungu to save a people in their hour of need: Mugo, the great seer; Wachiori, the glorious warrior; Kamiri, the powerful magician.

They became strangers to the hills. Thereafter, the oilskin of the house

was not for them. It was for those who lived inside. These were the people whose blood and bones spoke the language of the hills. The trees listened, moaned with the wind and kept silent. Bird and beast heard and quietly listened. Only sometimes they would give a rejoinder, joyful applause or an angry roar.

### Questions

- In groups of four, discuss and state what you think is the historical context of this story.
- State the social context of this story. Discuss this in groups of four.
- What is the main theme in this story? Discuss this with your desk mate.
- How do you compare the culture depicted in this excerpt to Rwandan traditions? Discuss this in groups of four

## 4.1. Themes and messages in a novel

### Activity 3

Discuss with members of your group why we read novels. Report your findings to the class.

The key functions of a novel are firstly to entertain and secondly to communicate ideas. **Theme** is the main/central idea of a story. It is the view about life that is expressed in the story.

**Message** is the lesson the author hopes the reader can get from the novel.

A theme is stated explicitly when the writer expresses it openly and clearly. It can also be implied, when the author does not state it directly. Themes may also be major or minor. **A major theme** is an idea that a writer repeats in his literary work. It becomes one of the most important ideas in the story. **Minor themes** are ideas that may appear once in a while in a story.

### Identifying themes

#### Activity 4

In groups of four, discuss why we are asked about the moral of a story only at the end.

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In interpreting themes, one has to deduce evidence from the story. You must identify a cross section of examples from the text to support your interpretation of the story's theme. When writing about themes do not merely describe what happens in the story. The theme should be an idea we learn after reading the story.

There are some common/universal themes, such as love, suffering, hope and betrayal.

Every element of a story can highlight a theme. For instance:

1. The title often provides insights into the theme or themes in a story.
2. The statements of the narrator or other characters could reveal a theme.
3. The arrangement of events – plot – can also reveal themes.
4. Conflicts in a story are also indicators of themes.
5. Central symbols in a story may also point out to important themes.

Ask yourself the following questions when interpreting themes in a novel:

1. What is the central or main theme of the story?
2. What other themes can you identify?
3. Does the title of the story suggest a theme?
4. Does the narrator or any other characters, make statements that express or imply a theme?
5. In what ways does the arrangement of events in the story suggest a theme?
6. In what ways does the central conflict suggest a theme?
7. How does the point of view shed light on the story's central theme?
8. Are there any symbols that suggest a theme?

### Practice Exercise 1



- a. For homework read *The River Between* and discuss two other major themes in the novel.
- b. Explain how setting, symbolism and characters have helped in the development of the major themes in the novel.
- c. Explain the meaning of the title in relation to themes in the novel.
- d. From your knowledge of history, compare the culture depicted in *The River Between* to Rwandan traditions.

## Practice Exercise 2

Following is Chapter 1 from Chinua Achebe's novel, *A Man of the People*. Read it in groups of four, taking turns, and answer the questions that follow. The chapter has been subdivided using activity questions.

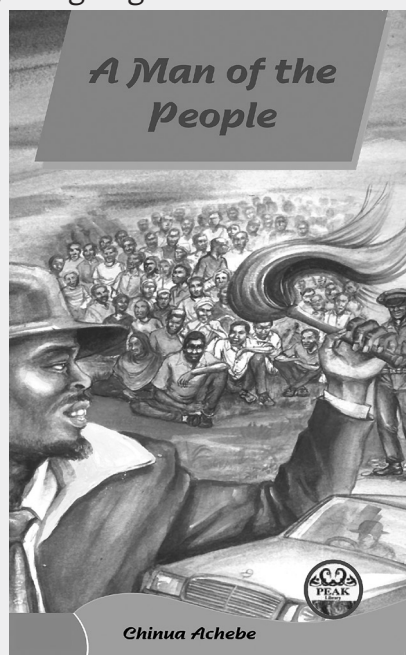
### CHAPTER ONE

No one can deny that Chief the Honourable M.A. Nanga, M.P., was the most approachable politician in the country. Whether you asked in the city or in his home village, Anata, they would tell you he was a man of the people. I have to admit this from the onset or else the story I'm going to tell will make no sense.

That afternoon he was due to address the staff and students of the Anata Grammar School where I was teaching at the time. But as usual in those highly political times the villagers moved in and virtually took over. The Assembly Hall must have carried well over thrice its capacity. Many villagers sat on the floor, right up to the foot of the dais. I took one look and decided it was just as well we had to stay outside – at least for the moment.

Five or six dancing groups were performing at different points in the compound. The popular 'Ego Women's Party' wore a new uniform of expensive *accra* cloth. In spite

of the din you could still hear as clear as a bird the high-powered voice of their soloist, whom they admiringly nicknamed 'Grammar-phone'. Personally, I don't care too much for our women's dancing but you just had to listen whenever Grammar-phone sang. She was now praising Micah's handsomeness, which she likened to the perfect, sculpted beauty of a carved eagle, and his popularity, which would be the envy of the proverbial traveller-to-distant-places who must not cultivate enmity on his route. Micah was of course Chief the Honourable M.A. Nanga, M.P.



The arrival of the members of the hunters' guild in full regalia caused a great stir. Even Grammar-phone stopped – at least for a while. These people never came out except at the funeral of one of their number, or during some very special and outstanding event. I could not remember when I last saw them. They wielded their loaded guns as though they were playthings. Now and again two of them would meet in warriors' salute and knock the barrel of their guns together from left to right and again from right to left. Mothers grabbed their children and hurriedly dragged them away. Occasionally, a hunter would take aim at a distant palm branch and break its mid-rib. The crowd applauded. But there were very few such shots. Most of the hunters reserved their precious powder to greet the Minister's arrival – the price of gunpowder like everything else having doubled again and again in the four years since this government took control.

As I stood in one corner of that vast tumult waiting for the arrival of the Minister, I felt intense bitterness welling up in my mouth. Here were silly, ignorant villagers dancing themselves lame and waiting to blow off their gunpowder in honour of one of those who had started the country off down the slopes of inflation. I wished for a miracle, for a voice of thunder, to hush this ridiculous festival and tell the poor contemptible people one or two truths. But of course it would be quite useless. They were not only ignorant but cynical. Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you – as my father did – if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth.

### Activity 5

- a. In groups of four, discuss the passage you have just read.
- b. How does the narrator feel about what is happening. Answer this individually.
- c. With evidence from the story, explain why the soloist is called Grammar-phone. Discuss this with your desk mate.
- d. Grammar-phone is an \_\_\_\_\_.
- e. Compare the culture depicted in this extract novel to Rwandan traditions.

## Continue reading

I had not always disliked Mr Nanga. Sixteen years or so ago he had been my teacher in Standard Three and I something like his favourite pupil. I remember him then as a popular, young and handsome teacher, most impressive in his uniform as scoutmaster. There was on one of the walls of the school a painting of a faultlessly handsome scoutmaster wearing an impeccable uniform. I am not sure that the art teacher who painted the picture had Mr Nanga in mind. There was no facial resemblance; still we called it the picture of Mr Nanga. It was enough that they were both handsome and that they were both impressive scoutmasters. This picture stood with arms folded across its chest and its raised right foot resting neatly and lightly on a perfectly cut tree stump. Bright red hibiscus flowers decorated the four corners of the frame; and below were inscribed the memorable words: *Not what I have but what I do is my kingdom*. That was in 1948.

Nanga must have gone into politics soon afterwards and then won a seat in Parliament. (It was easy in those days – before we knew its cash price.) I used to read about him in the papers some years later and even took something like pride in him. At that time I had just entered the University and was very active in the Students' branch of the People's Organisation Party. Then in 1960 something disgraceful happened in the Party and I was completely disillusioned.

At that time Mr Nanga was an unknown backbencher in the governing P. O. P. A general election was imminent. The P. O. P. was riding high in the country and there was no fear of its not being returned. Its opponent, the Progressive Alliance Party, was weak and disorganised.

Then came the slump in the international coffee market. Overnight (or so it seemed to us) the Government had a dangerous financial crisis on its hands. Coffee was the prop of our economy just as coffee farmers were the bulwark of the P. O. P.

The Minister of Finance at the time was a first-rate economist with a Ph. D. in public finance. He presented to the Cabinet a complete plan for dealing with the situation.

The Prime Minister said 'No' to the plan. He was not going to risk losing the election by cutting down the price paid to coffee planters at that critical moment; the National Bank should be instructed to print fifteen million

pounds. Two-thirds of the Cabinet supported the Minister. The next morning the Prime Minister sacked them and in the evening, he broadcast to the nation. He said the dismissed ministers were conspirators and traitors who had teamed up with foreign saboteurs to destroy the new nation.

I remember this broadcast very well. Of course no one knew the truth at that time. The newspapers and the radio carried the Prime Minister's version of the story. We were very indignant. Our Students' Union met in emergency session and passed a vote of confidence in the leader and called for a detention law to deal with the miscreants. The whole country was behind the leader. Protest marches and demonstrations were staged up and down the land.

It was at this point that I first noticed a new, dangerous and sinister note in the universal outcry.

*The Daily Chronicle*, an official organ of the P. O. P., had pointed out in an editorial that the Miscreant Gang, as the dismissed ministers were now called, were all university people and highly educated professional men. (I have preserved a cutting of that editorial.) *Let us now and for all time extract from our body-politic as a dentist extracts a stinking tooth all those decadent stooges versed in textbook economics and aping the white man's mannerisms and way of speaking. We are proud to be Africans. Our true leaders are not those intoxicated with their Oxford, Cambridge or Harvard degrees but those who speak the language of the people. Away with the damnable and expensive university education which only alienates an African from his rich and ancient culture and puts him above his people ...*

This cry was taken up on all sides. Other newspapers pointed out that even in Britain where the Miscreant Gang got its 'so-called education' a man need not be an economist to be Chancellor of the Exchequer or a doctor to be Minister of Health. What mattered was loyalty to the party.

### Activity 6

- a. With evidence from the passage, tell your desk mate the main economic activity of the people in this passage.
- b. In groups of four, discuss the statement, "It was easy in those days – before we knew its cash price." From this statement discuss what message the author is passing across to the reader.

## Continue reading

I was in the public gallery the day the Prime Minister received his overwhelming vote of confidence. And that was the day the truth finally came out; only no one was listening. I remember the grief-stricken figure of the dismissed Minister of Finance as he led his team into the chamber and was loudly booed by members and the public. That week his car had been destroyed by angry mobs and his house stoned. Another dismissed minister had been pulled out of his car, beaten insensible, and dragged along the road for fifty yards, then tied hand and foot, gagged and left by the roadside. He was still in the orthopaedic hospital when the house met.

That was my first – and last – visit to Parliament. It was also the only time I had set eyes on Mr Nanga again since he taught me in 1948.

The Prime Minister spoke for three hours and his every other word was applauded. He was called the Tiger, the Lion, the One and Only, the Sky, the Ocean and many other names of praise. He said that the Miscreant Gang had been caught ‘red-handed in their nefarious plot to overthrow the Government of the people by the people and for the people with the help of enemies abroad’.

‘They deserve to be hanged,’ shouted Mr Nanga from the back-benches. This interruption was so loud and clear that it appeared later under his own name in the Hansard. Throughout the session, he led the pack of back-bench hounds straining their leash to get at their victims. If anyone had cared to sum up Mr Nanga’s interruptions, they would have made a good hour’s continuous yelp. Perspiration poured down his face as he sprang up to interrupt or sat back to share in the derisive laughter of the hungry hyena.

When the Prime Minister said that he had been stabbed in the back by the very ingrates he had pulled out of oblivion some members were in tears. ‘They have bitten the finger with which their mother fed them,’ said Mr Nanga. This too was entered in the Hansard, a copy of which I have before me. It is impossible, however, to convey in cold print the electric atmosphere of that day. I cannot now recall exactly what my feelings were at that point. I suppose I thought the whole performance rather peculiar. You must remember that at that point no one had any reason to think there might be another side to the story. The Prime Minister was still talking. Then he made the now famous (or infamous) solemn declaration: ‘From today we must watch and guard

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our hard-won freedom jealously. Never again must we entrust our destiny and the destiny of Africa to the hybrid class of Western-educated and snobbish intellectuals who will not hesitate to sell their mothers for a mess of pottage ...’

Mr Nanga pronounced the death sentence at least twice more but this was not recorded, no doubt because his voice was lost in the general commotion.

I remember the figure of Dr Makinde the ex-Minister of Finance as he got up to speak – tall, calm, sorrowful and superior. I strained my ears to catch his words. The entire house, including the Prime Minister tried to shout him down. It was a most unedifying spectacle. The Speaker broke his mallet ostensibly trying to maintain order, but you could see he was enjoying the commotion. The public gallery yelled down its abuses. ‘Traitor’, ‘Coward’, ‘Doctor of Fork your Mother’. This last was contributed from the gallery by the editor of *The Daily Chronicle*, who sat close to me. Encouraged, no doubt, by the volume of laughter this piece of witticism had earned him in the gallery he proceeded the next morning to print it in his paper. The spelling is his.

Although Dr Makinde read his speech, which was clearly prepared, the Hansard later carried a garbled version, which made no sense at all. It said not a word about the plan to mint fifteen million pounds – which was perhaps to be expected – but why put into Dr Makinde’s mouth words that he could not have spoken? In short, the Hansard boys wrote a completely new speech suitable to the boastful villain the ex-minister had become. For instance, they made him say he was ‘a brilliant economist whose reputation was universally acclaimed in Europe’. When I read this I was in tears – and I don’t cry all that easily.

The reason I have gone into that shameful episode in such detail is to establish the fact that I had no reason to be enthusiastic about Chief the Honourable M.A. Nanga who, seeing the empty ministerial seats, had yapped and snarled so shamelessly for the meaty prize.

### Activity 7

- a. In pairs, discuss the main theme in this extract.
- b. In round table, debate the minor themes in this extract.
- c. In groups of three, discuss the irony in this extract.

## Continue reading

The Proprietor and Principal of the school was a thin, wiry fellow called Jonathan Nwege. He was very active in politics at the local council level and was always grumbling because his services to the P. O. P. had not been rewarded with the usual prize – appointment to some public corporation or other. But though disgruntled he had not despaired, as witnessed by his elaborate arrangements for the present reception. Perhaps he was hoping for something in the proposed new corporation which would take over the disposal of all government unserviceable property (like old mattresses, chairs, electric fans, disused typewriters and other junk) which at present was auctioned by civil servants. I hope he gets appointed. It would have the merit of removing him from the school now and again.

He insisted that the students should mount a guard of honour stretching from the main road to the school door. And the teachers too were to stand in a line at the end of the student queue, to be introduced. Mr Nwege who regularly read such literature as ‘Toasts – How to Propose Them’, was very meticulous about this kind of thing. I had objected vehemently to this standing like school children at our staff meeting, thinking to rouse the other teachers. But the teachers in that school were all dead from the neck up. My friend and colleague Andrew Kadibe found it impossible to side with me because he and the Minister came from the same village. Primitive loyalty, I call it.

As soon as the Minister’s Cadillac arrived at the head of a long motorcade the hunters dashed this way and that and let off their last shots, throwing their guns about with frightening freedom. The dancers capered and stamped, filling the dry-season air with dust. Not even Grammar- phone’s voice could now be heard over the tumult. The Minister stepped out wearing damask and gold chains and acknowledging cheers with his ever-present fan of animal skin which they said fanned away all evil designs and shafts of malevolence thrown at him by the wicked.

The man was still as handsome and youthful-looking as ever – there was no doubt about that. The Proprietor was now introducing him to the teachers beginning with the Senior Tutor at the head of the line. Although I had not had time to scrutinise the Senior Tutor’s person, I had no doubt he had traces of snuff as usual in his nostrils. The Minister had a jovial word for everyone.

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You could never think – looking at him now – that his smile was anything but genuine. It seemed bloody-minded to be sceptical. Now it was my turn. I held out my hand somewhat stiffly. I did not have the slightest fear that he might remember me and had no intention of reminding him.

Our hands met. I looked him straight in the face. The smile slowly creased up into lines of thought. He waved his left hand impatiently to silence the loquacious Proprietor who had begun the parrot formula he had repeated at least fifteen times so far: ‘I have the honour, sir, to introduce ...’

‘That’s right,’ said the Minister not to anyone in particular, but to some mechanism of memory inside his head. ‘You are Odili.’

‘Yes, sir.’ Before the words were out of my mouth he had thrown his arms round me smothering me in his voluminous damask. ‘You have a wonderful memory,’ I said. ‘It’s at least fifteen years ...’ He had now partly released me although his left hand was resting on my shoulder. He turned slightly to the Proprietor and announced proudly: ‘I taught him in ...’

‘Standard Three,’ I said.

‘That’s right,’ he shouted. If he had just found his long-lost son he could not have been more excited.

‘He is one of the pillars of this school,’ said the Proprietor, catching the infection and saying the first good word about me since I had joined his school.

‘Odili, the great,’ said the Minister boyishly, and still out of breath. ‘Where have you been all this time?’

I told him I had been to the University, and had been teaching for the last eighteen months.

‘Good boy!’ he said. ‘I knew he would go to a university. I use to tell the other boys in my class that Odili will one day be a great man and they will be answering him sir, sir. Why did you not tell me when you left the University? That’s very bad of you, you know.’

‘Well,’ I said happily – I’m ashamed to admit – ‘I know how busy a minister ...’

‘Busy? Nonsense. Don’t you know that minister means servant? Busy or no busy he must see his master.’

Everybody around applauded and laughed. He slapped me again on the back and said I must not fail to see him at the end of the reception.

‘If you fail I will send my orderly to arrest you.’

## Activity 8

- a. In groups of four, compare the culture depicted in this extract to Rwandan traditions.
- b. ‘If you fail I will send my orderly to arrest you.’ This is a bit of an exaggeration. Discuss with your desk mate what this is called.

## Continue reading

I became a hero in the eyes of the crowd. I was dazed. Everything around me became suddenly unreal; the voices receded to a vague border zone. I knew I ought to be angry with myself but I wasn't. I found myself wondering whether – perhaps – I had been applying to politics stringent standards that didn't belong to it. When I came back to the immediate present I heard the Minister saying to another teacher: ‘That is very good. Sometimes I use to regret ever leaving the teaching field. Although I am a minister today I can swear to God that I am not as happy as when I was a teacher.’

My memory is naturally good. That day it was perfect. I don't know how it happened, but I can recall every word the Minister said on that occasion. I can repeat the entire speech he made later.

‘True to God who made me,’ he insisted. ‘I use to regret it. Teaching is a very noble profession.’

At this point, everybody just collapsed with laughter not least of all the Honourable Minister himself, nor me, for that matter. The man's assurance was simply unbelievable. Only he could make such a risky joke – or whatever he thought he was making – at that time, when teachers all over the country were in an ugly, rebellious mood. When the laughter died down, he put on a more serious face and confided to us: ‘You can rest assured that those of us in the Cabinet who were once teachers are in full sympathy with you.’

‘Once a teacher always a teacher,’ said the Senior Tutor, adjusting the sleeves of his faded ‘bottom-box’ robes.

‘Hear! Hear!’ I said. I like to think that I meant it to be sarcastic. The man's charisma had to be felt to be believed. If I were superstitious I would say he had made a really potent charm of the variety called ‘sweet face’.

Changing the subject slightly, the Minister said, ‘Only teachers can make this excellent arrangement.’ Then turning to the newspaper correspondent in his party he said, ‘It is a mammoth crowd.’

The journalist whipped out his notebook and began to write.

‘It is an unprecedented crowd in the annals of Anata,’ said Mr Nwege.

‘James, did you hear that?’ the Minister asked the journalist.

‘No, sir, what is it?’

‘This gentleman says it is the most unprecedented crowd in the annals of Anata,’ I said. This time I clearly meant my tongue to be in my cheek.

‘What is the gentleman’s name?’

Mr Nwege called his name and spelt it and gave his full title of ‘Principal and Proprietor of Anata Grammar School’. Then he turned to the Minister in an effort to pinpoint responsibility for the big crowds.

‘I had to visit every section of the village personally to tell them of your – I mean to say of the Minister’s – visit.’

We had now entered the Assembly Hall and the Minister and his party were conducted to their seats on the dais. The crowd raised a deafening shout of welcome. He waved his fan to the different parts of the hall. Then he turned to Mr Nwege and said: ‘Thank you very much, thank you, sir.’

A huge, tough looking member of the Minister’s entourage who stood with us at the back of the dais raised his voice and said: ‘You see wetin I de talk. How many minister fit hanswer sir to any Tom, Dick and Harry wey senior them for age? I hask you how many?’

Everyone at the dais agreed that the Minister was quite exceptional in this respect – a man of high position who still gave age the respect due to it. No doubt it was a measure of my changed – or shall we say changing? – attitude to the Minister that I found myself feeling a little embarrassed on his account for these fulsome praises flung at his face.

‘Minister or no minister,’ he said, ‘a man who is my senior must still be my senior. Other Ministers and other people may do otherwise but my motto is: Do the right and shame the Devil.’

### Activity 9

- With your desk mate, discuss why the narrator became a hero.
- ‘Minister or no minister,’ he said, ‘a man who is my senior must still be my senior.’

In groups of four, use this statement to compare the culture depicted by this statement with Rwandan traditions.

## Activity 10

**Take turns to read the story, continued below. Discuss the main and minor themes in the extract. Prepare and act out the extract in your groups.**

Mr Nwege took the opportunity to mount his old hobbyhorse. The Minister's excellent behaviour, he said, was due to the sound education he had received when education was education.

'Yes,' said the Minister, 'I use to tell them that standard six in those days is more than Cambridge today.'

'Cambridge?' asked Mr Nwege who, like the Minister, had the good old standard six. 'Cambridge? Who dash frog coat? You mean it is equal to B. A. Today - if not more.'

'With due apologies,' said the Minister turning in my direction.

'Not at all, sir,' I replied with equal good humour. 'I am applying for a post-graduate scholarship to bring myself up to Mr Nwege's expectation.'

I remember that at that point the beautiful girl in the Minister's party turned round on her chair to look at me. My eyes met hers and she quickly turned round again. I think the Minister noticed it.

'My private secretary has B. A. from Oxford,' he said. 'He should have come with me on this tour but I had some office work for him to do. By the way, Odili, I think you are wasting your talent here. I want you to come to the capital and take up a strategic post in the civil service. We shouldn't leave everything to the highland tribes. My secretary is from there; our people must press for their fair share of the national cake.'

The hackneyed phrase 'national cake' was getting to some of us for the first time, and so it was greeted with applause.

'Owner of book!' cried one admirer, assigning in those three brief words the ownership of the white man's language to the Honourable Minister, who turned round and beamed on the speaker.

That was when my friend Andrew Kadibe committed the unpardonable indiscretion of calling the Minister the nickname he had worn as a teacher: 'M.A. Minus Opportunity.' It was particularly bad because Andrew and the Minister were from the same village. The look he gave Andrew then reminded me of that other Nanga who had led the pack of hounds four years ago.

'Sorry, sir,' said Andrew pitifully.

‘Sorry for what?’ snarled the Minister.

‘Don’t mind the stupid boy, sir,’ said Mr Nwege, greatly upset. ‘This is what we were saying before.’

‘I think we better begin,’ said the Minister, still frowning.

Although Mr Nwege had begun by saying that the distinguished guest needed no introduction he had gone on all the same to talk for well over twenty minutes – largely in praise of himself and all he had done for the Party in Anata ‘and environs’.

The crowd became steadily more restive especially when they noticed that the Minister was looking at his watch. Loud grumbles began to reach the dais from the audience. Then clear voices telling Nwege to sit down and let the man they came to hear talk. Nwege ignored all these warning signs – a more insensitive man you never saw. Finally, one of the tough young men of the village stood up ten feet or so away and shouted, ‘It is enough or I shall push you down and take three pence.’

This did the trick. The laughter that went up must have been heard a mile away. Mr Nwege’s concluding remarks were completely lost. In fact, it was not until the Minister rose to his feet that the laughter stopped.

### Activity 11

**Take turns to read the extract below and then answer the following questions.**

- The extract below has a story about Mr Nwege. Discuss in groups of four, the reason the author included it.
- The women in the extract below are seen more as companions of Chief Nanga. In groups of four, discuss if this is right and report your findings to the rest of the class.

### Continue reading

The story had it that many years ago when Mr Nwege was a poor, hungry elementary school teacher – that is before he built his own grammar school and became rich but apparently still hungry – he had an old rickety bicycle of the kind the villagers gave the onomatopoeic name of anikilija. Needless to say, the brakes were very faulty. One day as he was cascading down a steep slope that led to a narrow bridge at the bottom of the hill he saw a lorry – an

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unusual phenomenon in those days – coming down the opposite slope. It looked like a head-on meeting on the bridge. In his extremity, Mr Nwege had raised his voice and cried to passing pedestrians: ‘In the name of God push me down!’ Apparently nobody did, and so he added an inducement: ‘Push me down and my three pence is yours!’ From that day ‘Push me down and take my three pence’ became a popular Anata joke.

The Minister’s speech sounded spontaneous and was most effective. There was no election at hand, he said, amid laughter. He had not come to beg for their votes; it was just ‘a family reunion – pure and simple’. He would have preferred not to speak to his own kinsmen in English which was after all a foreign language, but he had learnt from experience that speeches made in vernacular were liable to be distorted and misquoted in the press. Also there were some strangers in that audience who did not speak our own tongue and he did not wish to exclude them. They were all citizens of our great country whether they came from the highlands or the lowlands, etc. etc.

The stranger he had in mind I think was Mrs Eleanor John, an influential party woman from the coast who had come in the Minister’s party. She was heavily painted and perfumed and although no longer young seemed more than able to hold her own, if it came to that. She sat on the Minister’s left, smoking and fanning herself. Next to her sat the beautiful young girl I have talked about. I didn’t catch the two of them exchanging any words or even looks. I wondered what such a girl was doing in that tough crowd; it looked as though they had stopped by some convent on their way and offered to give her a lift to the next one.

At the end of his speech the Minister and his party were invited to the Proprietor’s Lodge – as Mr Nwege called his square, cement-block house. Outside, the dancers had all come alive again and the hunters – their last powder gone – were tamely waiting for the promised palm wine. The Minister danced a few dignified steps to the music of each group and stuck red pound notes on the perspiring faces of the best dancers. To one group alone he gave away five pounds.

The same man who had drawn our attention to the Minister’s humility was now pointing out yet another quality. I looked at him closely for the first time and noticed that he had one bad eye – what we call a cowrie-shell eye.

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‘You see how e de do as if to say money be san-san,’ he was saying. ‘People wey de jealous the money gorment de pay Minister no sabi say no be him one de chop am. Na so so troway.’

Later on in the Proprietor’s Lodge I said to the Minister: ‘You must have spent a fortune today.’

He smiled at the glass of cold beer in his hand and said: ‘You call this spend? You never see some thing, my brother. I no de keep anini for myself, na so so troway. If some person come to you and say “I wan’ make you Minister” make you run like blazes comot. Na true word I tell you. To God who made me.’ He showed the tip of his tongue to the sky to confirm the oath. ‘Minister de sweet for eye but too much katakata de for inside. Believe me yours sincerely.’

‘Big man, big palaver,’ said the one-eyed man.

It was left to Josiah, owner of a nearby shop-and-bar to sound a discordant, if jovial, note. ‘Me one,’ he said, ‘I no kuku mind the katakata wey de for inside. Make you put Minister money for my hand and all the wahala on top. I no mind at all.’

Everyone laughed. Then Mrs John said: ‘No be so, my frien’. When you done experience rich man’s trouble you no fit talk like that again. My people get one proverb: they say that when poor man done see with him own eye how to make big man e go beg make e carry him poverty de go je-je.’

They said this woman was a very close friend of the Minister’s, and her proprietary air would seem to confirm it and the fact that she had come all the way from Pokoma, three hundred and fifty miles away. I knew of her from the newspapers; she was a member of the Library Commission, one of the statutory boards within the Minister’s portfolio. Her massive coral beads were worth hundreds of pounds according to the whisper circulating in the room while she talked. She was the ‘merchant princess’ par excellence. Poor beginning – an orphan, I believe – no school education, plenty of good looks and an iron determination, both of which she put to good account; beginning as a street hawker, rising to a small trader, and then to a big one. At present, they said, she presided over the entire trade in imported second-hand clothing worth hundreds of thousands.

I edged quietly towards the journalist who seemed to know everyone in the party and whispered in his ear: ‘Who is the young lady?’

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‘Ah,’ he said, leaving his mouth wide open for a while as a danger signal. ‘Make you no go near am-o. My hand no de for inside.’

I told him I wasn’t going near am-o; I merely asked who she was.

‘The Minister no de introduce-am to anybody. So I think say na im girl-friend, or im cousin.’ Then he confided: ‘I done lookam, lookam, lookam sotay I tire. I no go tell you lie girls for this una part sabi fine-o. God Almighty!’

I had also noticed that the Minister had skipped her when he had introduced his party to the teachers.

I know it sounds silly, but I began to wonder what had happened to the Mrs Nanga of the scout-mastering days. They were newly married then. I remembered her particularly because she was one of the very first women I knew to wear a white, ladies’ helmet which in our ignorance we called helmet and which was in those days the very acme of sophistication.

## Unit 5

# Haiku and Tanka

### Activity 1

- Discuss in your small group what a poetic device is.
- To remind yourself of poetic devices, study the table below in groups.

Device	Meaning
<b>Alliteration</b>	the repetition of initial consonant sounds in a line of poetry, for example, <b>tiny tap</b>
<b>Assonance</b>	the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in series of words, phrases and for syllables. for example, <b>adoring aunt</b>
<b>Imagery</b>	words or phrases that create mental pictures – these include <b>similes</b> and <b>metaphors</b>
<b>Metaphor</b>	for example, <b>she is a rock</b> – a comparison between two objects, one object is used to give clear meaning to the other, in this case the rock is used to show that she is firm or strong
<b>Onomatopoeia</b>	the use of words which imitate sound for example, <b>buzz</b> or <b>patapata</b>
<b>Personification</b>	giving/assigning animals, ideas, or inanimate objects human abilities, for example, <b>the sun smiled</b> , to mean the sun was bright
<b>Repetition</b>	repeating words, phrases, lines, or stanzas
<b>Rhyme</b>	the similarity of line-ending sounds existing between two words. These are used at the end of lines in poetry.
<b>Synecdoche</b>	using a part of something to represent the whole, for example, <b>bread</b> can be used to represent <b>food</b> in general
<b>Simile</b>	a comparison between two objects using words such as 'like' and 'as'

<b>Stanza</b>	a grouping of two or more lines of a poem in terms of length, metrical form, or rhyme scheme
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In your small groups, identify any poetic devices used in a poem you have read before.

Now, let's define three terms, which we will come across in this Unit. These are:

## 5.1. Atmosphere

As a literary term, atmosphere means the feeling, emotion or mood that an author creates in a narrative through descriptive language. These feelings are based on details, such as setting, background, objects and foreshadowing.

## 5.2. Theme

This is the main idea about life in general in a literary work. The theme could be nature or environment.

## 5.3. Message

This is the point the writer wants a reader to get. The message could be that the writer wants the reader to consider conserving the environment. The writer could do this by showing the consequences of destroying the environment.

**In this Unit, we shall study the haiku and the tanka.**

## 5.4. Haiku

A haiku is a short Japanese poem. This poem is normally **made up of three lines**.

The first and last line has 5 moras. The middle line has seven moras. Mora is another word for sound unit.

Here is an example of a haiku:

The sky is so blue,  
The sun is so warm up high,  
I love the summer.

What feeling do you get as you read the above haiku? That feeling is the atmosphere. In this case, it is a feeling of joy. This is expressed by the blue sky and the sun – which is warm. The blue sky and the sun are therefore images. They help create the atmosphere which enables us to understand this haiku.



*Issa Kobayashi*

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The haiku usually **has seventeen syllables**. A syllable is a segment of a spoken word usually made up of one or two sounds and spoken as one unit.

The **lines** of the haiku **rarely rhyme**.

As you have just seen, the haiku **uses few words to capture a moment and create a picture** in a reader's mind. Therefore, the poet uses metaphors and personification. Read this haiku and see if you can spot the personification.

## Beans

Beans are kind to hearts,  
I like to eat them daily,  
And then do big farts.

Can a plant or part of a plant have a heart like a human being?

Haikus usually focus on nature. They use language that appeals to the senses to capture feelings or images in nature. The poet does not give you the emotion he/she feels, but instead shows the details in the subject that cause that emotion. For instance, this haiku talks about the sky:

1. The sky is so blue,
2. The sun is so warm up high,
3. I love the summer.

### Activity 2

Read this haiku.

## With my Father

*by Issa Kobayashi*

With my father  
I would watch dawn  
over green fields.

### Questions

- a. Mention any poetic devices used in this haiku.
- b. Explain the feeling the devices create in the reader.
- c. Would this poem still be a haiku if we added 'the' between 'over' and 'green'? Why?

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## Characteristics of a haiku

- contains three lines;
- has five syllables – sound units (moras) – in the first line, seven in the second and five in the last line
- contains seventeen syllables in total
- does not rhyme
- frequently has seasonal reference
- usually focuses on nature or natural phenomenon
- has two juxtaposed subjects that are divided into two contrasting parts  
In English, this division between two parts can be shown by a colon or dash.

### Activity 3

- a. Read the haikus below and identify the characteristics you have just read.

#### **T**oast

I really like toast,  
It's yummy when it's hot,  
I like it best cold

- b. Identify any poetic devices in the haiku you have just read.  
c. Working in your small groups, read the haiku below and mention the poetic devices used. Thereafter, discuss what the haiku is talking about.

#### **A** butterfly

The falling flower thought I,  
Fluttering back to the branch –  
was a butterfly.

### How to write a haiku

1. Write two sentences about nature. Focus on details of the environment that are similar to the human condition.
2. Write a third sentence about something that is seemingly different from what you were writing in the first two sentences. You are shifting your focus from the first two lines and the ideas to something that may look as if it is different. Maybe you are looking outside and thinking about beautiful

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flowers and trees. Then you think of a hot cup of milky tea. The flowers and trees are growing, healthy and strong. The milk is a gift of healthy nature; the grass the cows eat, but someone could ask: What have trees and flowers to do with cows?

3. Combine the three sentences and see whether the lines have any connection. Use language that appeals to the senses. This is what we mean by imagery. Let your reader see, smell, taste, touch and hear nature. You may not need to involve all the senses all the time. You could think of words that strongly appeal to one or two senses. Remember, you are showing not telling. Don't tell the reader the maize is healthy; show them that it is healthy without even mentioning the word 'healthy'.
4. Next rewrite the lines in the form of 5-7-5 syllables.  
Remember the poem does not need to have rhyme.

#### Activity 4

Working in your groups, use the above steps to compose a haiku. Share your ideas and discuss your different haikus. Your teacher will ask you to read the haiku you have written.

## 5.5. Tanka

A tanka is another form of Japanese poems, like the haiku. It is also called waka or uta. Tanka means a short song.

## 5.6. Characteristics of the tanka

1. The tanka is longer than the haiku. It has two additional lines that have seven syllables each. In total, it has 31 syllables. Its structure is 5-7-5-7-7.
2. A tanka does not have end punctuation.
3. It also does not use rhymes.
4. The third line of the tanka acts like a pivot that divides the poem into two parts.
5. The tanka uses imagery to convey its meaning. Remember, an imagery is a word that creates mental pictures. Examples include similes, metaphors and personification, though it could be any word that makes a reader smell, touch, hear, taste or see what the poet intends.

Let's look at the following tanka.

Crash at two A.M.  
I opened my bedroom door  
A white cat ran by  
Startled by the clanging fall  
Of the treat jar's metal lid

*(Accessed from [www.poetry4kids.com](http://www.poetry4kids.com))*

In this poem, we 'hear' the noise from the use of 'crash', and 'clanging'. The cat becomes more visible when we are told it is 'white', instead of just a cat. Therefore, imagery makes the poem more alive. Note how the line on the cat is a pivot. We understand why the persona woke up, even without the last two lines. We also understand why the cat is hurrying by even without the first two lines.



**Masaoka Shiki**

### Activity 5

- a. Read this tanka to your desk mate and then discuss its atmosphere.

Her hair at twenty  
Flowing long and black  
Through the teeth of her comb  
Oh beautiful spring  
Extravagant spring

*Yosano Akiko*

- b. Read this tanka in pairs and discuss its message. Finally, explain the kind of atmosphere it creates.

The man  
I used to meet in the mirror  
Is no more  
Now I see a wasted face.  
It dribbles tears

*Masaoka Shiki*



*A girl reciting a poem*

- c. Read this tanka and then discuss its theme and message. Finally, discuss at least one poetic devices used.

tree with lush leaves  
at an outdoor fair  
giving shade  
to a goldfish seller  
as summer begins

*Masaoka Shiki*

## 5.7. Writing a tanka

How can we write a tanka? We can use the following steps.

1. Think of a funny or amusing situation.
2. Write down a few sentences that describe the situation.
3. Think of powerful words that can appeal to the senses of the reader, and use them to describe the situation.
4. Once you are done, think of how you can create the pattern 5-7-5-7-7.

### Activity 6

- a. Working in groups, study the following tankas and answer the questions that follow.

- 1) For *Satori*

In the spring of joy  
When even the mud chuckles  
My soul runs rabid  
Snaps at its own bleeding heels  
and barks: “What is happiness?”

- 2) *Sombre Girl*

She never saw fire  
from heaven or hotly fought  
with God; but her eyes  
smolder from Hiroshima  
and the cold death of Budha

*(Accessed at [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org))*

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## Questions

- i) Identify the characteristics of a tanka in the two poems.
  - ii) Give the images used in the two poems.
  - iii) What is the atmosphere in the second poem and how has it been created?
  - iv) Using your school library, research on Hiroshima and then discuss the message in the second poem.
  - v) If your school has internet connection, research on tankas and write down two more examples of a tanka.
- b. Using suggestions on how to write a tanka, write one and share it with your group members. Your teacher will display the best tanka to the class.

## Unit 6

# Sonnet and rhyme

## 6.1. Sonnet

### Activity 1

In groups of four, read the poem below. One of you should read as the rest of the group members listen.

### Teenage Love

*by Mohammed Adel*

Why should we be in love though it'll end?  
And we both know so, so why should we start?  
Knowing that our feelings and time in vain spent?  
And we gain nothing but the aching of the heart

It is a matter of time till our parting  
I think we should better not commence  
A journey that has a joyful starting  
But shortly in sadness and tears ends

Stop using your heart and use your mind  
For the heart sometimes be so reckless  
Think of our alleged love and you shall find  
That our exertions will be worthless

Teenage love shall give us nothing but pain  
And we may love each other, but in vain.

### Questions

- How many lines does it have?
- What is it talking about?

- c. As a class, with the guidance of your teacher, discuss the relationship between age and love. For instance, at what age can one say that s/he is capable of understanding and appreciating love?

A sonnet is a fourteen-line poem. This poem usually has a single theme with a standard or a fixed, rhyme pattern. Sonnets can explore all types of themes. However, love is the most common in sonnets. The poem you just read is a sonnet.

## 6.2. Rhyme

### Activity 2

**Have a look at the sonnet below. Write down the endings of all the lines. What do you notice about them?**

Why should we be in love though it'll **end**?  
And we both know so, so why should we start?  
Knowing that our feelings and time in vain spent?  
And we gain nothing but the aching of the heart

It is a matter of time till our parting  
I think we should better not commence  
A journey that has a joyful starting  
But shortly in sadness and tears ends

Stop using your heart and use your **mind**  
For the heart sometimes be so reckless  
Think of our alleged love and you shall **find**  
That our exertions will be worthless

Teenage love shall give us nothing but **pain**  
And we may love each other, but in **vain**.

### Activity 3

**Write the sounds of the line endings in the poem you have just read.**

When we read a poem, we sometimes notice that the last word in a line has the same vowel sound as the word in the following line. It could even be more than one other line. When this happens, we say the words rhyme. Thus we can say a **rhyme is the matching of sounds in words at the end of lines of a poem.**

Rhyme can be **masculine** or **feminine**. It is masculine when the rhyming words are monosyllabic. Monosyllabic means they have one syllable. If for example the words are ‘ate’ and ‘bate’, ‘old’ and ‘fold’, we say these are masculine rhymes.

On the other hand the words could be polysyllabic. Polysyllabic means they have more than one syllable. Such rhyme is called feminine rhyme.

Look at the following poems.

## Africa

*by R.E.G Armattoe*

I once saw a maiden dark and comely,	a
sitting by the wayside, sad and lonely.	a
Oh! Pretty maiden, so dark and comely,	a
Why sit by the wayside, sad and lonely?	a
“I am neither sad nor lonely,” she said,	b
“But living, sir, among the deaf and the dumb;	c
Relentlessly watching these shameless dead,	b
Makes my warm heart grow very cold and numb.”	c

*(Adapted from A Poetry Course For KCSE)*

The letters of the alphabet have been used to show which words rhyme. ‘Comely’ rhymes with ‘lonely’. ‘Said’ rhymes with ‘dead’, and ‘dumb’ with ‘numb’. When we do this we say we are describing the rhyme scheme of the poem. We use the letters of the alphabet to show the sounds that rhyme.

‘Comely’ and ‘lonely’ are feminine rhymes, while ‘numb’ and ‘dumb’ are masculine rhymes.

### Activity 4

**Read the following poem in pairs and:**

- Describe the rhyme scheme.
- Identify the type of rhymes used and give examples.

## The Imprisonment of Obatala

*by J. P Clark*

Those stick-insect fingers! They rock the dance  
Of snakes, dart after His daddy-long arms,  
Tangle their loping strides to mangrove stance  
And He, roped in the tightening pit alarms

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Dangles in his front, full length,  
Invincible limbs cramped by love of their strength.

#### Activity 5

### 6.3. Masculine rhyme

In groups of five, read the poem below. Study and discuss the highlighted words at the end of each line carefully.

#### Lecture upon the Shadow

*by John Donne*

Stand still and I will read to **thee**  
A lecture, love, in love's philosophy  
These three hours that we have **spent**  
Walking here, two shadows **went**,  
Along with us, which we ourselves **produced**.  
But now the sun is just above our **head**  
We do those shadows **tread**  
And to brave clearness all things are **reduced**.

Masculine rhyme, also known as single rhyme, refers to a rhyme on a single stressed syllable at the end of a line of a poem. It is the most commonly used. In the poem above, the rhyme scheme is as follows: **aa bb cd dc**. Similar rhyme is assigned the same letter. For example, the first and second lines have a similar rhyme, hence they are assigned **aa**.

#### Activity 6

### 6.4. Feminine rhyme

In groups of four, read the poem below. Study and discuss the highlighted words.

#### Sonnet Number 20

*by William Shakespeare*

A woman's face with nature's  
Own hand **painted**,  
Hast thou, the master  
Mistress of my **passion**

A woman's gentle heart,  
But not **acquainted** with shifting change,  
As is false women's **fashion**  
But since she prick'd thee  
Out for women's **pleasure**  
Mine be thy love  
And thy love's use their **treasure**

Feminine rhyme is also commonly known as double rhyme. It is a rhyme that matches two or more syllables in which the final syllable or syllables are unstressed. This kind of rhyme is relatively rare.

Rhyme in the above poem occurs in the following sounds:

pain-ted	fash-ion
quain-ted	plea-sure
pass-ion	trea-sure

Feminine rhymes often occur internally. This means they don't always appear as endings of a line in each stanza but in random words within a given line.

### Activity 7

Use the rhyming words: passion, fashion, pleasure and treasure to write a simple poem.

### Importance of rhyme

### Activity 8

Read the poem below. Discuss with your desk mate what makes it interesting

### Africa

I once saw a maiden dark and comely,	a
Sitting by the wayside, sad and lonely.	a
Oh! Pretty maiden, so dark and comely,	a
Why sit by the wayside, sad and lonely?	a
"I am neither sad nor lonely," she said,	b
"But living, sir, among the deaf and the dumb;	c
Relentlessly watching these shameless dead,	b
Makes my warm heart grow very cold and numb."	c

*(Adapted from A Poetry Course For K.C.S.E)*

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Rhyme has several uses in a poem.

1. When words rhyme, they create beauty and a sense of completeness. In the poem, *Africa*, ‘numb’ and ‘dumb’ rhyme, the idea of the lady becoming totally unfeeling becomes complete. She keeps the company of people who can’t hear or talk. It looks as if this is something they have chosen for themselves and that is why she says they are shameless. This makes her lose all warmth and life. It is not a wonder that though she is ‘comely’ she is ‘lonely’.
2. Rhyme also makes the words that rhyme stand out. For instance, ‘comely’ and ‘lonely’ stand out. They emphasise the contrast in the poem. You would certainly expect a beautiful lady to have beautiful company, but we are told she is all alone.
3. Rhyme can help focus on the meaning of the poem. For example, the words ‘numb’, ‘lonely’ and ‘dumb’ are important in expressing the meaning of the poem. The maiden’s sadness and loneliness comes from the fact that she is in the midst of people who seem incapable of speaking for themselves. Figuratively, Africa is a continent of a people who are voiceless, perhaps out of choice.
4. Rhyme may also be used as a way of making fun or making light of a situation. For instance:

It’s clear she ate not, they said  
For many years none she fed  
So here she lay sadly so dead

In this extract from a poem, the poet makes light of a very sad situation where someone has starved to death, almost making it look funny.

It is important to note that rhyme is one way in which a poet can create **atmosphere** in a poem. Atmosphere refers to emotions and feelings in a poem. The poet also uses setting, meaning the time and place of the poem, to create the atmosphere. The atmosphere can also be created using any **imagery**. Imagery are words that create mental pictures in the mind of the reader.

Atmosphere can be tense, calm, chaotic, uncertain, unfriendly and so on.

### Practice Exercise 1



Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.

## Educational Dispersion

### Graphite Drug

The instructor is, at head of class,  
Scans the classroom and sees all the students,  
They inhabit the room like inert gas,  
Atoms of reason float in abundance.

Who will learn and who will remain inert?  
The instructor may not ask of such things,  
It is enough to keep a group alert,  
And help them all to grow their wings.

Many moments are spent in discussions,  
Helping fresh minds understand the subject,  
Sometimes there are excursions,  
And sometimes seeing the real object.

Though some may let their knowledge fade,  
Many will find work and careers will be made.

### Questions

- What kind of poem is this? Give reasons for your answer.
- Is the rhyme in this poem feminine or masculine? Give reasons for your answer.
- What is the poem talking about?
- What do you think makes this poem interesting to recite and listen to?

### Practice Exercise 2



- In small groups, write a sonnet on the topic, 'Our love for the environment'. Include a feminine rhyme.
- In small groups, write a sonnet entitled, 'Responsible sexual behaviour'.

## 6.5. Types of sonnets and their rhyme schemes

There are two types of sonnets. These are:

1. The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet;
2. The Shakespearean or English sonnet.

Sonnets are usually characterised by their country of origin or the poet and the rhyme scheme they use.

### The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet

#### Activity 9

In your small group, read the poem below that was written by James Deford. Use the rhyming words in the octave to write a simple poem. Your poem should be a sestet.

Turn back the heart you've turned away  
Leave not my love as you have left  
The broken hearts of yesterday  
But wait, be still, don't lose this way

Give back your kissing breath  
Affection now, for what you guess  
May be something more, could be less  
Accept my love, live for today

Your roses wilted, as love spurned  
Yet trust in me, my love and truth  
Dwell in my heart, from which you've turned  
My strength as great as yours aloof  
It is in fear you turn away  
And miss the chance of love today!

Octave

Sestet

Poets create sonnets in two ways.

- a) The first way of creating a sonnet is when they start with an eight-line section followed by a six-line section. The first part is called an **octave**. The second part is called a **sestet**. This type of a sonnet is referred to as a **Petrarchan**. In this poem, a poet can develop an argument easily. The first part of the poem will develop the argument and the sestet

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will give the conclusion. Usually the sestet could start with words such as ‘and’, ‘if’, ‘thus’, ‘so’, ‘but’, ‘for’ or ‘then’.

The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet was introduced by Italian poet Francesco Petrarch. Hence similar sonnets by Petrarch and other poets were then called Petrarchan or Italian sonnets. Italian sonnets consist of an octave (the first eight lines) rhyming *abbaabba* and a sestet (the last six lines) rhyming in either *cdecde* or *cdcdcd*.

The beginning of the sestet marks the volta, or turn, in the sonnet. Often, the octave presents an argument or a problem. In the poem above, the poet is trying to convince someone beloved to him or her not to abandon their relationship but instead give it a chance. The poet warns the beloved that he or she should appreciate the love present instead of anticipating something better that may never happen.

It is the sestet that answers the question on whether the beloved stayed or left. From line nine, it is clear the beloved left and suffered the consequences: ‘Your roses wilted’. Yet, the persona is steadfast in his or her love for the beloved. In line 11, the persona says: ‘dwell in my heart from which you’ve turned.’

The sestet, therefore, presents an answer or a counter-argument to a problem presented in the octave.

### **English sonnet or Shakespearean**

- b) The second way of creating a sonnet is to create a poem with three stanzas, each made up of four lines, and a final stanza made up of two lines. The first type of stanza is called a **quatrain**. The second type is called a **couplet**. A quatrain is a four-line stanza, while a couplet is a two-line stanza.

A sonnet with three quatrains and a couplet is called a **Shakespearean sonnet**. In this type of a sonnet, the poet can develop an argument in the quatrains and then use the couplet to conclude it. The poet may also present an argument in the first quatrain, give variations in this argument in the following two quatrains and then use the couplet to give the conclusion.

A poet can also build a picture in the first twelve lines and then use the couplet to agree or disagree, or to change the picture in a certain way.

### Activity 10

In your small groups, read the poem below. One of you should read a stanza out loud as the rest listen. Take turns until you finish reading it.

## SONNET 18

by William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often in his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade  
nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time  
Thou grow'st;  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

### Activity 11

- In pairs research the nationality of William Shakespeare.
- In groups of four, discuss what the above sonnet is talking about.

The Shakespearean or English sonnet was popularised by famous poet and playwright, William Shakespeare. This poem consists of three quatrains (four-line stanzas) and a couplet (two-line stanza) with a rhyme scheme of *abab cdcd efef gg*.

In a Shakespearean sonnet, the volta (the turn) usually begins at line nine. This is when the mood of the poem changes and the poet expresses a revelation or epiphany.

In the poem above, the poet talks about time and seasons. The persona agrees that everything in this life blooms and withers at specific times, 'summer comes

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and goes’, ‘the sun shines bright and at other times it is dimmed’. However, there is a change in line nine ‘...but thy eternal summer shall not fade’.

The poem is a typical shakespearean poem where the persona declares his eternal love to his beloved. The poem then takes a shift from line nine where the poet contradicts his earlier belief that nothing is permanent. This is what is referred to as the volta or the turn.

## 6.6. Poetic devices in poetry

Different poetic devices are used to make a poem more interesting and therefore musical and memorable. Poets create rhythm in their poems. This enhances meaning and intensifies mood. Below is a list of the most commonly used poetic devices in a sonnet:

1. **Simile** : this is an indirect comparison used to describe things, situations or persons. A simile will make use of the words ‘as’ or ‘like’  
Example: ‘... they inhabit the room like inert gas’
2. **Metaphor** : is a direct comparison. Unlike a simile, it does not use the words ‘as’ or ‘like’.
3. **Alliteration** : is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words.  
Example: ‘... a lecture, love, in love’s philosophy’
4. **Assonance** : refers to the repetition of vowel sounds usually in the middle of a word. Example: ‘batter that mattered’
5. **Consonance** : is similar to alliteration but the consonants are at the end of the words, while alliteration is at the beginning of words.
6. **Onomatopoeia**: this describes the use of word that sounds like their meanings or imitation of sounds. Example: “the bees were buzzing”
7. **Repetition** : this is the repeating of words, phrases or lines. Repetition is used to enhance rhythm and create emphasis.  
Example: ... so long as men can breath  
... so long lives this

### Activity 12

**Research and write on the following poetic devices. Write their definitions down and give relevant examples from poems you have read.**

- |              |              |                    |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| a. Idiophone | c. Hyperbole | e. Personification |
| b. Symbolism | d. Meter     | f. Allusion        |

### Activity 13

- a. In your small groups, choose any one poem from this Unit and discuss, write down and explain the poetic devices used.
- b. In groups, write a sonnet on any of the themes below:
  - i) Environment
  - ii) Sex and relationships
  - iii) Work and careers

### Practice Exercise 3

In your groups, read the following sonnet and then answer the questions that follow.

#### Sonnet 130

*by William Shakespeare*

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
**Coral** is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why her breasts are **dun**;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses **damasked**, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks,  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
That from my mistress **reeks**.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound.  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any as she **belied** with false compare.

*(Adapted from Wikipedia)*

#### Questions

- a. Write down the rhyme scheme of the poem.
- b. With reasons, say whether this is a Shakespearean sonnet or a Petrarchan.
- c. Give the words that have been used to describe the persona's mistress.

- d. Do you agree with the persona's description of his mistress? Give reasons for your answer.
- e. What is strange in the persona's feeling towards his mistress?
- f. What is the message in the poem?

#### Practice Exercise 4

Working in your groups, read the following poem and then answer the questions that follow.

### Vantage Point

by Robert Frost

If tired of trees I seek again mankind,  
Well I know where to hie me – in the dawn,  
To a slope where the cattle keep the lawn.  
There amid lolling juniper reclined,  
Myself unseen, I see in white defined  
Far off the homes of men, and farther still,  
The graves of men on an opposing hill,  
Living or dead, whichever are to mind.  
And if by noon I have too much of these,  
I have but to turn on my arm, and lo,  
The un-burned hillside sets my face aglow,  
My breathing shakes the bluet like a breeze,  
I smell the earth, I smell the bruised plant,  
I look into the crater of the ant.

#### Questions

- a. Describe the rhyme scheme of the poem.
- b. What type of sonnet is this? Give reasons for your answer.

## Practice Exercise 5

Working in pairs, read the following poem and then answer the questions that follow.

### Cradle Song

by William Blake

Sleep, sleep, beauty bright,  
Dreaming in the joys of the night;  
Sleep, sleep; in thy sleep  
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face  
Soft desires I can trace,  
Secret joys and secret smiles,  
Little infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel  
Smiles as of the morning steal  
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast  
Where thy little heart doth rest.

O the cunning wiles that creep  
In thy little heart asleep!  
When thy little heart doth wake,  
Then the dreadful night shall break.

#### Note:

1. *o'er* – *over*
2. *doth* – *does*
3. *thy* – *your*

#### Questions

- a. Identify any words you do not understand and look up their meaning in the dictionary.
- b. Why do you think this poem is called the 'Cradle Song'?
- c. Identify the characteristics of a sonnet in the poem you have read.
- d. Who do you think is the persona in the poem?
- e. What do you think would be the most suitable time to recite the poem?
- f. What is the theme in the poem?

## Activity 14

With the help of your teacher, pick any one of the above poems and practise it for a number of days. Later you will recite it to your class. Carry out this activity in groups.

### Extra Exercises

- a. Working in groups, read the following poem and then answer the questions that follow.

### Migration: Zebra and Wildebeest

by Valerie Cuthbert

Pounding hooves, dust flying;  
heads held high, manes toss.  
Stripes blending bodies surging;  
eyes starting, teeth baring.  
Dams with foals, startled, running  
sharp hooves dusty grass beating;  
horns tossing. Glimpses so fleeting of  
brown and striped bodies blending, meeting;  
blundering together, pushing and shoving.  
Fear is the spur-off they go thundering  
terror behind, setting ground trembling  
pass out of sight, dusty grass flattening.  
Then – all is still. Red dust is settling.

*(Adapted from Voices Across the Valley)*

#### Questions

1. What is the subject matter in the poem?
2. Describe the rhyme scheme of the poem.
3. Identify feminine rhymes in the poem.
4. What is the effect of using rhyme in the poem you have read?
5. Why do you think the poet has used the rhyme scheme you have identified?
6. Comment on the use of punctuation marks in the poem.
7. What is the atmosphere in the poem?

- b. Working in groups, read the following poem and then answer the questions that follow.

## Double Tragedy

by Patricia K. Murefu

To us she came, just a brief **encounter**  
We grew in her fame, such a great enchanter  
Esther was her name, to us joy she could scatter  
Never in her was shame, but the death ship she would charter  
Four semesters of wonder, we didn't know she would leave  
In her love our hearts were fonder, Esther you were to live  
In the maze of **mediocrity** we meander, Oh what pain we have  
In the pool of mourning we ponder, how you accepted to leave  
You killed each other, you and that young life  
Never minding the father, in whose heart you put a knife  
Now we turn against one another, tears not calming our grief  
Your fate was set to go, to be one with nature  
Remembering you we'll never forego, your love we'll always **nurture**.

### Questions

1. Find the meaning of the following words.
  - i) encounter
  - ii) mediocrity
  - iii) nurture
2. Identify
  - i) feminine rhyme
  - ii) masculine rhyme
3. What has the poet achieved by using rhyme?
4. What do you think the 'ship' used in the poem means?
5. Summarise the subject of the poem.
6. How does the persona feel about Esther? Give your reasons.
7. What is the atmosphere in the poem?

c. Read the following poem in pairs and then answer the questions that follow.

## The Ugly Beauty

by F. Imbuga

I looked over my shoulder  
And saw her in my dream,  
A lingering thought from yonder  
Across yesterday's beauty stream.

Slowly like an early morning snail  
Came she up the garden path, my beauty,  
With a broad and warm smile  
That shamed her age of forty.

The morning snail walk  
And the fast spreading smile  
Nudged my side and made me talk  
Forgive me my dear snail,

But for the smile of mucus,  
On thy cotton soft face  
I would love thee still, my grace  
And shame our separation curse.

### Questions

1. Identify all the rhyming words in the poem.
2. Which rhyme types do we have in the poem?
3. What is the effect of using these rhymes?
4. Why is the title of the poem 'The Ugly Beauty'?
5. Identify any other poetic device used in the poem, besides rhyme.
6. What do you think is the message in the poem?

# Unit 7

# Epigrams

## 7.1. Introduction

We learnt about the sonnet in Unit 6. A sonnet is a poem with fourteen lines. What would you call a poem that has two lines? In this Unit we shall learn about epigrams; some are a single line while others are two or more lines.

### Activity 1

#### Read the following:

- Whatsoever ye do unto the least of these, my brethren, you do unto me. (*Jesus Christ*)
- No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. (*Eleanor Roosevelt*)
- There are no small nations ... only small minds. (*King Leopold of Belgium*)

#### Discuss the following in your small groups:

- What name do we give to this kind of writing?
- Read each line again carefully. What makes it interesting?

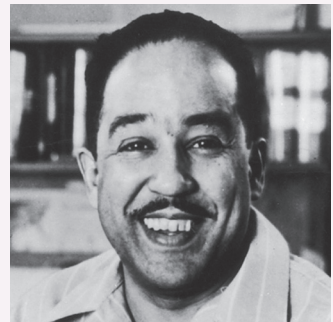
### Activity 2

#### Read the following:

Oh God of dust and rainbows, help us see that without dust the rainbow would not be.

– *Langston Hughes*

- In your small groups, discuss the poetic devices used in this writing.
- What is the difference between this writing and that in Activity 1?
- Discuss with your group members the lesson in this writing.



*Langston Hughes*

An **epigram** is a short witty expression. For example: No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

Usually, this short witty expression is meant to explain a ‘big’ idea. Think about this: There are no small nations ... only small minds.

Apart from being a short witty expression, an epigram can be a poem. For example, the poem in Activity 2. Here is another poem, which is an epigram:

Bigfoot often puts his foot in his mouth  
And he has a big mouth too ...

– *Tim Ryerson*

This poem is witty – clever and amusing. At the same time, its message is very true. It says that a foolish person usually makes silly mistakes. To add on to that, a fool usually talks a lot of nonsense. Don’t you think that is true?

### Activity 3

**In pairs, read the following epigrams and discuss the message and the poetic devices used in each one of them.**

a. Little strokes

fell great oaks.

– *Ben Franklin*

b. Whatever the mind can conceive

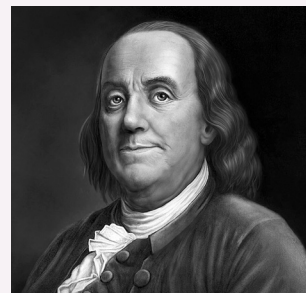
and believe,

the mind can achieve.

– *Napoleon Hill*

c. This is the moment when we must come together to save this planet. Let us resolve that we will not leave our children a world where the oceans rise and famine spreads and terrible storms devastate our lands.

– *Barack Obama*



*Ben Franklin*



*Barack Obama*

As you may have realised, epigrams are mainly written in couplets (two lines) or quatrains (four lines). However just as you saw at the beginning of this section, they can be one-line phrases.

Epigrams are effective – they get the message across easily. They are also memorable – we remember them.

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An epigram is like word puzzle or riddle. Therefore, it will require you to think to find out what an epigram is saying.

From your discussions, you have noted that epigrams use figures of speech just like poems. For instance, epigrams use a lot of satire, sarcasm and oxymoron.

**Satire** is the use of humour to mock failure. The failure is usually exaggerated to emphasise it and make the person responsible correct the situation. This is one way of mocking the person for whom the epigram is intended.

**Sarcasm** is when we say the opposite of what we mean in order to mock and possibly hurt the feelings of the person we are speaking to. Look at the epigram in Activity 4, how can you say it is sarcastic?

An **oxymoron** is a statement that is contradictory. For example, ‘ugly beauty’. Is it possible for one to be ugly and beautiful at the same time? When we say the ‘living dead’, it is contradictory since you cannot be alive and dead at the same time. We can also say loud silence. Silence is the absence of noise so it cannot be associated with ‘loud’ which implies noise. Can you think of situations when we can use the oxymorons given here?

#### Activity 4

**Read this epigram and discuss in your small groups what it is saying about the king.**

God bless our good and gracious king,  
Whose promise none relies on,  
Who never said a foolish thing,  
Nor ever did a wise one.

*John Wilmot*

### History of epigrams

In early Greece, epigrams were put on statues of famous people and on tombs. They also used to be very long, unlike modern epigrams.

The Romans also used epigrams. Theirs were more satirical and sometimes they were obscene, or dirty. They were often painted as graffiti on walls. Romans’ would be a few lines, with a joke in the last line – what we call the **punch line**.

Epigrams began to be used in English in the sixteenth century, especially with the translations of the Bible. This is when the couplet started being used, particularly those by writers like William Shakespeare.

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## 7.2. Epigrams from different cultures and times in history

The epigrams below are from different cultures and times in history. Study them in your small groups and discuss the messages and themes in them.

### 1. Africa

It seems impossible until it is done.

– *Nelson Mandela*

### 2. Rome

I came, I saw, I conquered.

– *Julius Caesar*

I have not come to praise Caesar but to bury him.

– *Mark Antony*

Brevity is the soul of wit.

– *William Shakespeare*

### 3. America

The ballot is stronger than the bullet.

– *Abraham Lincoln*

Early to bed, early to rise

Makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise

*Benjamin Franklin*

Your children need you more than your presents.

– *Jesse Jackson*

### 4. India

We have to have real peace in the world,

We shall have to begin with the children.

– *Mahatma Gandhi*

Error ceases to be error when it is corrected.

– *Mahatma Gandhi*

Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities.

– *Mahatma Gandhi*

### Activity 5

a. Working in your small groups, discuss and then explain the meaning of the following epigrams.

- i) Sir, I admit your general rule,  
that every poet is a fool.  
But you yourself may serve to show it,  
That every fool is not a poet.

– *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

ii) There are many humorous things in the world; among them, the white man's notion that he is less savage than other savages.

– *Mark Twain*

iii) We hold these truths to be self-evident,  
that all men are created equal;  
that they are endowed by their Creator  
with certain unalienable rights;  
that among these are Life, Liberty  
and the pursuit of Happiness.

– *Thomas Jefferson, with Benjamin Franklin*

iv) An unbending tree is easily broken

*Lao Tzu*

v) Another golden rule

is: – don't lose your cool.

– *Yogi Berra*

Some cause happiness wherever they go; others whenever they go.

– *Oscar Wilde*

If you can't be a good example, you'll just have to be a horrible warning.

– *Catherine the great*

vi) The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits.

– *Albert Einstein*

b. Identify the imagery used in the following epigram.

Happiness is like a butterfly:

the more you chase it, the more it will elude you.

But if you turn your attention to other things,

it will come and sit softly on your shoulders.

– *Henry David Thoreau*

(Accessed from [www.thehypertexts.com](http://www.thehypertexts.com))

c. If you have a library, try to look for a few epigrams and write them down. if you have an internet connection, search for epigrams and write down ten examples in your exercise book.

d. Compose an epigram of your own. Share it with your classmates.

## Unit 8

# Different forms of drama

### Activity 1

Tell your desk mate the types of plays you know.

### Activity 2

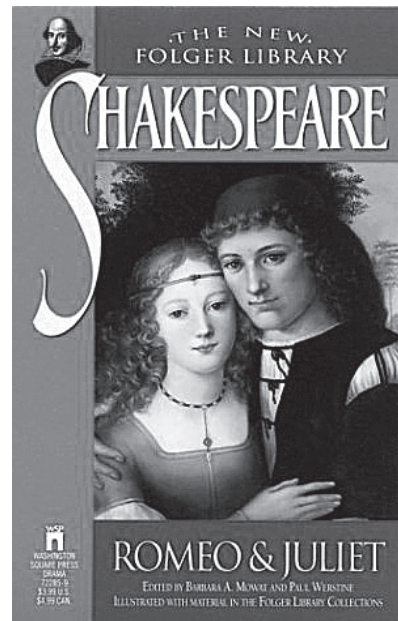
Discuss in your groups why you would say the genocide was a tragedy.

## 8.1. Tragedy

**The first type of play we will discuss is the tragedy.**

A tragedy is a serious play that discusses matters of great importance and that affect human beings. Tragedies are plays that have a series of unfortunate events. In most cases, the main character undergoes several misfortunes. Finally, the play ends in a great disaster.

For example, in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the main characters Romeo and Juliet fall in love. However, they cannot love each other, as their families are sworn enemies. This relationship causes members of the two families to fight. As Romeo intervenes, he kills Juliet's relative. Romeo is banished. Finally, as the two lovers try to reconnect, each thinks the other is dead. Hence, they both commit suicide.



*A play by William Shakespeare*

As we have seen, some tragedies end in the death or frustration of the main character. In some, the main protagonists fall from a high position to a low

position in society. These characters mainly fall due to a number of reasons. It may be,

1. because of faults within their own personalities;
2. because of fate;
3. because the gods have decreed they fall;
4. Sometimes, a combination of all the above.

Most playwrights of tragedies depict religious aspects of gods and supernatural powers and beings that control the fate of human beings.

There is a central character called the protagonist who is the point of focus. He or she is either the hero or the villain. The disaster directly affects this character either due to personal fault or unavoidable circumstances.

Tragedies get their format and content from various aspects for instance some stories in the Greek Mythology.

William Shakespeare, the English playwright and Sophocles the Greek playwright, are credited for writing the greatest plays in tragedy.

Below is the synopsis of Oedipus the king, a classical Greek tragedy set in Thebes by Sophocles.

### Activity 3

Imagine there was a great drought in Rwanda and many people died. In groups of four, write a short play that would pass as a tragedy.

### Activity 4

In groups of five, read the following extracts from the play *Oedipus the King*. Discuss with the members of your group what you think is tragic about it.

#### Extract 1

- OEDIPUS: That child he mentioned — did you give it to him?
- SERVANT: I did. How I wish I'd died that day!
- OEDIPUS: Well, you are going to die if you don't speak the truth.
- SERVANT: And if I do, the death I suffer will be even worse.
- OEDIPUS: It seems to me the man is trying to stall.



SERVANT: No, no, I'm not. I've already told you — I did give him the child.

OEDIPUS: Where did you get it? Did it come from your home or somewhere else?

SERVANT: It was not mine — I got it from someone.

OEDIPUS: Which of our citizens? Whose home was it?

SERVANT: In the name of the gods, my lord, don't ask! Please, no more questions!

OEDIPUS: If I have to ask again, then you will die.

SERVANT: The child was born in Laius' house.

OEDIPUS: From a slave or from some relative of his?

SERVANT: Alas, what I'm about to say now . . . it's horrible.

OEDIPUS: It may be horrible, but nonetheless I have to hear it.

SERVANT: If you must know, they said the child was his. But your wife inside the palace is the one who could best tell you what was going on.

OEDIPUS: You mean she gave the child to you?

SERVANT: Yes, my lord.

OEDIPUS: Why did she do that?

SERVANT: So I would kill it.

OEDIPUS: That wretched woman was the mother?

SERVANT: Yes. She was afraid of dreadful prophecies.

OEDIPUS: What sort of prophecies?

SERVANT: The story went that the child would kill his father.

OEDIPUS: If that was true, why did you give the child to this old man?

SERVANT: I pitied the boy, master, and I thought he'd take the child off to a foreign land where he was from. But he rescued him, only to save him for the greatest grief of all. For if you are who this man says you are you know your birth carried an awful fate.

OEDIPUS: Ah, so it all came true. It's so clear now. O light, let me look at you one final time, a man who stands revealed as cursed by birth, cursed by my own family, and cursed by murder where I should not kill.

## Extract 2

- CREON: What are you so keen to get from me?
- OEDIPUS: Cast me out as quickly as you can, away from Thebes, to a place where no one, no living human being, will cross my path.
- CREON: That is something I could do, of course, but first I wish to know what the god says about what I should do.
- OEDIPUS: But what he said was all so clear—the man who killed his father must be destroyed. And that corrupted man is me.

### Common stylistic devices used in tragedy

1. Imagery is used when describing situations and the emotional disposition of the various characters.

#### Activity 5

In groups of four, discuss the meaning of this image: ‘And that corrupted man is me.’

2. Foreshadowing is used when giving a premonition of an oncoming occurrence or an impending tragedy.

#### Activity 6

In your group, discuss how this statement could be seen as the foreshadowing of what would happen to Oedipus: ‘The story went that the child would kill his father.’

3. Flashback is employed for character and plot development or when recounting on a past event.

#### Activity 7

In groups of four, discuss how flashback was used in the above extract.

4. Suspense creates tension most especially in the end after the tragedy has taken place and no resolution is made; rather, the effects are not, if at all, explained.

#### Activity 8

In the extract you read, Servant keeps Oedipus in suspense for a while. Individually, provide evidence from the extract that shows that he is in suspense.

5. Tragedies mostly do not follow the logical sequence of happenings rather, ends in anticlimax.

## 8.2. Characters in a tragedy

Tragedies unlike most plays, have very few characters. The major character called the protagonist. The protagonist usually suffers greatly out of flaws in their own characters. Sometimes, they suffer out of forces greater than they can control.

The following terms are generally used in describing characters in a tragedy.

1. **Protagonist:** Is the character depicted to have good admirable traits. He or she is usually the hero or heroine. A hero in a tragedy is usually a tragic hero. The tragic hero is great. However, this hero is not perfect. His or her own downfall is partly his or her fault. The hero's misfortune is not wholly deserved. Hence, the reader will sympathise with him or her.
2. **Villain:** This could be an individual or a group of people against the victim who is the general recipient of the tragedy. Villains exhibit villainy – wicked or criminal behaviour. A villain is the opposite of a hero.
3. **Antagonist:** is the character brought out as mean and majorly tramples on the good character in the play.

### Practice Exercise 1



- a. On your own, identify the protagonist in the extract you just read.
- b. Why do you think Oedipus suffers so greatly?
- c. Research and write brief notes on the following terms used in describing characters:
  - i) Flat characters
  - ii) Round characters

## Common themes in tragedies

### Activity 9

**In groups of four, refer back to the extract on Oedipus and discuss the main theme.**

Tragedies explore the place of religion, the quality of one's character and the power of fate on the lives of people. As such, most tragedies will focus on themes such as love, pain and suffering, death, religion among others.

In *Oedipus the King*, for instance, love is depicted by the fact that the king and queen love their new born son so very much they are unable to kill him

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as directed by Teresias. They therefore task a servant to go to kill him. The servant is sympathetic towards the small innocent child and abandons him in the bushes.

In Corinth, the king and queen shower their new found child with so much love and care that he grows up without ever realising he was adopted.

It is for the love of his kingdom that king Oedipus finally gorges out his eyes and exiles himself. This he knows is the only way to save the kingdom from the calamity it now faces.

This and more illustrations depict that love is a theme that runs through the play from the beginning to the end.

Remember, you must use evidence from the text you read to validate what you are talking about any time you speak about themes.

#### Activity 10

In groups discuss the difference between theme and message.

### 8.3.Comedy

#### Activity 11

- a. Tell your desk mate what makes you laugh.
- b. Discuss with your desk mate the meaning of the word comic.

A comedy is a type of literature that adopts a humorous style and portrays laughable characters and situations.

A play that is described as a comedy brings about laughter. It is based on the strange or funny events or actions of human beings. Comedies normally have a happy ending.

Comedies are plays or a form of art where the main message or content is conveyed through humour. Political and social satire is employed.

Comedies intends to make an audience laugh . They involve a lot of word play in a funny and ironical way.

## Activity 12

The excerpt below is from *Aminata* by Francis Imbuga. Read it with your desk mate.

JUMBA: Agege, listen. Do you remember what I promised you two days ago? (Agege nods affirmatively.) What?

AGEGE: New shirt and trouser with no lice.

JUMBA: Now do you want them or not?

AGEGE: I do.

JUMBA: What about the messenger's job?

AGEGE: Messenger of stool?

JUMBA: Yes, *Banyako* Agege, messenger of the stool. Do you want it or not?

AGEGE: I do, but I am still obedient to refuse. Everyday, everyday, Agege do this, Agege do that. Even in middle of dark night, Agege do this. Now I refuse, because even idiot need rest. Yes, all man is equal. Even me I am equal also. And some women too are equal also. Yes, like Aminata is equal than Ababio because she bring water.

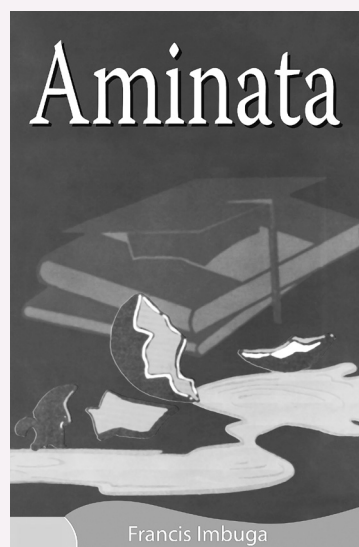
JUMBA: Shut up you porcupine!

AGEGE: Porcupine? Now that is double twice. Idiot, then woman, then the porcupine also. Call me anything but my mouth is for truth. Aminata is equal than Ababio. Me also. Aeeh, too much fire! Everyday, everyday, Agege light fire, Agege cut grass. Agege dig grave, Agege fetch water. Every morning, Agege feed dog, Agege feed cow, Agege feed hen! Why? I am not machine without bloodless! Even machine drink petrol also. So, from today now I am for respect me and I respect you back.

JUMBA: Am I hearing right? Agege, what did you have for your morning meal?

AGEGE: Morning meal? Me I don't eat to talk. I talk to eat.

JUMBA: You will starve yourself to death with this kind of talk, you toad. (An idea strikes Jumba. He extracts a coin from his pocket and hands



*A play by Francis Imbuga*

it to Agege who literally snatches it away from him) Are you happy now?

AGEGE: Yes, but not much, much. Aminata give me five of these at burial. Five! That mean full stomach in future.

JUMBA: Alright, go and call Ababio. The workers want to return to their homes. Tell him that.

AGEGE: (*After a little hesitation*) Alright, okey, I go. On your marks, get set, gooo! (*He takes off at full speed but stops almost immediately. Slowly, thoughtfully he turns and walks back to where Jumba is*)

JUMBA: What is the matter now?

AGEGE: Two matters. One, surely why should must I go again? (*Pause*) The second one is advice.

JUMBA: Advice? What advice?

AGEGE: Too much fire! You know, people call me village idiot, grave digger and many other. But they are foolish in their head themself. (*Jumba fidgets*) No, not you. You, you are headman with good equal head. Even me, I am equal with six sense here. (*Fingering his head*)

### Activity 13

- a. Tell your desk mate how you feel when you read Agege's part.
- b. With your desk mate, compare this excerpt with the one that you read earlier on, Oedipus the King. What are the differences?

## 8.4. General characteristics of comedy

1. It presents love as a motivating force, which can make people do silly things.
2. It shows that people face difficult situations and serious problems.
3. Human endeavour is usually seen as being pretentious, ludicrous and therefore stupid.
4. It exposes foolishness of customs or laws.
5. It often uses exaggerations, caricatures and stereotypes.
6. Presents absurd and bizarre situations to reflect the absurdity of the human condition.
7. It follows a logical sequence of events and mostly, has a predictable ending.

8. Issues in a comedy are mostly handled on a light note.
9. In comedy, irony is applied in the different situations and words of the characters as the occurrences do not match the reactions.
10. When need be, satire is used instead of sarcasm to criticize somebody or something.

#### Activity 14

Below is an excerpt from *The Government Inspector* by Nikolai Gogol. Here, the supposed Inspector is facing financial problems. Read it in groups of three and discuss what is funny about it.

- YOSIF: They're bringing some dinner.
- HLEST: (*claps his hands and jumps into a chair*) Dinner! Dinner! Dinner!
- WAITER: (*with plates and napkin, etc*) This is the last time you'll be served ... that's the landlord's orders.
- HLEST: The landlord! The landlord! The devil take the landlord! What have you got there?
- WAITER: Soup and roast fowl.
- HLEST: Only two courses?
- WAITER: That's all.
- HLEST: It's ridiculous! I won't have that! Go and tell him, tell him it's impossible! It's not enough!
- WAITER: The landlord says it's too much.
- HLEST: And why no sauce?
- WAITER: There is no sauce.
- HLEST: Why not? I saw them making a lot, when I came by the kitchen. And there were two little men in the dining room this morning eating salmon and lots of nice things.
- WAITER: Well, there is, and then again there isn't.
- HLEST: Why not?
- WAITER: There just isn't.
- HLEST: Isn't there any salmon or cutlets, or fish?
- WAITER: They're for the better-class customers.
- HLEST: You fool, you!
- WAITER: Yes, sir.

HLEST: You dirty pig! How is it they can eat, and not me? Why am I not treated the same? Aren't they travellers just like me?

WAITER: Well, we all know they're not the same.

HLEST: Why not?

WAITER: They're the usual sort, to be sure! It's like this, you see, they pay!

HLEST: You fool! I shan't waste my breath on you! (*pours out the soup and begins his dinner*) What sort of soup is this? You've simply put dirty water in the cup! There's no flavour, it just stinks! I won't have this soup; bring me another kind!

WAITER: Certainly, sir! The landlord said if you didn't like it you needn't have it.

HLEST: (*immediately protecting his soup from removal*) Leave it, leave it, you numskull! You may be used to treating other people like this, but I warn you, I'm not that sort of a man! I won't have it! (*still drinking his soup*) Good Heavens! What soup! I don't think there's anyone else in the world who would swallow such soup! Ugh! Look at the feathers floating in it! Give me the roast. (*carving fowl*) Good God! What a brute of a fowl! There's a little soup left there, Yosif, you can have. Roast chicken! That's not a roast chicken!

WAITER: What is it?

HLEST: The devil only knows what it is, but it isn't a chicken! Thieves! Rabble! I wonder what they're having now? Your jaws ache if you eat a mouthful of this! (*picking his teeth*) The beasts! This is like the bark of a tree, long and stringy, you can't get it out! It will make my teeth black! Robbers! Isn't there anything else?

WAITER: No.

HLEST: The idlers! The scum! No sauce or pudding? Just fleecing travellers, that's what it is!

[*the waiter and Yosif clear away and go out*]

I feel as if I'd had nothing at all! Only enough to whet an appetite! If I had a few coppers I could send out and buy some buns.

[*re-enter Yosif*]

### Activity 15

Answer the following questions individually. In each case, use evidence from the excerpts to justify your answer.

1. Do you think Hlestakov is serious when he complains about the meal?
2. What happens when Waiter decided to take away the roast chicken?

## 8.5. Tragicomedy

### Activity 16

The word tragicomedy is a compound word. Discuss with your desk mate the words that combine to make this word, and their meanings.

As the name suggests, a tragicomedy has both the elements of a tragedy and a comedy. It may use humour while addressing a very important matter about human relations. It is the delivery of a tragic play in a humorous way. The reader of such a play swings between laughter and sadness.

### Activity 17

Below are two excerpts from *Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare. Read and discuss them in your groups. Tell your groups if you feel pity for any of the characters. Present your findings to the class. Seek your teacher's help if you encounter any difficulty.

SALARINO: How now, Shylock! What news among the merchants?

SHYLOCK: You know, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight.

My own flesh and blood to rebel!

SALARINO: There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory. But tell us, do you hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or no?

SHYLOCK: There I have another bad match: a bankrupt, a prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto; a beggar, that was used to come so smug upon the mart; let him look to his bond: he was wont to call me usurer; let him look to his bond: he was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy; let him look to his bond.

SALARINO: Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh: what's

SHYLOCK:

that good for?

To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed



*Lady Justice*

with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villany you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

## Excerpt 2

*Shylock is about to leave, but Portia calls him back.*

PORTIA:

Wait, Jew: The law hath yet another hold on you. It is enacted in the laws of Venice, if it be proved against an alien that by direct or indirect attempts he seek the life of any citizen, the party against the which he doth contrive Shall seize one half his goods. The other half comes to the coffer of the state and

the offender's life lies in the mercy of the duke only, against all other voice. In which predicament, I say, thou standist; for it appears, by manifest proceeding, that indirectly and directly too. Thou hast contrived against the very life. Of the defendant; and thou hast incurred the danger formerly by me rehearsed. Down therefore and beg mercy of the duke.

DUKE: That thou shalt see the difference of our spirits. I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it. For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's. The other half comes to the general state, which humbleness may drive unto a fine.

SHYLOCK: Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that. You take my house when you do take the prop that doth sustain my house. You take my life when you do take the means whereby I live.

PORTIA: What mercy can you render him, Antonio?

ANTONIO: So please my lord the duke and all the court; to quit the fine for one half of his goods, I am content; so he will let me have the other half in use, to render it, upon his death, unto the gentleman that lately stole his daughter. Two things provided more, that, for this favour: he presently becomes a Christian. The other, that he do record a gift here in the court, of all he dies possessed, unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.

DUKE: He shall do this, or else I do recant the pardon that I late pronounced here.

PORTIA: Art thou contented, Jew? What dost thou say?

SHYLOCK: I am content.

PORTIA: Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

*Shylock leaves the court, a broken man. The Duke invites Portia to dine with him, but she explains that she is unable to accept his invitation as she has to return to Padua immediately.*

### Activity 18

#### In groups of four discuss,

- What is happening in extract one.
- What is happening in extract two.
- What Shylock has lost.
- What is tragic and what is comic in these excerpts.

## 8.6. Melodrama

### Activity 19

- Tell your desk mate about any soap opera you have ever watched.
- Imagine you are sick. Tell your desk mate how ill you are. Exaggerate as much as you can, using your voice, gestures and facial expressions. Take turns to do this.
- In pairs, research and find out the word that explains what you did in two, above.

Melodrama is simply exaggerated drama. It deals with romantic and sensational topics. The aim is to appeal to the emotions of the audience.

Live music was incorporated in melodrama to heighten the senses in the performances and mark entrances and exits.

The main purpose of melodramas was not credibility, but the capacity to ignite the audience's reactions. Therefore, melodramatic plays do not deliver much in themes but have a major concern of entertaining the audience. They are in a sense, plays meant for pleasure more than any moral lessons.

## 8.7. Features of Melodrama

**In writing a melodramatic play, playwrights offer stage directions to ensure melodrama plays depict the following features:**

- Strong facial expressions;
- Large quick movements and gestures;
- Clear, well projected delivery of lines by, for instance, being extremely loud;
- Extensive use of live music;
- Excessive use of hyperbole of characters and reactions to situations: for example, loud prolonged laughter, extreme anger pangs and so forth.

### Activity 20

**In groups of four, revisit and discuss the features of melodrama. Thereafter, act the play below.**

*(Loud sombre music as Hirwa walks on to centre stage holding a knife in his right hand. Gasana is facing away from him. There is a simple table on the stage.)*

**HIRWA:**           *(loudly, menacingly)* Where is he? His time of judgement has arrived.

KASINE: *(arrogantly)* He is in that room writing a love letter to your ...

HIRWA: Oh! My love for her surpasses anything you might say.

KASINE: *(shouting)* You are making a fool of yourself! How can you do this? She doesn't love you! I lo ...

HIRWA: How dare you? Anyway, she will soon, *(raising the knife)* when that fool is gone.

KASINE: I will tell him you are here.

HIRWA: Good, I will hide and wait. *(exit Kasine, Hirwa hides behind a table)*

*(Enter Uwase)*

UWASE: *(reading from a paper, loudly)* I love you more than I love myself. You are my sun, my stars ...

HIRWA: *(Standing up abruptly, energetically)* Oh darling I love you too!

UWASE: *(really startled)* Hirwa! But ... I love someone else!

*(Entre Manzi)*

MANZI: Uwase, what are you doing here.

KASINE: I came to see you my love. *(she runs to him)*

HIRWA: Kasine, you and I belong together!

KASINE: She doesn't love you!

HIRWA: Thanks for everything Kasine ...

UWASE: Thanks for what?

HIRWA: *(to himself)* She has brought him here; I will finish him.

KASINE: No, I will finish her, so that I can be with the one I love. *(she snatches Hirwa's knife and runs towards Uwase. Hirwa runs and jumps in between and he is stabbed. He falls down.)*

HIRWA: *(Gasping for air)* What have you done?

KASINE: *(crouches beside Hirwa, tears running down her cheeks. Uwase and Manzi are extremely surprised.)* My love, my love, my love. Don't die. Please do...n't!

### Activity 21

In groups of four, write and act a short melodramatic play about love.

## Unit 9

# Key aspects of drama

### 9.1. Introduction

The word drama comes from the Greek word “*dran*” which means play, action or deed. This is understandable because in a play, on stage, we are always presented with actions. A play is a story that is written for actors to perform in a theatre. A play usually has a dialogue that is spoken by the characters.

The major difference between plays and other forms of literary writing is the way that they are laid out. On paper, one can immediately see that the piece of writing is a play because it is set out as dialogue only. Most times,



the words of the dialogue are written on the right side and the names of the characters are written in the margin. The two, dialogue and names, should not be mixed up otherwise it becomes difficult for the reader to tell the difference.

#### Activity 1

##### In your small groups:

- Discuss what makes a play.
- Discuss what makes a play interesting.

This Unit seeks to explore the different aspects of drama which include: plot, setting, characters, themes, messages, dramatic techniques (dialogue, monologue, soliloquy, body language, flashbacks, asides, entrance/exit, props, costumes) and plot development tableaux.

## Activity 2

The following excerpt is from *Voice of the People* by Okiya Omtatah Okoiti. Read it individually in your spare time and retell the story in your own words to your group.

SIBUOR: Your Excellency!

BOSS: (some anger) Don't 'Your Excellency' me! Can't I have some time to myself?

SIBUOR: I am sorry, Your Excellency!

BOSS: What's it?

SIBUOR: The woman is here.

BOSS: Which woman?

SIBUOR: Nasirumbi.

BOSS: Who is she?

SIBUOR: I'd like you to meet her.

BOSS: Boss does not like to be ambushed!

SIBUOR: Son of the War God, it's not to ambush you that I brought her. It's to defuse a bomb.

BOSS: (grasping the gravity of the matter) Huh! What's wrong?

SIBUOR: (gets up) She's causing trouble. Things are getting out of hand.

BOSS: What are you talking about?

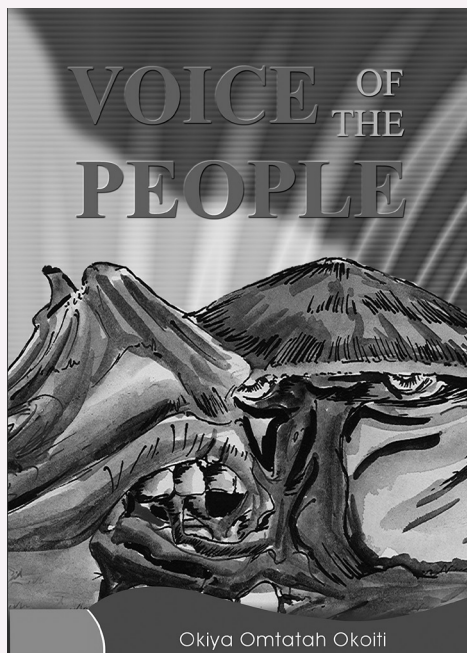
SIBUOR: There was a small story on it in yesterday's paper.

BOSS: It's your business to read local papers and then brief me accordingly.

SIBUOR: A group of women are ganging up to oppose our Resort Paradiso Africana Project.

BOSS: Mere women? What can they do?

SIBUOR: They are threatening to strip and stage a nude parade through the streets in protest – hundreds of them. They call themselves The Mothers' Front. Nasirumbi is their leader.



*A play by Omtatah Okoiti*

BOSS: *(impatient)* Don't tell me you're not on top of things.

SIBUOR: I am. That's why all is calm. When I sniffed out their scheme I reached out to contain their leader. I asked her to write Boss a letter stating their grievances ... and requesting to meet you.

BOSS: I won't see her today!

SIBUOR: *(Pulls the letter out of his pocket and hands it over to BOSS who declines to take it.)* Your Excellency, I assured her you could see her as soon as you read her letter.

BOSS: I never rush things!

SIBUOR: Within 24 hours!

BOSS: What madness is upon you?

SIBUOR: I told her this matter is very close to your heart. I wanted to impress her. Boss, the people know you as a man of action. You are known for your unrivalled efficiency. I assured her Simbi is close to your heart and you would leave everything you were doing to attend to her. It has to be today, Your Excellency.

BOSS: When did you get the letter?

SIBUOR: Yesterday.

BOSS: Why bring it this late?

SIBUOR: I was very busy Your Excellency... doing a thorough background check on her, looking for the button to turn her off.

BOSS: You should have called.

SIBUOR: *(subdued)* Your Excellency, I forgot.

BOSS: Goodness me! How could you?

SIBUOR: I'm sorry.

BOSS: Don't 'sorry me'! You should have forewarned me.

SIBUOR: Son of the Plague, she's riffraff – no match for Boss. Crush her. Grind her to pulp with a wave of your hand!

BOSS: You can't just ambush me like this and expect me to do your dirty work for you. No. I won't see her today.

SIBUOR: *(kneels on one knee)* Boss, you are Boss!

BOSS: Will I still be Boss if I make a fool of myself before her?

SIBUOR: That's why I have left her outside. I have all the information you need at my fingertips. Read her letter.

BOSS: *(as SIBUOR makes to open the letter)* It's too late to read that letter. Get up and give me your fingertip facts about her. You know the kind of weapons I need to annihilate her. *(pen and notebook in hand, he sits at the table and takes notes as he interviews SIBUOR)* Spouse?

SIBUOR: Single parent. No husband. I think she sleeps around with men.

BOSS: Children?

SIBUOR: Three children from three different men.

BOSS: Excellent! *(SIBUOR sits down)* Her age?

SIBUOR: About 40.

BOSS: Profession?

SIBUOR: Secondary school teacher.

BOSS: Where?

SIBUOR: St. Bakhita's Academy.

BOSS: Public or private?

SIBUOR: Public.

BOSS: Performance record?

SIBUOR: Excellent. Top school!

BOSS: Subjects?

SIBUOR: Teaches English.

BOSS: Anything outstanding about her as a teacher?

SIBUOR: Has won top awards in both subjects several times.

BOSS: Is she rich?

SIBUOR: No. Survives on her small salary.

BOSS: Where does she live?

SIBUOR: Buru Buru.

BOSS: A slum dweller? *(chuckles)* Isn't that near Korogocho slums?

SIBUOR: No match for Boss.

BOSS: Any criminal record?

SIBUOR: I don't know.

BOSS: *(bangs the table and SIBUOR rises instinctively)* Don't know?

SIBUOR: The CID are investigating.  
BOSS: Then say CID!  
SIBUOR: CID!  
BOSS: Does she pay her taxes?  
SIBUOR: CID!  
BOSS: Does she hang around with criminals and other ‘do-no-gooders’?  
SIBUOR: CID!  
BOSS: Are any of the men who fathered her bastards in police records for anything?  
SIBUOR: CID!  
BOSS: (*pause. Casts a stern glance at SIBUOR who cowers*) What did you say the women she leads are called?  
SIBUOR: The Mothers’ Front.  
BOSS: Membership?  
SIBUOR: Rabble. The type you can buy off with a penny!  
BOSS: How many?  
SIBUOR: CID!  
BOSS: Any with police records?  
SIBUOR: CID!  
BOSS: Any supporters with means?  
SIBUOR: CID!  
BOSS: (*firm*) Do a thorough job! Have the women received any money from dubious sources? Criminals like patronising such groups. How many bank accounts do they have?  
SIBUOR: CID!  
BOSS: Any positive achievements?  
SIBUOR: They volunteer to clean streets. They have a lunch programme for street families where they serve a mug of porridge. Through their reforestation project they organise rural women to plant trees in the countryside. That has made them very popular in their neighbourhoods.  
BOSS: You said they have featured in the papers.  
SIBUOR: Only one paper has been carrying their articles.  
BOSS: Which one?

SIBUOR: The notorious one... *The Voice of People*.

BOSS: Those busybodies latch onto anything.

SIBUOR: Boss, we underrate a muckraking journalist at our own peril. His pen is lethal. Don't you remember the scandal involving the illegal importation of luxury cars, and the ease with which he "finished" Hon. Owiti?

BOSS: That's enough for now. Get the CID to check out that newspaper.  
*(BOSS stands up and begins adjusting his clothes. SIBUOR helps tidy up the place.)*

BOSS: How do I look?

SIBUOR: Like a burning spear aimed at the enemy!

BOSS: That's me.

SIBUOR: Son of Thunder!

BOSS: Bring her on!  
*(exit SIBUOR. BOSS remains standing, full of himself. Moments later, SIBUOR ushers NASIRUMBI to where BOSS is. She is formally dressed in elegant Kitenge or similar African attire. She is about 40, confident and "full of life")*

SIBUOR: Your Excellency, it's my pleasure and honour to introduce Lady Nasirumbi.

BOSS: *(without moving)* Welcome, Nasirumbi.

NASIRUMBI: *(diplomatic but suspicious)* Thank you, Your Excellency.

SIBUOR: Your Excellency, Lady Nasirumbi is the embodiment of your dictum that great people stand out for doing two things: first, they realise that something needs to be done; second, they do it. She is a dedicated grassroots leader. She leads a large group of dedicated women. The Mothers' Front is a study in the importance of strong grassroots leadership in our communities. I ran into her yesterday morning and she gave me the letter I showed you.

BOSS: *(to NASIRUMBI)* I got your interesting letter yesterday afternoon. You addressed matters very close to my heart. Sorry for the rushed meeting.

NASIRUMBI: I am most grateful for this opportunity, Your Excellency. I want to talk to you so much like my life depends on it.

SIBUOR: Your Excellency, with your permission, I'll leave you to attend to her.

BOSS: Okay. But stay within earshot just in case I need you. (*exit SIBUOR*) Welcome. (*helps her sit down and serves her tea*) How much sugar?

NASIRUMBI: No sugar, please. (*BOSS serves the tea and they drink in silence.*)

BOSS: Your letter touched my heart.

NASIRUMBI: I didn't expect your response within 24 hours!

BOSS: On the contrary, it is one of those natural leadership things. When it is Boss' duty, it is my duty, my priority! You gave me this job. Boss must serve you.

NASIRUMBI: I am grateful to meet you against all expectations!

BOSS: How do you find my garden? (*pause*)

NASIRUMBI: Lovely.

BOSS: I am a tree-hugger at heart.

NASIRUMBI: It shows.

BOSS: By the way, you look familiar. You teach English at St. Bakhita's and you have won the top awards in both.

NASIRUMBI: I am honoured you can remember.

BOSS: (*rises, walks about*) How can I forget great achievers like you? I am very proud of St. Bakhita's. It's one of our top schools. It's the shining evidence that our public schools can hold their own against the best private ones. Are any teachers from the school on the Education Board?

NASIRUMBI: No.

BOSS: That's not good. The key to our future lies in good education – quality education! After we introduced Universal Free Primary Education, my challenge now is to keep the class size at the minimum and put a well-trained teacher in charge. I'll instruct the Education Minister to appoint you to the board right away.

NASIRUMBI: (*politely*) Your Excellency, though I would love to, my hands are full right now. When not teaching I am busy with the Mothers' Front.

BOSS: Oh, the Mothers' Front! I've heard a lot about the Mothers' Front ... how you keep the streets clean ...

NASIRUMBI: Why does everybody associate us with garbage?

BOSS: (*sits*) You're doing a commendable job. There is no greater thing in life than to serve a cause greater than oneself; to be dedicated to something greater than us, to live for a cause one is prepared to die for. As Frantz Fanon would say, "we are nothing on earth if we are not in the first place slaves of a cause ..."

NASIRUMBI: Is it true your Government plans to cut down Simbi Forest?

BOSS: Why do you say that?

NASIRUMBI: (*pulls out a dossier*) We have this report that says some World Bank funded foreigners want to invest here.

BOSS: Well, Nasirumbi, this is a very big mountain to climb. The Cabinet is still studying the proposal. No firm decision has been made.

NASIRUMBI: The Mothers' Front would like to know where you stand.

BOSS: It is a good exercise in discipline that we don't get ahead of the facts. Experts are still poring over the documents, meticulously agonizing over tiny details, debating the matter and, as your presence here attests, even ordinary people are getting involved and having their full say. The debate is open. Boss must proceed on a platform of principle, not details. I don't want to interfere.

NASIRUMBI: You are the boss!

BOSS: This is not the time to pamper egos ... this is a time for hard questions. How do we manage a consensus?

NASIRUMBI: I doubt if that will work.

BOSS: Don't misunderstand me. On such sensitive matters, Boss must not inflame passions but appeal to the firm and dependable good old intellect. Reason and scientific facts must prevail. The strategy is to encourage dialogue and

imaginative thinking, and to shun sermons and dogmatic solutions to complex problems. (*rises, takes a few paces, then stops to address the empty space before him, talking more to himself than to her.*) The fundamental reason for politics is public service. Boss must consult widely ... He must hear from everybody on matters of policy and law. Boss cannot go beyond the accepted limits of civilized government. (*he changes to a delightful tone and talks directly to her*) Boss will form a Commission of Inquiry to look into the matter.

NASIRUMBI: (*rises*) Your Excellency, Simbi is our only water source.

BOSS: Let the people decide.

NASIRUMBI: We cannot do without Simbi. That forest is sacred.

## 9.2. Plot

**Plot refers to the arrangement and unfolding of events from the beginning to the end of a play.** In arranging events and incidences in a play, the playwright strives to show their impact on the various characters. As you study a play, you will notice that each event occurs for a reason. The action flows logically and we are able to explain why various characters react the way they do.

In patterning the events, the playwright utilises various techniques to create a sense of suspense. Some events shatter our expectations and maintain our interest in the play. As readers, we keep asking the question: What will happen next?

In your study of plays, it is therefore important for you to ask yourself the following questions as you read on: What makes the various characters react the way they do? What makes them behave the way they do? If you respond effectively to these questions then you will have mastered the play's plot.

## 9.3. Types of plot

There are two types of plots: simple plot and complex plot.

A simple plot is linear and focuses on one conflict and traces its development and resolution. This plot has few characters and almost all events directly impact on the major characters. A simple plot is most common in short stories.

A complex plot has a several conflicts which are logically developed leading to a resolution of all of them. A complex plot has many characters and it seems like a series of short stories interwoven together.

### Practice Exercise 1

- In groups, write the plot of the play excerpt that you read at the beginning of this Unit.
- Appoint a group secretary to read the plot you come up with to the class.

## 9.4. Setting

### Activity 3

- Tell your desk mate or class mate, where you were yesterday after school.
- Now tell her or him where you are now and what time it is.

### Activity 4

The excerpt below is from a play entitled *Aminata* by Francis Imbuga. Read it in pairs. Pay close attention to the words at the beginning of the scene. Thereafter, tell your desk mate where this event is taking place.

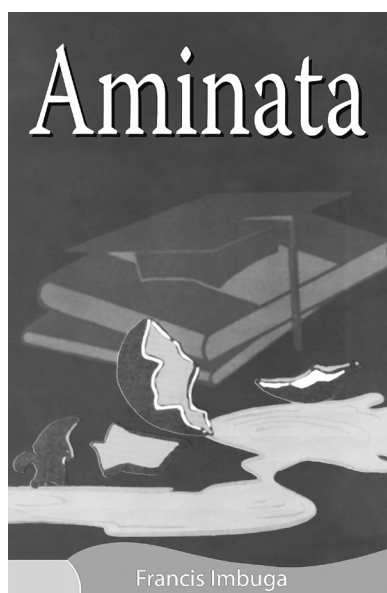
## PART ONE

### Scene Two

#### (Monkey Business)

*A spacious verandah at Dr. Mulemi's house. Against one of the walls hangs a dart board. Next to the board, on the same wall, hangs a scoreboard on which is written, M.A. and M.B. In the background can be heard various animal noises, prominent among them being monkey chatter. These noises are heard at intervals throughout the scene. Mulemi is busy playing. He throws the first set of three darts and records the score under M. B. He is so engrossed in the game that he does not notice Aunt Kezia's entry.*

KEZIA: (after watching him for a while.)  
Dagitari, what are you killing?



*A play by Francis Imbuga*

MULEMI: (surprised) Oh, hullo! Look who is here! Auntie Kezia!

KEZIA: Are you surprised?

MULEMI: You can say that again! What brings you here?

KEZIA: A bus, I came by bus. (they both laugh and shake hands warmly)

MULEMI: Aeeh, this is a very pleasant surprise indeed! How are the people back home?

KEZIA: They are still breathing. But your father has not been himself this past week.

MULEMI: Why? What is the matter with the old man?

KEZIA: That is a question for doctors like yourself to answer. Today the disease is in his big toe, tomorrow it is in his neck and the following day, the back. Ah, we really don't know what to do with him. We have used the roots and herbs that we know of, but the disease has defied them all. The travelling disease is no disease for an old body, I tell you. Where are the children?

MULEMI: They must be somewhere in the neighbourhood playing with their friends.

KEZIA: My namesake must be very big now.

MULEMI: Ah yes, even the boy is quite big. He will be tall, like his grandfather.

KEZIA: (absent-minded) That is good, that is good. But where is the mother?

MULEMI: Aminata went to visit her people. She went to Membe, but we are expecting her any time now.

KEZIA: I see. And is that why you are throwing these thorns all over the place? What are you killing on that board?

MULEMI: (amused) These are not thorns Auntie, they are darts. This is a game, a game of darts.

KEZIA: A game of darts? (pause) Is it for men whose wives have gone away?

MULEMI: (unaware of what she is driving at) Oh, no, no, no, this is an open game for both men and women. It is best played by more than two people. I know some women who are very good at it. Do you want to have a go at it?

KEZIA: That is madness. Do I look like one who has nothing to do?

MULEMI: (excited) Come on now, Auntie, this is a pastime activity. Now this area here is called the bull's eye. It is worth fifty points. Now you can decide to play the ...

KEZIA: *Dagitari!*

MULEMI: Yes, Auntie.

KEZIA: You are not the boy we brought up. And we blame your wife. Aminata has taught you wrong ways. How can a whole man, a doctor, spend all his time alone, killing nothing on a piece of board.

MULEMI: This is just a game, Auntie.

KEZIA: Just a game? What about the monkeys, the rats and the rabbits you keep? For what games are they?

MULEMI: That is my profession, Auntie. The monkeys, the rabbits and the rats are for serious business. They are for research.

KEZIA: Research, what game is that one? Is it a game of bulls too?

MULEMI: (*ignoring her*) If I make a breakthrough, and I am sure I soon will, I could save mother Kenya millions of shillings in hard foreign currency.

KEZIA: Start off by saving yourself from this boredom. My brother's son, we know you and Aminata well and we are worried. The monkeys and the rabbits are alright, they do not think like us. But you, why do you play games with the human body?

MULEMI: Games with the human body?

KEZIA: Yes, remember the truth does not sleep on the way. A man's stool is not for women's buttocks. Aminata should know that. Why is she fighting to inherit her father's land? What has she gone back to Membe for?

MULEMI: Auntie, Aminata is not fighting to inherit her late father's land. Her father left her a piece of land in a will. It is her right.

**Setting refers to the place where the story is taking place.** While it is true that the world the playwright creates is imaginary, it shares a close resemblance with our own real world. It is important to identify the setting of the story if you are to appreciate the themes. In order to understand the setting, ask yourself this question: Could this story be happening anywhere or could it have

happened somewhere? If you understand the setting, it will be possible for you to understand the characters and get to know why they act the way they do.

Setting can be geographical, historical and social.

**Geographical setting** deals with where the play is set – the place. It may be a real place or an imaginary one. For instance, the excerpt you just read is set in Dr. Mulemi’s house. We know this from the stage directions at the beginning of the scene.

If the play is set in an imaginary place, the playwright will give some cues on where this imaginary place could be; for instance, an independent African state.

**Historical setting** refers to the time in which the play is set. A playwright may give the actual date and time but more often, playwrights give a period in time; for example, pre-colonial, colonial or post-colonial Africa.

**Social setting** refers to the type of society in which the play is set. It could be in a village or city, a market or a church. For instance, *Aminata* is set in a village that is undergoing a lot of influence from the neighbouring city and feeling the effects of liberalisation – where women see themselves as equal to men.

Setting helps to give a play and its characters authenticity and helps in building a foundation for the development of themes and dramatic techniques.

### Practice Exercise 2

In groups read and discuss the setting of the excerpt below.

#### FOURTH SEQUENCE

*(Action takes place at the Editor’s office. INDONDO is going through his work. Enter NASIRUMBI bursting with energy)*

INDONDO: Did the High Court grant your application for a permanent injunction?

NASIRUMBI: The judge noted that though the Mothers’ Front had a moral obligation to protest, he distinguished between moral obligations and legal ones. Justice Opoti argued that not being mandated to represent the people; and two, the forest not being our private property there is no legal basis in our laws for us to apply for the injunction. He dismissed the case with costs.

INDONDO: I saw it coming.

- NASIRUMBI: How can we not have jurisdiction over Simbi? It is public property!
- INDONDO: Such judicial lynching has far-reaching political and social implications.
- NASIRUMBI: That ruling was totally without merit. A travesty of justice that prevents a fair hearing of the issues we raised in our plaint ... it is an abuse of court procedure and the due process. I didn't expect such an outrageous outcome.
- INDONDO: On the contrary, that verdict was written long before you presented your case.

*(From Voice of the People by Okiya Okiya Omtatah)*

### Activity 5

Study the excerpt you just read in the Practice Exercise. Read out loud the names written in the margin.

## Characters

Do you remember what we said at the beginning of this Unit? We said, most times, the words of the dialogue in a play are written on the right side, and the names of the characters are written in the margin.

A character refers to the fictional human being, animal or thing in a story (in this case, a play). Some are dominant from the beginning to the end of the play while others make few appearances in selected scenes or acts.

In order to identify a character we look at:

- The physical description of the character in terms of size, colour and general appearance.
- What the character says about himself or herself and about other issues affecting society.
- The actions of the character in his or her interaction with other characters in the play.
- What other characters say about the character.
- The character's thoughts, desires, dreams and wishes.

Characters are usually described by single adjectives such as loving, cruel, intelligent, naïve, hardworking, lazy and humorous. Consequently, one does not say character A cares about people, but rather, character A is caring. One should

also avoid ambiguous words when describing a character. For example, rather than say character B is not disciplined, one should be more specific and say he/she is rude or dishonest.

Characters in a play are a reflection of human beings. Therefore, characters can have both positive and negative traits. A character, for example, can be very generous but also extremely temperamental.

### Activity 6

Read the following excerpt, from *Voice of the People* by Okoiti Omtatah and mention the characters involved. Thereafter, copy the table below in your exercise book and fill it in. Follow the given example.

Character	Character trait	Illustration from excerpt
Sibuor	Cunning	He finds a way of catching Boss's attention by praising him.

SIBUOR: Son of the War God, it's not to ambush you that I brought her. It's to defuse a bomb.

BOSS: (*grasping the gravity of the matter*) Huh! What's wrong?

SIBUOR: (*gets up*) She's causing trouble. Things are getting out of hand.

BOSS: What are you talking about?

SIBUOR: There was a small story on it in yesterday's paper.

BOSS: It's your business to read local papers and then brief me accordingly.

SIBUOR: A group of women are ganging up to oppose our Resort Paradiso Africana Project.

BOSS: Mere women? What can they do?

SIBUOR: They are threatening to strip and stage a nude parade through the streets in protest – hundreds of them. They call themselves The Mothers' Front. Nasirumbi is their leader.

BOSS: (*impatient*) Don't tell me you're not on top of things.

SIBUOR: I am. That's why all is calm. When I sniffed out their scheme I reached out to contain their leader. I asked her to write Boss a letter stating their grievances ... and requesting to meet you.

BOSS: I won't see her today!

SIBUOR: *(pulls the letter out of his pocket and hands it over to BOSS who declines to take it)* Your Excellency, I assured her you could see her as soon as you read her letter.

BOSS: I never rush things!

SIBUOR: Within 24 hours!

BOSS: What madness is upon you?

SIBUOR: I told her this matter is very close to your heart. I wanted to impress her. Boss, the people know you as a man of action. You are known for your unrivalled efficiency. I assured her Simbi is close to your heart and you would leave everything you were doing to attend to her. It has to be today, Your Excellency.

BOSS: When did you get the letter?

SIBUOR: Yesterday.

BOSS: Why bring it this late?

SIBUOR: I was very busy Your Excellency... doing a thorough background check on her, looking for the button to turn her off.

BOSS: You should have called.

SIBUOR: *(subdued)* Your Excellency, I forgot.

BOSS: Goodness me! How could you?

SIBUOR: I'm sorry.

BOSS: Don't 'am sorry me'! You should have forewarned me.

SIBUOR: Son of the Plague, she's riffraff – no match for Boss. Crush her. Grind her to pulp with a wave of your hand!

BOSS: You can't just ambush me like this and expect me to do your dirty work for you. No. I won't see her today.

SIBUOR: *(kneels on one knee)* Boss, you are Boss!

*(From Voice of the People by Okiya Okioti Omtatah)*

### Activity 7

**In your small groups, discuss the idea the playwright is putting across in *Voice of the People*. Your discussion should be based on the excerpts you have read.**

## 9.5. Theme

Theme refers to the main idea portrayed in a play. What does a playwright hope to achieve when writing a play? Some playwrights write with the intention of showing the power of change, the dangers of love, the role of

good governance and leadership, the negative effects of retrogressive cultures and practices, the immortality of death, fate and destiny, among others.

Some plays have one major theme and several minor themes, while other plays could have two or more major themes and a number of minor themes.

The most common themes in plays include change, tradition, religion, education, love, death, family relations, women empowerment, etc.

Francis Imbuga, in his play *Aminata*, explores a number of themes, such as; tradition and culture, change and women empowerment.

### Activity 8

Read the excerpt below and in your small groups discuss the main theme.

JUMBA: Mama Rosina!

ROSINA: I hear you.

JUMBA: Come. (*Rosina takes the meandering path and goes to Jumba*)

ROSINA: Are you alright?

JUMBA: Why do you ask?

ROSINA: The elders, what happened?

JUMBA: They went away, but they will be back at sunset.

ROSINA: Are you sure?

JUMBA: What kind of question is that? I tell no lies. (*pause*) Now listen, I have been in deep thought.

ROSINA: Deep thought?

JUMBA: Yes, I have been thinking. I was a Christian once, wasn't I?

ROSINA: You are still baptised.

JUMBA: Me?

ROSINA: Yes, Aberenego Jumba.

JUMBA: No, I dropped that one, and you know it. That is what created the mountain between me and Ngoya.

ROSINA: Like Lot's wife, you looked back but you are still baptised. The door is still wide open. Why do you and a handful of elders choose to be left behind?

JUMBA: I am here with you. Am I not?

ROSINA: After all that you had gone through, it was unwise, no, unforgivable for you to look back: turning around to fight your own brother and the church. Tell me, what is wrong with elders like Nuhu? They go to church and still join you at your beer parties, don't they? So, what is wrong with that?

JUMBA: Mama Rosina, I did not call you here to chew my words for me. *(pause)* So listen. By leaving a piece of land for Aminata, Ngoya defied our laws of ages. His action was a deliberate one because it has never happened in any of our neighbouring clans. Now, I have been thinking. The stool of rule is spittle in the sand without the support of all the elders. So now I have made up my mind. If the elders want to give that piece of land to Aminata, they can do so.

ROSINA: No they cannot. The final say is yours. The elders cannot give away land from one hand to another, without the consent of the headman. Have you forgotten what is normally done?

JUMBA: No, I have forgotten nothing. *(pause)* I have been thinking. This is a battle of wits. Jumba against the rest. Tell me, I am Jumba with or without the stool of rule, am I not?

ROSINA: You are, but what do you mean?

JUMBA: So the soil can be handed over to Aminata without me?

ROSINA: No it cannot be ...

JUMBA: Yes. It can. I will resign.

ROSINA: Resign? My husband, which man ever proved his manhood by re ...

*(Jumba winces, Rosina checks herself)* Sorry, a slip of the tongue.

JUMBA: This is a game of wits.

ROSINA: That will be new here. Who will sit on the stool for you then?

JUMBA: That is what I have been thinking about, and that is why I called you here. I will let the elders have their way in the matter of

land, but it will be me who shall have the final laugh. Yes, I will outwit them at their own game.

ROSINA: How exactly will you do that?

JUMBA: Our family, Nyarango's family, still has two years to sit on the stool of headmanship, not so?

ROSINA: It is so.

JUMBA: Since I am yet to complete my years on the stool, whose responsibility is it to choose my successor?

ROSINA: It is yours but in this case you ...

JUMBA: No, there are no buts. If I voluntarily step down from the stool of rule, then it is my right to pick my successor, not so?

ROSINA: Yes but ...

JUMBA: No buts! Now, when I step down, Membe will expect our family to provide a replacement, not so?

ROSINA: It is so.

JUMBA: Good, now look at our family, Nyarango's family, who among us is fit to take over the stool of rule?

ROSINA: Jumba, think of something else. This is no joke for our age.

JUMBA: A joke? Who put that into your head? If the elders insist on pleasing their goddess at my expense, I shall have no choice but to resign. And if I resign, then Nyarango's family must produce my replacement. So where is the joke? The question now is, who?

ROSINA: (*misunderstanding Jumba's seriousness*) Well, if it is a game partner you want, you can count on me. I am not yet too old to play. Now, Joram is in India and Ababio is a gone ca...

JUMBA: Leave the crow out of it. (*long pause*) Now, Mama Rosina, that leaves only one other person.

ROSINA: One other person? Who?

JUMBA: You! (*this revelation is too much for Mama Rosina. She immediately bursts out laughing*) What are you laughing at?

ROSINA: (*still laughing*) Me?

JUMBA: Yes, you, what are you laughing at?

ROSINA: (*still laughing*) I am a woman, have you forgotten that?

JUMBA: I may be a joker, but this is no time for jokes.  
ROSINA: You mean, you want me, Rosina Jumba, to become Membe's headman?  
JUMBA: That is so.

*(From Aminata by Francis Imbuga)*

When discussing a theme, you should give enough illustrations from the play. You must remember to start with a topic sentence.

Here is an example of how to discuss a theme from *Aminata*.

### Theme of change

The theme in this excerpt is change. There is a significant change in the position and role of a woman in society. Traditionally, women were required to take care of their homes and families with no other meaningful engagements. However, from the above excerpt, we can see that Ngoya has bequeathed his land to Aminata. At the same time, Jumba is willing to relinquish his power as leader of Membe to Rosina. Rosina is actually shocked and she asks, "you mean, you want me, Rosina Jumba, to become Membe's headman?" to which Jumba replies, "That is so." This had never happened before as Jumba observes: "His action was a deliberate one because it has never happened in any of our neighbouring clans."

Therefore, the playwright seems to be advocating women's empowerment through change of perception especially by men. This (what the playwright is telling us) is what we call **the message**.

A good essay on a theme should have a proper introduction and conclusion. Every paragraph should handle a different illustration and should begin with a topic sentence which must be very clear on what the paragraph aims to discuss. Avoid being repetitive in illustrations and examples.

### Practice Exercise 3

**Individually, read the excerpt below and discuss the main theme with members of your group.**

MAYOR: (*uneasily*) Well, they may, or they may not. That doesn't matter now. This Inspector may even now be undoing us all behind our own backs. As to my own special responsibilities, the police, and the general good order of the town, I have already taken some steps, and I advise you to do the same.

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(*swinging round on CC*) Especially you, Artémy Filípovitch; this official will certainly inspect your institutions, and you had better see they look decent! Get some clean nightcaps and bedclothes, the ones you've got are enough for a report in themselves. And the patients might look a little less like chimney sweeps!

CC: That's nothing much. I may be able to find some clean nightcaps.

MAYOR: And there ought to be some way of distinguishing the patients. Put a sign over each bed, and get the doctor to put up, in Latin or some such language, the names of the patients when admitted, their diseases, and so on. And make them stop smoking that filthy tobacco for a while; it makes me choke whenever I go in! And get rid of some of the patients; there are far too many. He'll think the doctor doesn't know his business!

CC: Oh! The doctor and I have got things well arranged in the medical line. The more natural your treatment is the better. We don't bother with expensive medicines! These patients are very simple people! If they die, well, they die! If they get better, they get better! And it would really be very difficult for Hiebner to talk to them. He's a very good doctor, but he doesn't know a word of Russian!

MAYOR: (*to Judge*) And you ought to do something about the state of your courthouse, Á'mmos Fyódorovitch! Your porter keeps geese in the anterooms, and goslings, and they run about and peck under your feet. Of course it's a good thing to keep poultry, very praiseworthy, but can't he keep them somewhere else? It makes the place smell so!

JUDGE: That's a small matter. I can have them killed today. Would you like to come to dinner tonight?

MAYOR: Then your offices are full of all kinds of rubbish. Skins hanging up to dry, and whips and gear mixed up with the papers. I know you're very fond of hunting, but why not tidy it up till this inspector's been, then you can put it all back, if you want

to! Then that clerk of yours! He may know a great deal, but he gives off a powerful odour of vodka! I've wanted to talk these things over with you for some time, but something has always turned up to put it out of my mind. If it really is his natural smell, as he says it is, there must be a remedy. Tell him to try eating onions, or perhaps the doctor could give him something or the other.

JUDGE: No, it's no good. He says when he was a child his nurse bruised him, and he's given off a slight smell of vodka ever since.

MAYOR: Well, I thought I'd mention it. About your conduct in Court, and what Tchmihov in his letter calls "little failings" well! What is there to say? No man is without sin. It's God's will, and it is no use the free-thinkers arguing about it.

JUDGE: Well, there are sins and sins. I freely admit I take bribes; but what sort of bribes? Borzoi puppies, that's all!

MAYOR: Whether it's Borzoi puppies or something else, it's still bribery.

JUDGE: But you're wrong there. For example, if a man takes a fur coat, worth 500 roubles, or a shawl for his wife ...

MAYOR: *(who doesn't relish this line)* Well, what of it? Only taking puppies as bribes won't save you. Why, you don't believe in God! You never go to church! As for me, I do at least believe devoutly, and I go to church every Sunday. But you ... when you start talking about the creation of the world, it makes my hair stand on end!

*(From The Government Inspector by Nikolai Gogol)*

## Dramatic techniques

Dialogue, which is the conversation between characters, is what sets a play apart from the other types of literature. However, there are other ways by which a playwright enriches his or her play. These techniques make the play more interesting to read and perform.

These dramatic techniques include:

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**Monologue:** This is a long speech by one character in a play. For example,

**SHYLOCK:** To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villany you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

(From *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare)

**Soliloquy:** This is a speech in a play in which a character who is alone on stage speaks his or her thoughts aloud. Soliloquy is made up of two Latin words: 'solo' and 'loquor'. 'Solo' means, 'to self' while 'loquor' means 'I speak'. The character to whom the soliloquy is assigned reveals his or her character to the audience through this speech. He or she can reveal his or her feelings or intentions through the soliloquy. A soliloquy reveals the innermost thoughts of a character.

A character may directly address the audience or may speak in a way to suggest that he is talking to the audience in confidence.

**Aside:** This is something which a character in a play says to the audience, but which the other characters in the play are not supposed to hear. When spoken in a low voice, an aside is usually directed at one of the other characters that are on stage too. An aside may also be a remark made as a comment about a character on stage directed at the audience to leave out the character not meant to hear the aside. The character making the aside will turn away from the unintended audience.

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**Stage props:** These include the set and items on stage. The set is made up of the structures placed on a stage and backdrops. The items or props are those things that characters use on stage. The set creates the particular atmosphere the playwright has in mind. The props are not idle items but are used by the characters to complement their actions and speech.

**Stage directions:** These are instructions given in italics at the beginning of every act and throughout the play in brackets. For example: (*who doesn't relish this line*) Stage directions serve specific functions. For instance, they provide background information on the setting and the set. Stage directions also say when an actor makes an **entrance** (comes on stage) and when he or she makes an **exit** (leaves the stage). They also describe the actor's **body language** (communicating non-verbally through conscious and non-conscious body movements; the way in which a character's body **communicates his or her** attitudes. An audience or viewer can watch and see this.)

**Irony:** This is when something is said or done contrary to expectations. In a play, irony is broadly viewed in two ways: **Dramatic irony:** The reader or listener is in the privileged position of being able to see more than the character himself or herself. There is, therefore, a gap between the character's ideas/aspirations and the reality. The meanings as conveyed by the character's conversations are different to the ones that appear on the surface. **Verbal irony:** The meanings of a character's utterances are indirectly implied and may be the exact opposite of what is meant. The playwright may use puns or humour to bring out irony.

**Sarcasm:** This is the use of ridicule to criticise the character or quality of something or a situation. - For example when Askari in Francis Imbuga's *Betrayal in the City* pretends to be intelligent, Mosese tells him: *Sometimes I wonder why a man of your understanding should accept this Job. I honestly think you are in the wrong place.*

**Satire:** This is the use of sarcasm with humour.

For example: You are so intelligent you never have new ideas.

**Imagery:** This is the use of decorative language to bring about a certain picture. It includes:

**Simile:** This is the comparison of two objects with the use of 'as ... as'.

For example: He is as fast as a cheetah

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**Personification:** This is the giving of human qualities to innate characters.

For example: The sun smiled at us.

**Metaphor:** It is the direct comparison of items.

For example: She is a snake.

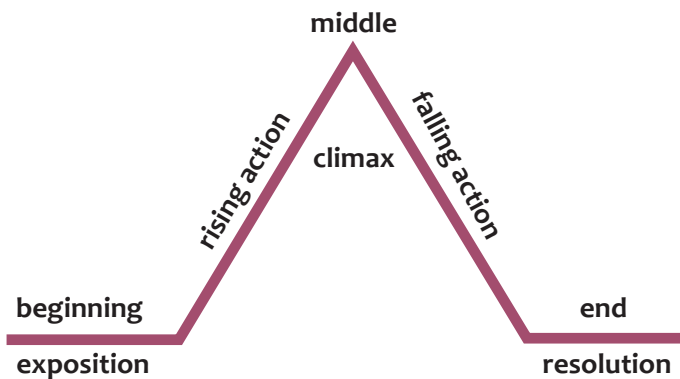
**Foreshadow:** This is the prediction of future events in a text.

**Flashback:** This is the technique of using recall to give an account of past events or recount past happenings.

**Allusion:** Referral to various contexts considered to be common or known. We have various types, for example, biblical allusion, historical allusion, and geographical allusion. For example, a playwright can refer to be Bible.

## 9.6. Plot development/plot diagram

Study the following diagram.



The above diagram represents the plot of a story. What do you think happens at each stage?

**Exposition** is a story's beginning. Here, the author introduces the main characters and sets up the story's problem. A problem in a story is what we call **conflict**. This is what generates action.

**Rising action:** This is all the action that leads up to the climax. The climax is a pivotal part of the story.

**Climax:** This is where all the actions in a story lead up to. Here, the story reaches its peak. At this point, the story changes and starts heading toward its end.

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**Falling action** (also known as **denouement**) is so named because it consists of everything that ‘falls’ out from the climax.

And just as the rising action leads to the climax, the falling action leads to the **resolution**, which is another way of saying how everything ends up.

A well-structured plot will keep readers guessing what happens next until they hit the climax. It will also keep the reader’s attention until the story’s resolution. Ideally, the resolution is in line with everything that came before it, and the end doesn’t seem forced or unrealistic for the story.

### Activity 9

**Read a select play and write down its plot development. Clearly show the stages we have just discussed.**

## Tableau

Do you think you can demonstrate how a character feels without saying a word? For instance, how would Shylock feel when he does not get justice? We can recreate the court scene in William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, by posing without uttering a word. In this case, Shylock would be very sad while Antonio and his companions would be happy. Imagine if you took a picture of this scene. How would it look? We can freeze scenes in a play using a technique called tableau.

Tableau is short for the French, *tableau vivant*, which means ‘living picture.’ A tableau is a representation of a dramatic scene by a person or group, posing silently without moving.

### Activity 10

- a. Imagine the court scene in *The Merchant of Venice* again. In your small groups, find space, take the different roles and pose to represent this scene. Remember, do not utter a word but use your bodies to represent the scene.
- b. Read the following excerpt and in pairs, create a tableaux for the scene.

JUMBA: Since I am yet to complete my years on the stool, whose responsibility is it to choose my successor?

ROSINA: It is yours but in this case you ...

JUMBA: No, there are no buts. If I voluntarily step down from the stool of rule, then it is my right to pick my successor, not so?

ROSINA: Yes but ...

JUMBA: No buts! Now, when I step down, Membe will expect our family to provide a replacement, not so?

ROSINA: It is so.

JUMBA: Good, now look at our family, Nyarango's family, who among us is fit to take over the stool of rule?

ROSINA: Jumba, think of something else. This is no joke for our age.

JUMBA: A joke? Who put that into your head? If the elders insist on pleasing their goddess at my expense, I shall have no choice but to resign. And if I resign, then Nyarango's family must produce my replacement. So where is the joke? The question now is, who?

ROSINA: (*misunderstanding Jumba's seriousness*) Well, if it is a game partner you want, you can count on me. I am not yet too old to play. Now, Joram is in India and Ababio is a gone ca...

JUMBA: Leave the crow out of it. (*long pause*) Now, Mama Rosina, that leaves only one other person.

ROSINA: One other person? Who?

JUMBA: You! (*this revelation is too much for Mama Rosina. She immediately bursts out laughing*) What are you laughing at?

ROSINA: (*still laughing*) Me?

JUMBA: Yes, you, what are you laughing at?

ROSINA: (*still laughing*) I am a woman, have you forgotten that?

JUMBA: I may be a joker, but this is no time for jokes.

ROSINA: You mean, you want me, Rosina Jumba, to become Membe's headman?

JUMBA: That is so.

(From *Aminata* by Francis Imbuga)

## Unit 10

# Periods of African drama

We can identify African drama at three levels:

1. Traditional drama
2. Drama during colonialism
3. Drama after colonialism

### 10.1. Pre-colonial period

**Traditional African drama** is the drama that existed during pre-colonial times. This is drama which had its roots in oral traditions. It was about traditional rituals of religious festivals and other ceremonial activities. These included births, initiation, marriage and death. Also, there were cultural activities for changes in seasons, for instance, prayers for rain.

#### Activity 1

On your own, research songs and chants that were performed in Rwandan traditional community:

- a) When a child was born.
- b) during initiation and marriage

Pre-colonial drama taught morals. Children were taught to have good manners. This was done by showing how bad characters suffered in stories. There was also concentration on the gods and ancestors. The power of the gods was demonstrated through their anger and punishment of humans who erred.

We can identify three types of drama in the traditional African drama, namely, storytelling, comedies and masquerades.

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## Storytelling as drama

Storytelling in the traditional setting was a form of drama. The reason for this is that during storytelling:

1. The narrator imitated speech and gestures of the characters.
2. The action was largely exhibited through dialogue.
3. The storyteller directly portrayed various characters in turn as he or she told the story.

This similarity to dramatic performance was enhanced by the frequent occurrence of music and dance movements.

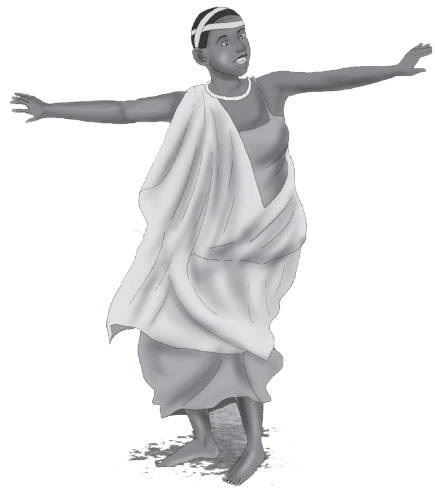
It was common for the storyteller to begin a song in the course of the narration. One of the characters whom the storyteller would represent often sang the song. The song would also represent the actions of one of the characters. The audience, acting as chorus, would take up this song without being asked. This way, they took part in the dramatic enactment of the story. Occasionally, the storyteller stood and moved among the audience. Most African peoples, by the oral nature of their art, lay greater stress on certain dramatic characteristics of their literature.

### Activity 2

Tell your group any oral narrative that you know. If it has a song, perform it the way a character in the story would. The group can dramatise parts and any songs that the characters sing.

## Comedies

The Mande-speaking peoples in the savannah areas of ex-French West Africa performed comedies. These comedies had clear plots and dialogue, as well as music. They had dancing, costumes, definite audiences, and the interaction of several human actors appearing at once in the village square that acted as a stage.



*A dancer*

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## Masquerades

Masquerades are the other dramatic phenomena in African oral tradition. Masquerades were dances of masked figures of various kinds. For instance, among the Igbo of Nigeria there were the *egwugwu*. These were masquerades who impersonated one of the ancestral spirits of the village. They would come together in front of a village to resolve conflicts.

These masquerades differed from one place to another. The differences were in content, purpose and pattern. However, they all included certain elements of drama and were often referred to as 'plays'.

Generally, there was the idea of some kind of representation by the masked figure with great emphasis on costume (especially masks) and on music and dancing.

On the other hand, there seemed to be little or no linguistic content, though there was sometimes a basic plot. The masquerades enacted religious and magical rituals, rhythmic dances and songs.

The ritual dramas involved the imitation of the actual phenomena. If the people for instance wanted to get rainfall, or to conquer in battle, or cause pain to their foes, they had to imitate (make a representation of) these things. They dramatised the results they desired to accomplish. These masquerades usually took place in ceremonies.

## 10.2. Drama in colonial Africa

This is the drama that uses the languages of former colonial masters, such as English and French.

There are certain forms of drama in Africa that the European colonialists encouraged during their colonial rule. Drama during the colonial period runs from the time Europeans came and took over power from the tribal chiefs. It goes on until the time they gave way for independence by handing over power to African national leaders.

### Drama to reinforce colonial rule

The colonialists brought their own drama with them. They made the Africans feel their drama was less important, bad or demonic. Therefore, colonial poetry and drama worked against African indigenous theatre.

European observers had a low opinion of African drama. They went about breaking the indigenous forms of drama and poetry and set up European-like

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structures and outfits. The Europeans attacked indigenous arts through:

1. The Church (missions)
2. The schools
3. Professional theatres
4. Didactic village drama

## Church and mission drama

Upon arrival in Africa, many missionaries saw African traditions, cultures, practices and dramatic activities as the works of the devil. They therefore felt they had to be fought and eradicate before evangelisation could take root in the hearts of Africans.

They devised a strategy of using drama as a way of reaching out to the 'lost' sheep in Africa. This was because the missionaries were finding it hard to convert Africans by merely preaching to them and telling them to abandon their ways. Therefore, stories of Bible characters like David, Saul, Jesus and Samson were acted out on stage to help attract natives to the church.

After the show, priests, pastors and missionaries would talk to them and possibly convert them. The white missionary would also encourage the converts to take part in dramatised Christian celebrations. These included the birth, the passion and crucifixion of Jesus, the story of Nebuchadnezzar, the Garden of Eden, the prodigal son and the ascension of Jesus to heaven. Some Africans who took part in such celebrations felt privileged to be associated with the white man. Therefore, they were easily converted through drama.

### Activity 3

In groups, practise and act the story of the birth of Jesus.

## Didactic drama

Didactic drama was encouraged by European settlers and colonial agricultural agencies. It was used as class demonstration exercises meant to enlighten natives on the new ways of life and farming.

Didactic drama is a kind of drama/theatre for development. In this drama, the audience is given training or instructions through participatory performances.

This drama used elements of pre-colonial performing arts, such as dances, songs and narrative motifs to teach Africans new agricultural extension programmes. They also taught them the supposed importance of adherence to colonial expectations like hygiene.

#### Activity 4

Practise and act a scene where a headman arrests a native who does not have a toilet in his home. One of you should be a white health officer who advises the native on good health and to leave some of his 'backward' tendencies.

Drama, therefore, was used to show such ideals as better homes, healthier children and better plantations among the native populations. Extension officers told natives to act in improvised plays in which concepts like the importance of building a grain store or new farming methods were acted out.

The hare who was the trickster hero in mythical African oral culture was depicted as the progressive farmer who embraced colonially authorised methods. On the other hand, the hyena would represent the farmer who clings to African methods of farming. This was intended to make the alien ideas of farming seem relatively familiar to the natives.

This didactic drama was found particularly useful in agriculture and other fields of colonial administration. Such fields included primary health care, savings and importance of paying tax. The hare was presented as a law abiding native who paid his taxes on time, took his children to health care centres and saved regularly. The hyena was presented as one who was always in conflict with the authorities over taxes. The hyena was the African who took his children to traditional herbalists, and the children eventually died. Also, he never saved any money for emergencies.

### Professional theatres

Many European-controlled theatre buildings were erected in major towns. Here, European plays were performed. These plays were aimed at comforting and reassuring Europeans. Their other objective was to manipulate Africans to obey the colonialist.

### Drama in schools

The colonial masters encouraged school-going boys and girls, particularly in secondary schools, to engage in drama. This was part of their extra-curricular activities. In East Africa, plays of English origin were staged in European-controlled schools. The students performed classical European drama for the annual school plays. William Shakespeare was a favourite, with such plays as *As You Like It*, *King Henry IV* and *King Lear* being staged.



**A scene from Alliance High School's 1955, Kenya, production of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.**

The themes in these plays included love, transformation, art and culture, warfare, rules and order, power, language and communication (aligned to authority and control), betrayal, justice and hate.

### Activity 5

The following is an excerpt from William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Read and discuss it on your own in your spare time.

## ACT I

### SCENE I. Orchard of Oliver's house.

*Enter ORLANDO and ADAM*

ORLANDO: As I remember, Adam, it was upon this fashion bequeathed me by will but poor a thousand crowns, and, as thou sayest, charged my brother, on his blessing, to breed me well: and there begins my sadness. My brother Jaques he keeps at school, and report speaks goldenly of his profit: for my part, he keeps me rustically at home, or, to speak more properly, stays me here at home unkept; for call you that keeping for a gentleman of my birth, that differs not from the stalling of an ox? His horses are bred better; for, besides that they are fair with their feeding,

they are taught their manage, and to that end riders dearly hired: but I, his brother, gain nothing under him but growth; for the which his animals on his dunghills are as much bound to him as I. Besides this nothing that he so plentifully gives me, the something that nature gave me his countenance seems to take from me: he lets me feed with his hinds, bars me the place of a brother, and, as much as in him lies, mines my gentility with my education. This is it, Adam, that grieves me; and the spirit of my father, which I think is within me, begins to mutiny against this servitude: I will no longer endure it, though yet I know no wise remedy how to avoid it.

ADAM: Yonder comes my master, your brother.

ORLANDO: Go apart, Adam, and thou shalt hear how he will shake me up.

*Enter OLIVER*

OLIVER: Now, sir! what make you here?

ORLANDO: Nothing: I am not taught to make anything.

OLIVER: What mar you then, sir?

ORLANDO: Marry, sir, I am helping you to mar that which God made, a poor unworthy brother of yours, with idleness.

OLIVER: Marry, sir, be better employed, and be naught awhile.

ORLANDO: Shall I keep your hogs and eat husks with them?  
What prodigal portion have I spent, that I should come to such penury?

OLIVER: Know you where your are, sir?

ORLANDO: O, sir, very well; here in your orchard.

OLIVER: Know you before whom, sir?

ORLANDO: Ay, better than him I am before knows me. I know you are my eldest brother; and, in the gentle condition of blood, you should so know me. The courtesy of nations allows you my better, in that you are the first-born; but the same tradition takes not away my blood, were there twenty brothers betwixt us: I have as much of my father in me as you; albeit, I confess, your coming before me is nearer to his reverence.

OLIVER: What, boy!

ORLANDO: Come, come, elder brother, you are too young in this.

OLIVER: Wilt thou lay hands on me, villain?

ORLANDO: I am no villain; I am the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys; he was my father, and he is thrice a villain that says such a father begot villains. Wert thou not my brother, I would not take this hand from thy throat till this other had pulled out thy tongue for saying so: thou hast railed on thyself.

ADAM: Sweet masters, be patient: for your father's remembrance, be at accord.

OLIVER: Let me go, I say.

ORLANDO: I will not, till I please: you shall hear me. My father charged you in his will to give me good education: you have trained me like a peasant, obscuring and hiding from me all gentleman-like qualities. The spirit of my father grows strong in me, and I will no longer endure it: therefore allow me such exercises as may become a gentleman, or give me the poor allottery my father left me by testament; with that I will go buy my fortunes.

OLIVER: And what wilt thou do? beg, when that is spent? Well, sir, get you in: I will not long be troubled with you; you shall have some part of your will: I pray you, leave me.

ORLANDO: I will no further offend you than becomes me for my good.

OLIVER: Get you with him, you old dog.

ADAM: Is 'old dog' my reward? Most true, I have lost my teeth in your service. God be with my old master! he would not have spoke such a word.

*Exeunt ORLANDO and ADAM*

OLIVER: Is it even so? Begin you to grow upon me? I will physic your rankness, and yet give no thousand crowns neither. Holla, Dennis!

*Enter DENNIS*

DENNIS: Calls your worship?

OLIVER: Was not Charles, the duke's wrestler, here to speak with me?

DENNIS: So please you, he is here at the door and importunes access to you.

OLIVER: Call him in.

*Exit DENNIS*

'Twill be a good way; and to-morrow the wrestling is.

*Enter CHARLES*

CHARLES: Good morrow to your worship.

OLIVER: Good Monsieur Charles, what's the new news at the new court?

CHARLES: There's no news at the court, sir, but the old news: that is, the old duke is banished by his younger brother the new duke; and three or four loving lords have put themselves into voluntary exile with him, whose lands and revenues enrich the new duke; therefore he gives them good leave to wander.

OLIVER: Can you tell if Rosalind, the duke's daughter, be banished with her father?

CHARLES: O, no; for the duke's daughter, her cousin, so loves her, being ever from their cradles bred together, that she would have followed her exile, or have died to stay behind her. She is at the court, and no less beloved of her uncle than his own daughter; and never two ladies loved as they do.

OLIVER: Where will the old duke live?

CHARLES: They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England: they say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world.

OLIVER: What, you wrestle to-morrow before the new duke?

CHARLES: Marry, do I, sir; and I came to acquaint you with a matter. I am given, sir, secretly to understand that your younger brother Orlando hath a disposition to come in disguised against me to try a fall. To-morrow, sir, I wrestle for my credit; and he that escapes me without some broken limb shall acquit him well. Your brother is but young and tender; and, for your love, I would be loath to foil him, as I must, for my own honour, if he come in: therefore, out of my love to you, I came hither to acquaint you

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withal, that either you might stay him from his intendment or brook such disgrace well as he shall run into, in that it is a thing of his own search and altogether against my will.

OLIVER: Charles, I thank thee for thy love to me, which thou shalt find I will most kindly requite. I had myself notice of my brother's purpose herein and have by underhand means laboured to dissuade him from it, but he is resolute. I'll tell thee, Charles: it is the stubbornest young fellow of France, full of ambition, an envious emulator of every man's good parts, a secret and villanous contriver against me his natural brother: therefore use thy discretion; I had as lief thou didst break his neck as his finger. And thou wert best look to't; for if thou dost him any slight disgrace or if he do not mightily grace himself on thee, he will practise against thee by poison, entrap thee by some treacherous device and never leave thee till he hath ta'en thy life by some indirect means or other; for, I assure thee, and almost with tears I speak it, there is not one so young and so villanous this day living. I speak but brotherly of him; but should I anatomize him to thee as he is, I must blush and weep and thou must look pale and wonder.

CHARLES: I am heartily glad I came hither to you. If he come to-morrow, I'll give him his payment: if ever he go alone again, I'll never wrestle for prize more: and so God keep your worship!

OLIVER: Farewell, good Charles.

*Exit CHARLES*

Now will I stir this gamester: I hope I shall see an end of him; for my soul, yet I know not why, hates nothing more than he. Yet he's gentle, never schooled and yet learned, full of noble device, of all sorts enchantingly beloved, and indeed so much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether misprised: but it shall not be so long; this wrestler shall clear all: nothing remains but that I kindle the boy thither; which now I'll go about.

*Exit*

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## Summary

In this scene, Orlando is in the orchard of his brother's house speaking with Adam, an old servant of the family. Orlando complains about the way his eldest brother Oliver treats him. Since Oliver is the eldest brother, he inherited all of Sir Rowland De Bois' estate as well as the responsibility for taking care of his younger brothers. Orlando is upset that he is kept away from school and forced to work with the animals at home. They see Oliver coming and Adam quickly hides.

Oliver arrives and orders Orlando to do some work instead of standing idly around. Orlando spitefully tells Oliver that he has as much of their father's blood in him as Oliver does. Oliver angrily lunges at Orlando, who quickly grabs his older brother by the throat and holds him. Adam comes out of his hiding place and asks them to be patient with one another. Orlando replies that Oliver has denied him an education as befits his rank as a nobleman. He therefore asks Oliver to give him the small portion of money that Sir Rowland left him in the will (a thousand crowns) so that he may leave and seek his fortune elsewhere.

Oliver agrees to give Orlando a part of his inheritance and then turns to Adam and tells him to "Get you with him, you old dog". Adam is offended to be treated thus after his many years of service to the family and leaves with Orlando.

Oliver meets Charles, the Duke's wrestler, and asks what is happening at court. Charles tells him it is the same old news, namely the new Duke has banished his brother the old Duke. The old Duke left with several lords and now lives in the forest of Ardenne where "they live like the old Robin Hood of England". Rosalind, the old Duke's daughter, has remained at court with her cousin, the new Duke's daughter.

Charles then informs Oliver that he has learned that Orlando plans to challenge him the next day in the Duke's presence. Since Charles is fighting for his reputation, he indicates that he might end up hurting Orlando and he hopes that Oliver can dissuade his brother from challenging. Oliver cruelly tells Charles that Orlando has been plotting against his life, and that if Charles defeats Orlando but does not seriously injure him then Orlando will likely plot against him as well. Charles promises to hurt Orlando as much as possible, to the point where he cannot walk anymore.

### Activity 6

- In your small groups, discuss the language used in the excerpt (*As You Like It*) you just read.
- Read a set play in your spare time, discuss it with your group members and summarise the story on your own.

## 10.3. Drama after colonialism/post colonial drama

This drama uses the languages of former colonial masters, such as English, French and other national languages.

The playwrights of post-colonial drama addressed the themes of disillusionment, corruption and bad leadership, among others.

### Activity 7

**The following is an excerpt from John Ruganda's play, *The Floods*. Read it in pairs.**

NANKYA: You've forgotten the floods.

BWOGO: Still have two hours or so.

NANKYA: Maybe you are afraid

BWOGO: Afraid? Afraid of what?

NANKYA: The peasants are feeling the pinch. The army especially. Restive. That's what you said. And besides you're Boss's first cousin. Chairman of The Building Board. Most of all, head of the State Research Bureau. That's pretty close, brother. Enough to unsettle a saint. Given a chance, some people could hit back at the head of the State Research Bureau. And you know it.

BWOGO: Do I know?

NANKYA: Yes, you are afraid. Anything could happen.

BWOGO: Anything like what?

NANKYA: A coup, maybe. The land is caved in with corruption. The atmosphere hangs heavy with various grievances. Men deprived of the land they fought for. By Boss. Mercenaries terrorising the populace.

BWOGO: You don't fancy Boss, do you?

NANKYA: Graduates grovelling in dustbins in search of sustenance; the Civil Service sore about MP's salary hikes; temples tainted with martyred blood and, above all, uncertainty and death. Death stalking the streets like thousands of soldiers on the beat. The situation is real bad. It will either be assassination or a bloody coup.

BWOGO: No. Boss will be the last one to be toppled by a coup.

NANKYA: That's what he says.

BWOGO: I know. But still, he shouldn't.

NANKYA: What about you and I?

BWOGO: What about us?

NANKYA: And the coming baby?

BWOGO: What of it?

NANKYA: You said anybody could have done it.

BWOGO: Did I now? (*offers her a drink; she takes it*)

NANKYA: Had anybody known me before you, Bwogo? Had anybody... before you seduced me?

BWOGO: (*absentmindedly, toying with his glass*) "In big executive offices. On the Afghanistan carpets. Secretaries gape at the ceiling."

NANKYA: That trick won't work again.

BWOGO: "Afraid to stake their shillings."

NANKYA: Try something else.

BWOGO: "As they are hurriedly filled."

NANKYA: Stop it, Bwogo.

BWOGO: "And then they pick up their garments. Hurry to their rented rooms. Doubting. Their fulfilment."

NANKYA: It won't work.

BWOGO: That is what you think.

NANKYA: I am telling you.

BWOGO: In big executive offices.

NANKYA: In your office, to be exact.

BWOGO: (*trapped*) What the hell?

NANKYA: Did you find a rapture? Afterwards, you told me: "Nankya,

you may not believe me, but it is a miracle to find a virgin nowadays.”

BWOGO: So I did, did I?

NANKYA: Can you deny that, too? Six months of calculated abstinence during which you had your sex orgies on the sly. “Platonic,” you said. “Our relationship is to be purely platonic.” And for a while I got caught in the web of lies. You are crafty.

BWOGO: It doesn’t pay to be pure, you see. To be pure is to be a failure. And the world is sick and tired of failures. Yes, the world has no room for those who are pure. Those who aren’t successful. To wring success from the rocks of life, you have to be hard yourself. Hard and remorseless and unfeeling. That is the gospel according to Saint Success.

NANKYA: Like you callously disposed of Rutaro. Tall and handsome. Eyes big and bright like diamonds.

BWOGO: That is provocation.

NANKYA: First Class Honours, Animal Husbandry. Dying to take on the world and change it. And he disappeared into thin air like a flea’s fart. That was hard and remorseless, alright.

BWOGO: You shouldn’t have told me.

NAKYA: It was the truth. We went out for dinner one night, with a friend of his. Danced and drank quite a bit. I found myself in the same bed with him afterwards. Not as much as a kiss or a caress. He slept in his trousers on top of the blankets. A man of principles. Took no advantage. Like some people would.

### Questions

- What is the main theme in this excerpt?
- Compare the theme you have settled on in 1 above with one in William Shakespeare’s play, *As You Like It*.
- How do you compare the language used in this excerpt with that of William Shakespeare’s play, *As You Like It*?

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