



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

COURSE CODE : ENG 312

COURSE TITLE: CREATIVE WRITING 1I

COURSE GUIDE

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National Open University of Nigeria 2010
First Printed 2010

ISBN 978.....
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Printed by.....
For
National Open University of Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to ENG 312: CREATIVE WRITING II

ENG 312: Creative Writing II is a 3 credit one semester undergraduate course. It comprises 20 study units subdivided into 5 modules. The materials have been developed with the aim of guiding you in writing your own poem, play, short story or novel. You should therefore ensure that you carry out all the assignments given in the self assessment exercises and tutor-marked assignments. This course guide gives you an overview of the course and also provides you with information on the organization and requirements of the course.

The course is a follow up to the ENG 212 Creative Writing I and is more of practical course as you are expected to do some practical exercises. Sometimes you are referred to some texts to read some literary materials. Make sure that you do them. Creative Writing is an art which comes out naturally in some people but some acquire the art. Even those with natural talent need to polish it, hence this course is going to help both groups.

Course Aim

- a. To expose students to the concept of creative writing/creativity.
- b. To acquaint students with practical steps in creative writing.
- c. To acquaint students with the composition of different genres of literature.

Course Objectives

To achieve the aims above, we have some overall objectives. Each unit also has the objectives that will guide you in your study. They are usually stated at the beginning of the unit; so when you are through with studying the units, go back and read the objectives. This would help you carry out the task you have set out to achieve. On completion of the course, you should be able to:

- a. Write at least a poem, a play or a short story or even all of them.

Working through this Course

To complete the course, you are required to read the study units and other related materials. You will also need to undertake practical exercise for which you need a pen, a notebook, and other materials that will be listed in this guide. The exercises are to aid you in understanding the concepts being presented. At the end of each unit, you will be required to submit written assignments for assessment. At the end of the course, you will write a final examination.

Course Materials

The major materials you will need for this course are:

1. Course guide
2. Study units
3. Relevant textbooks, including the ones listed under each unit
4. Assignment file
5. Presentation schedule

Study Units

There are 20 study units in this course as follows:

Module I : Fictional Reality

Unit 1 – The Germinal Idea

Unit 2 – The Process

Unit 3 – Your Mouthpiece

Unit 4 – Your Style

Module II: Drama

Unit 1 – Your subject

Unit 2 – Adaptations.

Unit 3 – Practical Steps

Unit 4 – First Draft

Unit 5 – Revision.

Module III: Poetry

Unit 1 - The First Steps

Unit 2 - The Voice

Unit 3 - Structure

Unit 4 - Poetic Language

Unit 5 - The Poem

Module IV Prose

Unit 1 – The Short Story

Unit 2 - The Novel

Unit 3 - The Last Things

Unit 4 - Write a Novel in One Hundred Days

MODULE 5: Other Guides for Effective Writing

Unit 1 - Creative Writing & Information Technology

Assignment File

An assignment file and a marking scheme will be made available to you. In this file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignments will be found in the assignments file itself and later in this Course Guide in the section on assessment.

Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMAS)

You will need to submit a specified number of the Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs). Every unit in this course has a tutor-marked assignment. You will be assessed on four of them but the best three (that is, the highest three of the fifteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for these best three (3) assignments will account for 30% of your total marks. Assignment questions for the units in this course are contained in the Assignment File. When you have completed each assignment, send it, together with the TMA (tutor-

marked assignment) form to your tutor. Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submission. If, for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extension will not be granted after due date unless under exceptional circumstances.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination for ENG 312 will be of three hours' duration. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the units all over before your examination. The final examination will attract 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked assignments you have previously come across. All areas of the course will be assessed. You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will also find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments (Best three Assignments out of Four marked)	30%
Final Examination	70%
Total	100%

Presentation Schedule

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date for completing the study units and dates for examinations.

Course Overview

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignments that follow them.

Unit	Title of Work	Week's Activity	Assessment (End of Unit)
	Course Guide	1	
	Module 1 Fictional Reality		
1	The Germinal Idea	1	
2	The Process		Assignment 1
3	Your Mouthpiece	1	Assignment 2
4	Your Style	5	Assignment 3
	Module 2 Drama		
1	Your subject	1	Assignment 4
2	Adaptations.	1	Assignment 5
3	Practical Steps	1	Assignment 6
4	First Draft	1	Assignment 7
5	Revision	1	
	Module 3 Poetry		
1	The First Steps	1	Assignment 8
2	The Voice	1	Assignment 9
3	Structure	1	Assignment 10
4	Poetic Language	1	Assignment 11
5	The Poem	1	Assignment 12
	Module IV Prose		
1	The Short Story	1	Assignment 13
2	The Novel	1	Assignment 14
3	The Last Things	1	Assignment 15
4	Write a Novel in One Hundred Days	1	Assignment 16
	MODULE 5: Creative Writing in the New Millennium	1	Assignment 17
1	Other Guides for Effective Writing	1	Assignment 18

2	Some Literary Terms	1	Assignment 19
	Revision		
	Examination		
	Total	18	

How to get the most from this Course

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecturer instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might give you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other materials. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. If you make a habit of attempting all the exercises, you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from your course guides. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you encounter any difficulty, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it. Follow the following advice carefully:

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment
2. Organise a study schedule. Refer to the Course Overview for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write your own dates for working on each unit.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.
4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the Introduction and the Objectives for the Unit

5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit, itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit, you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
7. Review the objectives for each unit to ensure that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the Course Objectives (listed in the Course Guide)
11. Keep in touch with your study centre. Up to date course information will be continuously available there.

Tutors & Tutorials

There are 12 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least

two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or through a discussion if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary.

Contact your tutor if:

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings,
- You have difficulty with the self-test exercises,
- You have a question or problem with assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

SUMMARY

This course guide gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study.

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National Open University of Nigeria 2010
First Printed 2010

ISBN 978.....
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Printed by.....
For
National Open University of Nigeria

MODULE 1: FICTIONAL REALITY

UNIT 1: THE GERMINAL IDEA

CONTENT

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- 2.0 Objectives
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 - 3.1 Ideas/Concepts
 - 3.2 Environment
 - 3.3 Events
 - 3.4 Individuals
 - 3.5 Myth
 - 3.6 Legend
 - 3.7 History
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be introduced to the first step in creative writing. Generally, good writers in all fields, especially in journalism, write creatively to enhance their ability to secure special and vantage positions in their chosen profession. In this course however, we are concerned with creative writing in literature. In this unit, we will concentrate on those areas from which you could generate ideas and materials for creative writing. A writer could get his idea from inexhaustible sources, but we will treat just a few of them.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- See and evaluate your environment differently
- List possible areas that could generate ideas for your writing
- List some ideas that you could develop in your writing

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Fictional reality in literature is the ability of the writer to adopt or choose an idea which she/he presents in a technique that enables him/her capture and hold his/her readers' emotion as the events in the work unfold.

3.1 Ideas/Concepts

Basically, creative writing is an imaginative art. But before you can imaginatively create a story or a poem, you must have been struck by an idea or concept. However, in some cases, especially in poetry, the poems flow in the poet's imagination and he/she only records what is in the imagination. This is inspired creativity. Some writers claim to have written while in a trance. So creativity here is spontaneous creativity which is not based on idea but the idea emerges after the work is complete.

A writer could also be inspired by an idea or a concept. Let us look at corruption. Almost every day we hear of corruption. In the civil service, in government, in schools, on our roads, in recruitment and even at gates and reception areas of public places the story is the same. If you want to explore the idea of corruption in your work, you will ask yourself the following questions. What do you want to say about corruption? Is your intention that of condemnation, exaltation or to give information? Do you just want to let your audience know that corruption exists or does not exist in certain places? Your decision here will determine the content and form of your story. Hence it influences your writing.

Having taken the decision on your perspective on the idea, the next step is to imaginatively create a story to suit your purpose. Can you think of a perspective, that you would like to adopt in an exposition of an ill in the society? Remember, the creative writer is the conscience of the society so should reflect the society objectively. You should be able to extol when necessary and criticize where criticism is required and condemn despicable acts.

Class stratification and its attendant entrenchment of inequality/ oppression in the society is another common area of discourse among Nigerians. Where do you work? Revisit the organization with the eyes, ears and mind of a creative writer. Are there forms of oppression, inequality or corruption there? Do you think you can tell the story of what happens?

By the end of this module, hopefully, you may be able to tell the story with fictitious names and some embellishments to make it realistic and interesting.

3.2 Environment

A writer is a product of his background. The environment of the writer has a great influence on his/her writing. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* would not have been written by him if he were not from Igboland. A non-Igbo man or woman who has lived in Igboland could depict the Igbo culture in a novel but not with much detailed information on an aspect of the culture of the people and its significance. Let us consider the following excerpt from the novel.

The missionaries had come to Umuofia. They had built their church there, won a handful of converts and were already sending evangelists to the surrounding towns and villages. That was a course of great sorrow to the leaders of the clan; but many of them believed that the strange faith and the white man's god would not last. None of his converts was a man whose word was heeded in the assembly

of the people. None of them was a man of title. They were mostly the kind of people that were called efulefu, worthless, empty men. The imagery of an efulefu in the language of the clan was a man who sold his matchet and wore the sheath to battle. Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, called the converts the excrement of the clan, and the new faith was a mad dog that had come to eat it up. (p. 130).

In the above passage, Achebe presents the incursion of the Whiteman to Umuofia which is heralded by the advance group, the missionaries. In this short piece, he shows not just the activities of the missionaries and their converts but also the feelings of the elders, and the class of people that embraced the new religion. They are somehow outcasts, people of no consequence in the towns and villages. The elders believe this group of people could not achieve anything. On the other hand, the converts who belong to this class of people who are rejected and looked down on by their kinsmen, found solace in the new religion. Achebe contends that the callousness of the society towards this class of people contributed to the success of the new religion contrary to the expectations of the elders and the priestess of Agbala.

As a creative writer, you have to keep your eyes and ears ‘wild, wide open’ like one of my lecturers, Domba Asomba, used to say. This is the only way you could see and hear beyond everyone else in that environment. The filth in your surrounding acquires new meaning for you, new significance and a symbol of something, you could explore. This could be as a result of the people’s way of life or attitude to public utilities which in turn could be a consequent of neglect, bad leadership or lack of patriotism. These alternatives will help you to build the structure of your story which must have some semblance of life. It is very important.

3.3. Events

Closely related to environment is events and maybe individuals, inter-personal relationships. An event could spark off the creativity/spirit in you. You may not build an entire story on it but it could form part of the story. Your ability to situate that event appropriately in the story is what matters. This helps to make your story coherent. Good novels, plays, short stories and poems thrive on coherence.

Think of an event – a birthday party, a wedding, a naming ceremony. Can you relate that event factually? Try to recount specific details and of that event. Think of the significance of some specific acts and include them in the story the way you recalled it. Have you ever been a bridesmaid or a bestman in a wedding? Can you recount vividly as much as possible, the preparation from home, the ceremony in the church, the exchange of consent and rings, the prayers, the dressing of the couple, the bridal train, the priest, the guests? Can you go beyond the bridal white gown? Was the gown flowing, were there sequins? Was the neckline too deep or too high? Can you describe her beyond “she looked beautiful” can you tell how beautiful, noting the minutest details of her make-up? Did she engage a make up artist? Was it worthwhile? If you can give these details in one, two or three paragraphs, read it again and the story is not drab, or boring but interesting you are getting close to your mark. Compare your write up with the one below.

Dusk was already approaching when their contest began. The drums went mad and the crowd also. They surged forward as the two young men danced into the circle. The palm fronds were helpless in keeping them back.

Ikezue held out his right hand. Okafo seized it, and they closed in. It was a fierce contest. Ikezue strove to dig in his right heel behind Okafo so as to pitch him backwards in the clever eye style. But the one knew what the other was thinking.

The crowd had surrounded and swallowed up the drummers, whose frantic rhythm was no longer a mere disembodied sound but the very heart-beat of the people.

The wrestlers were now almost still in each other's grip. The muscles on their arms and their thighs and on their backs stood out and twitched. It looked like an equal match. The two judges were already moving forward to separate them when Ikezue, now desperate, went down quickly on one knee in an attempt to fling his man backwards over his head. It was a sad miscalculation. Quick as the lightning of Amadiora, Okafo raised his right leg and swung it over his rival's head. The crowd burst into a thunderous roar. Okafo was swept off his feet by his supporters and carried home shoulder-high. They sang his praise and the young women clapped their hands:

*'Who will wrestle for our village?
Okafo will wrestle for our village
Has he thrown a hundred men?
He has thrown four hundred men,
Has he thrown a hundred Cats
He has thrown four hundred cats.
Then send him word to fight for us.'*

In the passage above, Achebe presents an aspect of life of the people in Igboland through a detailed presentation of an event – a wrestling match. The reader can easily feel the excitement and the physical movements of the spectators and the wrestlers. He likens the rhythms of the drums to the heart-beat of the people. In another excerpt below, Festus Iyayi, in *Violence* through Idemudia's illness, and the attempts to admit him into the hospital present's the inability of the government to provide basic social amenities for the people.

Even in that early hour, the University Hospital was crowded. It was a pitiable sight. So many people were sick and in need of the doctor. The long benches were full. The porch outside was filled with patients who were able to stand. Some of the patients coughed violently.

Mothers who carried sick children moved agitatedly. The faces that waited were grim serious and preoccupied with worry (Violence 61).

Festus Iyayi could have simply said “There were many sick people waiting to be attended to in the hospital”. But he did not. Instead, he included minute details that recreate the pitiable sight in the minds of the readers. Initially, Idemudia and Adisa could not pay the required fee for registration and when they eventually managed to do so, they fail to get any reasonable service and attention from the hospital. The doctors are incapacitated by the misplaced priorities of the political or elite class.

The doctor put on his glasses again but his mind went back to the dark tunnel of numberless sick, their abject poverty and from that to the helplessness of their position. He couldn't understand why in the midst of so much disease, the government concentrated on building hotels instead of hospitals (Violence 63).

You can see from the above, that a creative writer does not just see events on the surface but gives details, analyzes situations, adduces possible reasons for such situations or events or their consequences. They also seek underlying meanings to the surface events or use words that emphasize or highlight the message that is being conveyed. In the first passage, note words like “long benches” “...filled,” “porches... full”, “coughed violently”, “moved agitatedly”, “faces...grim, serious.., preoccupied with worry”. These help to evoke the deplorable, near-desperate, and hopeless situation the patients find themselves.

Self Assessment Exercise:

Identify such words and adduce reasons why the writer has used them. Have you ever been to a General Hospital before? Try to recall your experience and compare it with the one above.

3.4 Individuals

Specific individuals in your society could ignite the creative impulse in you. Your story could revolve around this individual or he/she plays a significant role in the story or has a significant impact on the character of your protagonist. There is a saying that anyone who survives childhood has at least a story in him or her. The individual could therefore be you or any other person who has played a significant role in your life or the lives of others. (It could be how this individual you admire or hate behaves). It could be how this individual relates to the people around him or her that inspire you.

In your writing, you present the society through such individuals. Their interpersonal relationships with others became sources of germinal ideas for you. In Festus Iyayi's *Violence* for instance, the relationship between Obofun and his wife, Queen and others highlight the idea that excessive wealth generates excessive desire for material possession and sex. He associates opulence with moral laxity. Queen exhibits lack of sanctity for the marriage institution and sleeps with men to get contract awards or to gain one favour or the other.

In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, his admiration for Unoka is obvious. Unoka's presented as lazy and cowardly but Achebe's attitude to him is not that of condemnation. He wants us to appreciate his qualities which if Okonkwo had possessed, his life may not have ended in catastrophe. Read the following passage on Unoka carefully.

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 fare 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...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. (pp. 4-5)

Unoka is an artist, an actor and a musician. He is good natured, generous and humorous. He enjoys good fellowship and lives in harmony with his kinsmen and the forces of nature. His son, Okonkwo, lacks his warmth and humanity. Although his society sees Unoka's life as a disaster, he is useful to the society through his life.

3.5 Myth

Writers, from the origin of literature, have taken their germinal ideas from myth. The myths are either central to the works or are reflected in the works. We have explained the meaning of myth and the fact that it provides materials for creative writing has been treated in the course material Eng 210 Creative Writing I.

The myth of Moremi has been reflected in several literary works. As a writer, you will decide to reflect a particular myth the way it is or restructure it to suit your purpose. In the novel and the play, it is a bit difficult to base the entire work on a particular myth. Writers, often depict the myth as part of the story to help

illuminate certain character(s), ideas or incident(s). In *Morountodun*, Femi Osofisan restructures the Yoruba Moremi myth to show Titubi's resolve to align with the oppressed class. In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe presents the myth of Ogbanje as part of the belief system in Igboland. In both cases, the myths are presented as part of the stories.

In poetry, the most concise genre of literature, a myth could be the germinal idea and an entire poem becomes an exploration of that myth. Ogbanje in Igbo is Abiku in Yoruba. Read Wole Soyinka's Abiku to assess the explication of that belief system in Yorubaland.

Self Assessment Exercise

Read this poem two or three times and also read another poem with the same title "Abiku" by J. P. Clark. Compare it with Soyinka's 'Abiku' and see if you can write a poem based on that concept.

3.6 Legends

Legends deal with communal heroes or heroines. They are men and women who have performed certain feats in the past. A good example of such heroine is Queen Amina of Zaria. Ngugi Wa Thong'O is an African writer who portrayed a legendary hero of the celebrated Mau-Mau anti-colonial rebellion freedom fighting in Kenya. In one of his plays, *The Trial of Dedin Kimathi*, he presents the celebration of such a hero. However, in *A Gain of Wheat*, he presents such presumed legendary heroes who fought for uhuru-Independence as traitors. Some of them are Mugo, Gikonyo, Karanja, and Numbi who presumably played heroic roles in the struggle.

Uhuru demands herambée (unity) and on the eve of Independence, it is expected that these heroes and heroines work together for the progress of Kenya. Unfortunately all of them are burdened with guilt, shame and envy as they

ruminate on their activities during the Mau-Mau emergency. One of them, Mugo who betrayed Khika is seen as a hero but his sense of guilt has tormented him so much that he felt that only a confession could liberate him from his torment.

Why should I not let Karanja bear the blame? He dismissed the temptation and stood up. How else could he ever look Mumbi in the face? His heart pounded against him, he felt sweat in his hands, as he walked through the huge crowd. His hands shook, his legs were not firm on the ground. In his mind everything was clear and final. He would stand there and publicly own the crime. He held on to this vision. Nothing, not even the shouting and the songs and the praises would deflect him from this purpose. It was the clarity of this vision which gave him courage as he stood before the microphone and the sudden silence. As soon as the first words were out, Mugo felt light. A load of many years was lifted from his shoulders. He was free, sure, confident (p. 267).

Here it is not an event or incident that is described. The passage presents what goes on in Mugo's mind, before his confession, the confession and his sense of relief thereafter.

Self Assessment Exercise Can you think of a heroic exploit of a legendary hero? Try to imagine what goes on in his or her mind at a particular incident in his life, and recount it in a paragraph.

3.7 History

History and legend are interrelated. Both are set in the remote and immediate past of the people. This is unlike myth which is set in the primordial past. Many Nigerian writers have drawn the inspiration for some of their works from history. Many Nigerian writers especially novelists have written novels on the Nigerian Civil War. Each writer presents his own perspective on the war.

Poets and dramatists are not left out in recounting historical experiences imaginatively. One could say that each writer mediates history in order to present an artistically satisfying experience. Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi*, *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Hopes of the Living Dead* are historical plays.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Creative writing is an art and a talent, a writer may compulsively write while another writer makes a conscious effort to write. The important feature is the urge to write, the availability of what to write about and the ability to write fluently to present a coherent story. The art of fiction does not begin until the writer thinks of his story as worthy of presentation. When you have an idea, incident, event or relationship you want to portray you must make sure that it will interest your audience, that it is worthy of exhibition.

In doing this, the first consideration is the establishment of “a fictional reality, or mimesis (the imitation of real life) or verisimilitude (semblance of truth). This consideration relates more to drama and prose which present stories. Poems also present stories but in a very special way as you will see in Module 3. To make your idea and story a creative work, it should be presented or dramatized in such a way that it will evoke the reader's emotion as we see in some of the passages above. Before writing, the events exist only in your imagination so your task is to present them alive and vividly for your audience to not only view them the way they are in your imagination but also react to your character and events that are not real as if they are real.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit you have been taken through the first step in creative writing – the identification of what to write and their possible sources. We have used some

excerpts from renowned writers to demonstrate this. We have taken more illustrations from the novel because story telling or recounting events in prose is part of our everyday life.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

List the seven possible areas that could generate ideas for a creative writer and indicate which of them you think you can utilize easily?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2: THE PROCESS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Planning
 - 3.2 Starting
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we discussed how and where we can get the germinal idea for a creative work. Once you have decided on what to write, the next step is to start the story. This appears to be the most difficult aspect of creative writing especially for the playwright and the novelist. The poet could be inspired and instantly, he/she produces a poem. The novelist and the playwright are usually uncertain as to how to start their works.

In some cases, the works are started but are not completed. In this unit, we will discuss how to start a creative piece and complete it.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to

- Identify an idea
- Plan your writing
- Develop a story based on that idea
- Identify how you could stick through it.
- Try to write the first paragraph of your story

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Some writers are born. Some may come from a family of writers and others have the innate talents. Some however are forced into writing by circumstances while others have their creative talents ignited through an encounter with people or influenced by a course in creative writing.

3.1 Planning

Creative writing depends on two different kinds of planning. First, you prepare to write by making an assessment of what is involved in expressing your idea and conveying it to your audience in a captivating manner. The next step is to plan the time and structure of how to get the job done. Creative writing timetable is practical, not theoretical. Although you will want to establish the timetable for your whole project before you set out to write, the technique for planning writing time depends to a large extent on your profession, the time you could spare for the project and on your inspiration.

The concept of writing with confidence or pleasure is somehow mysterious and it is believed to be reserved for “born writers”. This myth or illusion is reinforced by our cultural belief that “creative writing can’t be taught”. Yet, most of us have learnt to write creatively; and we strive to improve by the day with less frustration

and more control. Fortunately, common sense tells us anyone can learn to write well, with both energy and satisfaction.

Most writers share some unpleasant experience in the course of writing. Sometimes, what you want to write does not seem to flow in the way you want it. At other extreme cases, the mind is blank and the inspiration is not there, consequently, some works have remained uncompleted even by some renowned writers. Most often, we write to explore an idea; to understand a concept; and to demonstrate certain experience or make your reader understand certain issues or adopted a particular way of looking at an issue. We should try to write with a sense of self-discovery and try to engage and entertain our audience.

In planning, you must remember that literature is words set apart in some ways from ordinary everyday use. Unlike, oral literature, written literature is a private art that serves as a vehicle for the exploration and expression of emotion and the human situation. It is described as a lovely art, so make your writing lovely.

In your planning, you may start by giving a brief presentation of what the work is about or the social influences that inspired you. You could give the synopsis of what you want to write about through the presentation of an outline, character sketches and the setting. Try to relate your idea, or imagery to human experience or use it to define human personality or relationship. Let us try to use the water imagery to define the character of a woman.

“Water ebbs and flows, sparkles, reflect and evaporate.

It can carry a vessel, or take the shape of any vessel that holds it. Water can form deep pools, impenetrable, may be mysterious, or puddle into shallowness. It wears many faces- snow, sleet, and ice and can fall from the eyes as tears, it can mirror the self, it can quench thirst” (Oakley 146).

Charlotte Bronte uses many of these characteristics of water to capture the elusive Lucy Snowe in the 1853 novel *Villette*”.

Try to see if you can use some of the above characteristics of water to describe someone you know. Then in your imagination, create a character that you could relate to some of the characteristics. Note everything that “seems to connect with character and theme, allowing the imagination to flow freely” (Oakley, 147).

The method below could help you in drawing your outline. Choose an idea/object and list at least ten things that come to your mind concerning the idea. Let us look at the example below generated at a creative writing workshop at the National Theatre, Lagos.

There are protective things that prevent danger.
Doors can be open to anybody,
To enter a secret place.
Doors can be coverage from evil.
There are various types of doors
Gold, Silver, Bronze, Wood.
Doors could lead to anywhere.
A room containing anything.
Doors also mean privacy.
Doors could lead anywhere,
To prison, heaven, land of beauty,
Or even to a disastrous place
Doors could be of wisdom
And sorrow, success and failure
Doors could also lead to a room filled with idealism
And imaginations of the impossible.
Doors could mean eternity.

Doors could bring an end to your problems
Doors could bring a sad moment or happiness.
Doors can make you see and feel the wonderful things of the world.
And worst of all, they could bring death
Which is an end to life.
Doors could lead to slavery and destruction.
Doors could love you and keep you safe,
And doors could despise you and keep you locked.
They could lead to the path of your heart.
Onyenachi Ahumba, 15yrs, International School, UNILAG, SSI

From this list you can use the door imagery to explore human experience.

3.2 Starting

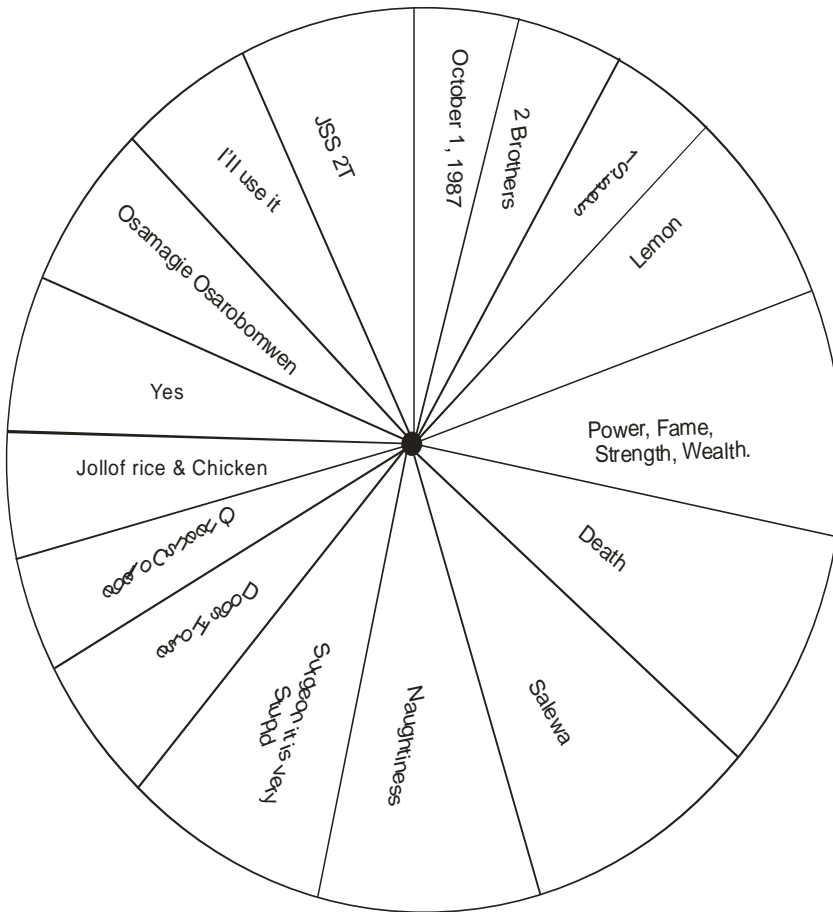
By now, you have the idea and an outline and you are confronted with the problem of how to begin. You stare at the blank sheet and you have the pen in your hand with a thousand and one options in your head. Even some renowned writers encounter this problem. In fiction, as in life, no venture no success, so take the plunge. Just start the story, what will be uppermost in your mind will be to rouse the attention of your reader, so that he or she can hardly wait to reach the end of the story to find out what it is all about.

I said earlier that anyone who survived childhood has at least one story in him or her. You may start with the story of yourself. Try to recollect a significant and interesting event in your life that you could start with. Read the paragraph below which is the beginning of a novel, *African Child* by Camara Laye and later get the novel and read it.

I was a little boy playing round my father's hut. How old would I have been at that time? I cannot remember exactly. I still must have been very young: five, maybe six years old. My mother was in the workshop with my father, and I could just hear their familiar voices above the noise of the anvil and the conversation of the customers.

Suddenly I stopped playing, my whole attention fixed on a snake that was creeping round the hut. He really seemed to be 'taking a turn' round the hut. After a moment I went over to him. I had taken in my hand a reed that was lying in the yard – there were always some lying around; they used to get broken off the fence of plaited reeds that marked the boundary of our compound – and I thrust this reed into the reptile's mouth. The snake did not try to get away: he was beginning to enjoy our little game; he was slowly swallowing the reed; he was devouring it, I thought, as if it were some delicious prey, his eyes glittering with voluptuous bliss; and inch by inch his head was drawing nearer to my hand. At last the reed was almost entirely swallowed up, and the snake's jaws were terribly close to my fingers.

You may decide to present your ideas in a circle like the one below. Study the circle below by Osaronomwen Osamagie on herself.



Osaromwen Osamagie, Queens College, Iwaya, Yaba, Lagos. JSS 2T

Now, draw your own circle, call it 'you' by name divide the circle into sections and in each write the following:

- Your name
- The number of sisters and brothers you have
- The country you live in
- What you like about your country
- What you do not like about your country
- Your favourite food
- What you like the most
- What you dislike the most
- Who you love the most – who your favourite person is

- Who is your best friend
- What you want to become
- What you fear the most
- What you think of the world
- What you like about the world
- What you dislike about the world
- What you think about nature
- What will you do with your money if you are rich
- What you will do if you have power to do something
- The books you like to read the most
- The most important thing you have been told
- Your favourite subject
- Your favourite colour

Use what you have in your circle to write a poem or short story

You could start your story by narrating an incident like the one or above, or describing a character as in the one below from Chukwuemeka Ike's *Toads for Super*.

The opening point of your work is very important. Try to introduce your principal characters at the earliest opportunity. You could start with a dialogue, narration or description, the important thing is to ensure that you are consistent with your choice. Ensure that when you start the writing and continue, the tempo or “pace is not slowed down immediately after the lengthy narrative introducing the characters and putting across other background information” (Ike, 136).

His Royal Highness, Ezeonuku III of Onuku, arrived at the prefabricated temporary residence of the Vice-Chancellor of the

University of Songhai in a manner intended to leave the Vice-Chancellor in no doubt that he was the First Class Chief for Onuku Province, member of Songhai's Upper House, the most influential personality for miles around, and the bosom friend of the Governor – General, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Educational Affairs, and every important personality you could name in Capital City. Never was a title more becoming to its bearer. His Royal Highness, nearly six feet in height and over two hundred pounds in weight, exuded royalty and dignity as he walked, and he talked, and in the slow and seemingly deliberate manner in which he rolled his neck from side to side. On this occasion, he brought with him his court musicians, who rarely accompanied him except on very major occasions such as the opening sessions of Parliament. This was a sure means of adding the Vice-Chancellor to his ever growing list of V.I.P friends and admirers.

The court musicians travelled in a black Morris Minor which preceded His Royal Highness. By the time his milkwhite Buick Electra stopped in front of the Vice Chancellor's log hut, the three-man ensemble was already praising him to the skies, forming a manilla in front of him as he stepped out of the car. He stood his full height in front of them, looking vacantly and majestically into the distance and failing to notice the smiling Vice-Chancellor who had moved up for a handshake. When he raised his beaded right hand which carried the regal fan, the little man with the oja skipped in front of him to pay special tribute with his instrument. H.R. H. absorbed the encomiums with the dignity of his office, nodding slowly but continuously as

*encomium toppled over encomium in quick succession.
Occasionally a touch of humour earned the flutist a dignified
half-smile.*

3.3. Continuing

Once you have started your story, it is usually better to follow your outline. It helps you to get focused and avoid unnecessary digressions. Once you have chosen the genre, and adopted your style, your task is to continue your story. You may decide to present your story chronologically from the beginning to the end or make use of flashbacks to knit your story together to achieve the desired cohesion.

As you write, you may develop new ideas or have reasons to modify the existing ones, do not hesitate to do that. Alternatively, you can prune everything at the point of revision. You may be aware of some gaps, if you can correct immediately, do so but if not, go ahead with your writing.

You may or may not have a time table. I observe that it is difficult in creative writing to adhere to any time table though some writers do. The length of time the work will take depends on the time you can spare for it and, most importantly, on how readily the ideas come. Sometimes the characters engage in a dialogue in the writer's mind yet he/she may not have time to record it immediately. In some case after that moment, he/she may not be able to recall the ideas or how they flowed in his/her mind. Some literary works take many years to complete while some are written in a month or two.

As you continue with your writing, you may become barren of ideas. This means that you have time to write but you cannot do so because nothing comes to your mind. But you should not give up at such times. You may need to revisit your outline, joggle some ideas and plan more thoroughly. You may skip a particular

troubled area and move on to the next chapter, scene or stanza. You may even change the direction of your story or take a long rest.

As you write, the story is bound to be revolving in your mind even at odd times and odd places. The inspiration bug could bite you at any time. If you can, as soon as it comes, record it and revise latter. In a short story titled “Inspiration Bug” by Akachi Ezeigbo, Chiny was in the church and while the preacher preached with eloquence, powerful ideas struck her. She started comparing the writer and the preacher and ruminated that both preacher and writer , exhort, criticize and even entertain. “Both are interpreters and in a sense also prophets ...” (72). As these thoughts impinged upon her consciousness she realized that she has been bitten by “Inspiration bug”. She exclaimed:

What a time! What a place!

“No...no...not here, please” I whispered

“What ...? Asked the woman sitting by me.

“Nothing...” I replied hastily. (72)

As the preacher was talking, his words gradually faded from her consciousness and in their place “was this beautiful story line which I immediately thought could form the framework for my next novel”(73). As she thought about it, an overpowering avalanche of ideas stormed her brain. As she muttered to herself her neighbor tried to find out if she was alright. She left the church, went straight to her house to complete the story before the inspiration bug left her.

This could happen to anyone. For instance, when I was writing *The Regal Dance*, I was smiling to myself as I wrote. It was in the office. A colleague entered and I did not take notice of him because I was engrossed in my writing. I was enjoying the fictive world and oblivious of the real world around me. The man stood for a while and called, O-nye-ka. I was startled. I looked up, wanted to ask him to leave

but could not since he was a senior colleague. He swore that I was an ‘Ogbanje’ or a little bit insane. If not, how could I be sitting in an office alone and smiling to myself. I tried in vain to explain, later showed him my earlier manuscripts. He was not only convinced but collected them – *Sons For My Son* and *Into The World* and helped me to get them published.

Once you have started writing, and momentary flashes come to you, please capture them on paper or record them in a tape as soon as they come before they vanish and may not reappear again. Do that, even if it means packing your car, stepping out of bed in the middle of the night or “stepping out of shower half soaked or interrupting a tête-à-tête with a possessive friend” (Ike, 87). This means that you need a lot of discipline for you to stick to your work, continue it till you get the first draft.

3.4 Completing

The ending of your story is as important as the beginning. You must ensure that your story ends at the appropriate point and not stretched to an anti-climax. If you are not careful your story will never end but it has to end. Ensure that all the conflicts are resolved and that you end at the point where you will achieve high dramatic effect. Then revise your work. Some writers claim that they do not revise their works. You should at this stage, revise your work, tie the loose ends to ensure that you produce a work that is worth reading. At the point of revision, try to assess yourself by providing honest answers to the following questions:

1. Have I told an interesting story?
2. Is it convincing?
3. Is my perspective on the theme clear?
4. Have I achieved the objective I set for myself?
5. Have I created convincing characters?

6. Are my characters memorable?
7. Is the environment suitable for the characters?
8. How is my language?
9. Are there irrelevances that could be cut
10. Do I like the way it ends.

You can revise your work as many times as possible before you send it to a publisher.

3.5 The Title

Sometimes, you give your story a title before you start and it ends up with that title. However, at other times, the title evolves from the story. As you write your story and titles come to your mind, write them down and later review all of them and choose the best.

The titles may change from the first draft through other drafts until you get the final piece. My play *Sons for My Son* started as *Ndidi* (My third year exam play) and later metamorphosed to “Obiefuna”, “An Only Son” before I settled finally for *Sons For My Son*.

You should choose a title that will give your reader an idea about your subject matter. If you choose an appropriate title before you start writing, it will help you to ensure that your characters, events, and other incidents in the play revolve around it.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Creative writing is the arrangement of words artistically to tell a story, relate an experience or recreate an event or a situation. It is written in form of drama, poetry or prose. A creative writer is an ordinary human being who imaginatively creates a new story, recreates an existing story, or relate an experience. The story or

experience could be based on real life experiences, history, myth, legend or folklore.

Creative writing therefore is a product of imagination. The writer goes through a process whereby he conceptualizes an idea, fertilizes the idea, moulds it in a desired form and produces a perceived perfect work. As a writer you need an organizational ability that would enable you to organize the conceptualized idea into a coherent and comprehensive form. The first step in this process is to draw your outline, plan your outline with a stimulating introduction (beginning), an interesting body (middle) and a build up to a reasonable and effective conclusion (end). In this way, you will be able to create an imaginative or fictional world that is very close to reality.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have taken you through the process of creative writing. We have tried to teach, through copious illustrations from the works of some renowned creative writers and learners like you. You have seen that some people are writers by accident while some came from a family of creative artists. Either way, you need to learn some of the rudiments of the art for you to excel. You have also learnt that you need a lot of discipline for you to start and end a creative work.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Why do you think that you need discipline to produce a good novel, play or poetry?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3: YOUR MOUTHPIECE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Content
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we tried to take you through the process of creative writing. You were taught how to plan, start and complete your story. In this unit, we will introduce you to how you would present that story. Who will tell your story – your point of view and why you should choose a particular point of view.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify the various points of view;
- List different genre of literature;
- List various modes of presenting your creative work for each genre;

- Identify the most appropriate perspective for your writing;
- Apply perspectives appropriately.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

In creative writing, you tell a story or relate an experience. It is necessary for you to know how to do that. You need to decide whether you will tell the story by yourself or you will tell it through somebody. Each genre of literature has its unique characteristics which influence the way it is presented.

3.1 Dialogue

Dialogue is a conversation between two people. It is the ultimate medium of presentation of action in drama. However, it is used sparingly in poetry prose where it is used to inject action but in drama the action is presented through dialogue. In whatever genre, you should need Hamlet's advise to the players in the "Mouse Trap". "Suit the action to the word and the word to the action". For effectiveness, dialogue should be tight and move swiftly.

Dialogue is used to convey information, to reveal character, to crystallize relationships, to propel the plot and "precipitate revelation, crises and climaxes" (Oakley 94). It means that dialogue should not be static but must be moving forward in such a progressive manner that it should lead to a change of heart or plan or a resolution of an action.

You should bear in mind that you must take pains to consciously create dialogue that is as close as possible to everyday speech. Avoid irrelevances, you should play down on the use of obscenities even when it is used to depict particular environment or people. Excessive use of profanities tends to bore the audience. Try not to use slangs in dialogue except when it contributes to the depiction of a character.

In creating your dialogue, try to be as concise as possible and ensure that your dialogue expresses one thought at a time and try to keep the lines short. Lengthy dialogue tends to slow down action, while short ones make the action brisk, racy and lively. In prose fiction, try to keep your dialogue minimal but at the same time it should be able to give the reader enough hints, information to fill out ensuing scenes from his/her own imagination. Dialogue should be informative but not propagandist except for special effect. You should not turn your characters to preachers of specific ideologies. Your character's dialogues must sound convincing and true to life and must conform to the characters as presented in the work.

Realistic dialogue does not mean “copying down everything you might pick up with a tape recorder at a social gathering” (Maxwell – Mahon 36). You should be able to prune the superfluous aspects of everyday speech from the dialogue and present only the “sense and sentiments” that carry your plot through its stages of development. That notwithstanding, you should reflect the real-life mutual conversation that involves lots of interruptions as the speakers butt into each other's argument with noises of approval or disapprovals or cut-ins with counter-arguments. Sometimes, normal conversations are disjointed, so try to reflect this disjointed nature of everyday dialogue especially at the emotional crisis moments in your work. Let us look at the dialogue below and see if it reflects some of the characteristics we discussed.

Matron: Back! I said go...

Inmate: (in Edo) Ikhian ya sa amen ye ete vben.

Matron: What was that?

Nweke: He wants some hot water for his sores.

Matron: Not now, Sorry.

*Nweke: (to patient, in Edo) Yato ta.
(Meaning go and sit down)
(Patient returns sheepishly to his mat).*

Matron: Now, would anyone care to explain what all that merriment was about?

Nweke: We had just finished choir practice, Madam. Since we still had some time left before curfew, we were only keeping ourselves..er...keeping ourselves going.

Matron: With drumming and dancing! Where do you think you are?

*Editor: (with malevolent calm)
In the hospital. The General Hospital of his Imperial Majesty King George V of England; situated in the land of Port Harcourt, in the Colonial Territory of Nigeria, West Africa, the World.*

Matron: Is that supposed to be plain rudeness or a display of high intellect in geography?

Cat: It's neither.

Matron: Beg you pardon!

Cat: you asked a simple question, and he gave you a simple answer.

*Matron: (curtly) No one is seeking your opinion.
(turns again to the Editor)
In the first place, I was addressing him...
(indicates Nweke)
Since when did you become the spokesman for the ...
(restrains herself from describing the group)
Or who do you think you are?*

Cat: Another question

*Editor: Leper, madam. I am a leper – like the rest...of them.
...(with a sweep of the arm taking in the entire inmates) lepers, lepers all – at the mercy of the hospital authorities.*

Matron: You could be –

She is cut short by a querulous appeal from an inmate still in dance tableau.

*Dancer: (in Ibibio) Ami ndi da ke utom mi tutu idaga nke?
(meaning: For how long am I supposed to hold this position?)*

Matron whirls round reproachfully: for the first time her calm is visibly rattled.

Cat: The fellow wants to know how much longer he is to remain like that...(raises his eyes over the newspaper to glance at Inmate: he chuckles, and suppressing the rest of the impulse, adds)...Like a smoked he-goat.

Matron does not respond, starts pacing about.

Editor: Well, how long?

Matron: Till the Senior Medical Officer himself comes to witness the extent of your latitude.

Hannah: (breaks off her tableau) Well, we can't wait forever! You hear? (in a frenzy)The night watchman you sent is too slow for our pains. Go yourself quickly and carry the SMO here on your back.

Matron: (shocked beyond belief) Miss Hannah!

Hannah: Don't Miss Hannah me! What's the matter! Don't we have a right to live in this land – just because we are like this?
(displays her body) Everything we do – (crosses from inmate to inmate releasing them from their tableau)
Sit down! Relax, all of you. The SMO? We can wait for him sitting down

You can see the fast pace of the dialogue above. In prose fiction, you could start your novel with an exciting dialogue instead of in a narrative form. The exposition presented in dialogue is usually more dramatic and effective than it could have been done in a narrative form.

Self Assessment Exercise – Study the dialogue above carefully and note the emotional crisis generated in it.

3.2 Monologue

Dialogue is a conversation between two people while monologue is a one man conversation. We talk of monologues more in drama where it is referred to as dramatic monologue. However there is monologue in poetry especially in the 19th century English poetry perfected in the narrative poetry of Robert Browning and others. Dramatic monologues help to give more information on action and character. Soliloquy is a type of monologue but soliloquy is like thinking aloud so the character is oblivious of the audience. In dramatic monologue on the other hand, the character is aware of the audience and in actual sense, speaks and dramatizes to the audience. A very good dramatic monologue is the one we have in the opening scene of Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*.

Get the play, read it and compare the monologue with the one presented below from Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*.

Seguwa:(Returning) This is what we are living with. This weakness that comes over her, and all this meandering talk. Talk of water and of drowning? What calamitous talk is that? When will it end? How will it end? We are mystified. How wouldn't we be? Oh, we should ask Edufa some questions; that is what I say. You should all ask Edufa some questions.

(She goes to the fire, throws in more incense, and withdraws from it as if she hates it)

I wish I could break this lock on my lips

Let those who would gamble with lives.

Stake their own.

None I know of flesh and blood

Has right to stake another's life

For his own.

Edufa! You have done Ampoma wrong.

And wronged her mother's womb

Ah, Mother! Mother!

The scenes I have witnessed in here,

In this respected house.

Would make torment in your womb

Your daughter, all heart for the man

She married, keeps her agonies from you

Ah, Mother! Mother!

Edufa has done Ampoma wrong

Tafrakye!

Some matters weigh down the tongue

But mother, I swear

Edufa does Ampoma wrong

He does her wrong.

(She returns angrily to the incense burning).

3.3 The Persona

Persona is the voice used mainly in poems. However, persona means the person the artists fronts in presenting his or her work. It is the writer's mouthpiece. The writer may be a man, an adult but presents his work through the experiences of a child. The persona is like a mask which the writers wear to camouflage him/herself to make the experience presented vivid and more realistic. In "Abiku", Wole Soyinka uses an Abiku child as a persona.

3.4 Point of View

We talk of point of view in the novel and the short story. Basically, there are three types of point of view – first person point of view, second person point of view and third person point of view.

3.4.1 First Person Point of View

In presenting your story, and you may decide to relate it in such a way that your reader will feel that you are presenting your personal experiences. It must not necessarily be a story of your real life – an autobiography. In this point of view you will use the first person pronoun 'I' and this 'I' in the story is called the narrator. In the first person narration, the story is viewed as authentic and reliable especially where realistic landmarks and dates are mentioned.

The only constraint is that it has its own limitations because the narrator can only relate the incidents he/she witnessed, or state his source of information. In multiple narration, the story is told by different characters in the novel. In the letter narration also known as the epistolary like Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* is

presented in form of a letter. The narrator, Ramatolaye starts the novel with “Dear Assiatou” and ends it with “Ramatolaye”. She recalls the incidents that are familiar to both of them and narrates the ones her friend, Aissatou, is not aware of.

Other advantages of this point of view is that it is the most personal point of view as the reader identifies easily with the narrator. It conveys the impression of a firsthand account and through it the author reaches the reader in an informal yet more intimate manner as though the reader was sitting beside him and seeing the story unfold. (Ike 91) Telling the story through the same person (often the hero) also helps to hold the story together.

3.4.2 Second Person Point of View

This point of view makes use of the second person pronoun, you. It is really difficult for someone to tell another person (2nd person) a story by saying “you did this, you did that...” The argument here could be that, there is no point for you here (the narrator) to tell me (2nd person) what I have done and what I have not done. It does not make sense. The insertion of dialogue in this point of view is difficult I have not read any novel that is written in this point of view but I have seen a short story that is relayed effectively in the second person point of view. Here is an excerpt from Akachi Ezeigbo’s “Fractures”.

Wetness is to winter as dryness is to harmattan; winter spawns snow as harmattan hatches dust, two climatic conditions you detest. Dry leaves falling to litter the earth, everything brittle, breaking to the touch, trees shedding their leaves, naked and dying to the world. Features common to both seasons in varying degrees.

You exchanged the harmattan for winter because you wanted to, nobody forced you and you cannot claim persecution drove you

away as so many exiled souls. You have asked yourself time and time again why you chose this as your country of self-imposed exile. You have learnt to live with the cold and get on with your life. The job you are doing is not the best but it is a job you are lucky to have and keep. The holiday was a bonus you received with gratitude. But things did not quite go the way you expected. They ended in an anti-climax

You ask, “why do things go wrong at the time one is happiest”? This question creeps into your mind because you are suffering. You are in pain; you have lived with pain for twenty-four hours. You are sitting in the waiting room, in an orthopedic hospital, waiting for the surgeon to see you. One thought dominates your mind and it is not a happy thought. You feel you have fractures in your knee. The pain is unbearable and you think only a fracture could produce so much pain. Extremity in anything is morbid, so you allow hope to curl up inside your heart like a green snake, whispering that you might be wrong, that you are wrong. Should there not be some swelling if a bone is fractured?

You cling to this hope, as you train your gaze on the paramedical staff engaged in getting patients ready to see the doctors. One of them has scrutinized your papers, your insurance cover and taken other details from you.

3.4.3 Third Person Point of View

You may decide to use the third person point of view, in which case you will use the third person “he/she” or the character’s name in the third person narrative, we have the omniscient point of view and the objective point of view. The omniscient

narrator sees and knows everything that happens in the story. This means that the author knows what each character is doing at any point and when necessary presents a character's innermost thoughts and feelings. It is the most popular form of narration. Most novels you read are in the omniscient point of view which is also referred to as 'the Eye of God'.

Objective point of view is also told in the 3rd person but unlike in the omniscient narration, the objective narrator does not intrude in the story, does not try to describe the characters, probe their inner feelings and thoughts, or comment on their actions. The reader is left to interpret the characters words and action and draw conclusions or make his/her judgment.

Since, as the author using this point of view, you would not comment on or interpret actions, you will need to inject a lot of action in the story which is realized mainly in dialogue for it to be successful. One episode leads to the other, consequently, the story tells itself in a dramatic form. The advantage here is that the story moves at a faster pace. The disadvantage is that the scope is limited to only the words and actions that the reader can hear or see physically. The reader is not exposed to the thoughts or motives of the characters and so may not be able to understand a characters growth or transformation or unravel some complications in the plot. Sometimes this objective point of view forms part of the omniscient point of view.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Creative writing is an imaginative art that is presented to entertain, to inform and to educate the reader. The artist chooses the genre to write and chooses a particular medium to relay his/her message while at the same time entertaining the reader. Each genre of literature has its own peculiar mode of presentation and it is

important for you to learn the different modes of presentation to enable you choose the best one for your work.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have exposed you to various ways of writing your creative piece. We used some illustrations from renowned writers to make our points. You cannot be a good writer if you do not read wide. If you intend to write a novel, start reading as many good novels as possible. Try to spend at least an hour a day on the genre of your choice. You will benefit from the masters but please do not copy what someone else has written.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Read the passage below that is presented in the first person narrative and try to present it in the third person point of view.

I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade, lived afterward at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer, but by the usual corruption of words in England we are now called, nay, we call ourselves, and write out name, Crusoe, and so my companions always called me.

I had two elder brothers, one of which was lieutenant-colonel to an English regiment of four in Flanders, formerly commanded by the famous Colonel Lockhart, and was killed at the battle near Dunkirk against the Spaniards; what became of my second brother I never

know, any more than my father and mother did know what was become of me.

Being the third son of the family, and not bred to any trade, my head began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts. My father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent share of learning, as far as house education and a country free school generally goes, and designed me for the law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea; and my inclination to this led me so strongly against the will, nay, the commands, of my father, and against all the entreaties and persuasions of my mother and other friends, that there seemed to be something fatal in that propension of nature tending directly to the life of misery which was to befall me.

My father, a wise and grave man, gave me serious and excellent counsel against what he foresaw was my design. He called me one morning into his chamber, where he was confined by the gout, and expostulated very warmly with me upon this subject. He asked me what reasons more than a mere wandering inclination I had for leaving my father's house and my native country, where I might be well introduced, and has a prospect of raising my fortunes by application and industry, with a life of ease and pleasure. He told me it was for men of desperate fortunes on one hand, or of aspiring, superior fortunes on the other, who went abroad upon adventures to rise by enterprise, and make themselves famous in undertakings of a nature out of the common road; that these things were all either too far above me, or too far below me; that mine was the middle state, or what might be called the upper station of low life, which he had found by long experience was the best stage in the world, the most suited to

human happiness, not exposed to the miseries and hardships, the labour and sufferings of the mechanic part of mankind, and not embarrassed with the pride, luxury, ambition and envy of the upper part of mankind. He told me I might judge of the happiness of this state by this one thing, viz, that this was the state of life which all other people envied; that kings have frequently lamented the miserable consequences of being born to great things, between the mean and the great; that the wise man gave his testimony to this as the just standard of true felicity, when he prayed to have neither poverty or riches.

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UNIT 4 YOUR STYLE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding units we have discussed the idea, the planning of the work and how to present it. We will now discuss the style in this unit. Your style is your own unique way of presenting your story. An analysis of any literary piece is hinged on content and form. Content is the subject matter, and the theme, the central idea or that message you want to relate to your reader. Form includes the way you arrange the incidents – plot; the way you create your characters – characterization; the vehicle of communication – language; the environment where

the action takes place – setting, and other literary devices you use to embellish your work.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Tell a story creatively
- Identify different ways you could arrange your story
- Differentiate language use as it is related to each literary genre
- Be able to delineate characters through language
- Identify the setting for your story
- Create characters appropriately
- Create suspense in your story
- Insert flashbacks appropriately

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. The Story

Creative literary writing is primarily an imitation of human life. It is generally referred to as “a mirror held up to nature”. The writer creatively or artistically renders and arranges the story in such a way that it would instruct and give artistic pleasure to the reader. We talked about ideas in Unit 1, but ideas alone cannot make an interesting reading. You build a story around your idea. Your personality and background influence your writing because “writers, however talented they may be, are conditioned by their human nature... based on their interests, goals and life experiences, make choices on what to write about” (Ojaide, 57) and how to write it. Your intention might be to simply tell a beautiful story; to tell a story to teach the audience a lesson; to tell a story that would stir the audience to an invariably revolutionary action; the choice is yours. The important point to be made here is that you are trying to tell a story.

Let us try to tell a story in this unit. As we go along with our story here, create your own story and try to tell it side by side with us. A managing director of a bank is sacked. Surprisingly, he does not have money to pay back /refund the money he is said to have embezzled. He is forced to leave his posh duplex apartment with boys quarters to live in a two bedroom apartment. He could not get another job and in despondency and desperation he commits suicide. We will use this short story to illustrate style in creative writing.

3.2 Plot

Plot is the arrangement of incidents in a story. You should be able to present your plot in such a way to arrest your readers' interest and sustain it till the end. You could arrange your story to run chronologically from beginning to the end or you could start from any point and through flashbacks present a coherent story. Whichever style you choose, employ a technique to "take a grip upon the reader's sympathies and imagination; dramatizing it" (Hall 62).

Plot according to Henry James is characters in action. These characters must be able to engage in an action that can hold the readers, raise their expectations as it progresses for them to desire to know what happens next. Your plot determines if your reader will pick your book and would not put it down until he gets to the end or abandon the book after struggling to read one or two chapters.

So organization or the arrangement of the incidents is very important here. Let us go back to the story of the bank manager. How do we organize the story? Shall we pick him as the major character, from childhood through secondary school to the university, to the job, the sack and the consequence of the sack? Shall we just start the story from the bank, his promotions and the sack? Shall we organize it in a chronological order or in another order to achieve our aim to tell an interesting

story? Whichever one we choose, we must bear in mind that “a plot is a story plus causal relationships in a meaningful sequence (Hall 60). With this as a guide, try to draw an outline in ten sentences or phrases to show your arrangement of this particular plot.

Self Assessment Exercise

Now compare your outline with this one below.

This bank manager is Mr. Bayo

1. Mr. Bayo is in his office
2. His cousin visits asking for job or loan to start a small business
3. Bayo refuses to help. He claims to be a born-again so would not touch bank money
4. He prays every morning with his staff, cautions them against embezzlement
5. He is a deacon in his church and is in charge of the money collected during offering
6. Sacks a staff instantly for receiving a tip from a customer
7. His children are studying abroad, visited them and just returned
8. In his sitting room, he is arrested for embezzlement
9. Arraigned in court – found guilty
10. From Grace to Grass

In developing the story, we must give some indications that he could commit the crime in such a way that the suspense is maintained. We should try to inject humour in the story. We should also create plausible and credible story/sequence of events.

My outline above is not detailed. You can create a more detailed outline. In my own case, sometimes, I create a detailed plot outline but at other times, a skeletal outline was sufficient. This happens more when a story is in my head and is

begging to be poured out. My play, *Into the World* for instance, was initiated by my elder sister who teaches French in a secondary school. She needed a short play as an entry by her students for a competition. I drew a sketchy outline and started immediately but the play “refused to stop”. In a week I had written a full-length play. That was the fastest play I had ever written. I abandoned it, drew another outline, and produced a playlet that served her purpose. My purpose was to provide insights into the activities of unserious students and make useful suggestions to both parents and students. I believe that I achieved my aim in both plays but in the full-length play extended the theme of laziness and unseriousness to the slothful housewife who was unserious as a student.

3.3. Characterization

In our outline, we mentioned Mr. Bayo. Mr. Bayo is a character in the story we intend to write. But he alone cannot carry our story so we need to create other characters. I already mentioned his cousin, his staff and his children. These are all characters.

You may recall that we said that as a creative (fiction) writer, you use your imagination to create an imaginary world. This world is inhabited by imaginary beings who, through their interactions and inter-personal relationships, present an imaginary story. You have the power to create virtuous and vicious people in your story. To a large extent, your reader’s interest in your work depends on “how much he can identify with the characters in the story” (Ike 58). When you are watching a film or home video for example, your interest is mainly on certain characters, what they do or what you anticipate them to do, the consequence of their actions in relation to other characters and on themselves. So in your fiction, you should try to create credible, authentic and life-like characters to give your story the desired “slice of life”.

As a budding artist, you should try to structure your story around one character and make your characters as few as possible. The guiding principle in characterisation is to "...exclude anybody who does not contribute to the central idea of the story" (Maxwell-Mahon 4). It is usually better to introduce the character around which your story revolves early so that the story unfolds as he develops.

You must try to develop your characters very well. Before you create a particular character, ensure that you know him/her very well. Remember that although in real life, we may not be able to decipher the inner workings of a person, in fiction you must present both the external manifestations and the inner lives of your character if he/she is well-drawn. For your character to be real to your reader you must know and reveal everything about the character. You must therefore, arm yourself with a "thorough understanding human nature and human behaviour" (Ike 58) especially the characteristics of the particular character you are creating.

We have chosen a bank manager. He is not just a bank manager but a hypocrite and tyrant. Have you worked in the bank before? Have you encountered a hypocrite before? Have you worked with tyrant before? If you have, you will have more insights into his character. This insight will help you to create characters that are consistent and whose actions are well-motivated. In his case, you would check his background, he could have come from very lowly background, so is prepared to grab what does not belong to him. He may have come from a wealthy background or have friends who are very rich so strives to keep up with their level (to keep up with the Joneses). These are part of what may have motivated him to embezzle the money.

As you move about and interact with people, you will come in contact with different members of the society. Your relationship with them or their relationship

with others help to expand the scope of your knowledge of human nature without any conscious effort.

Just as you draw an outline for the plot, you need a character sketch. First of all, list the major characters, name them and assign roles to them. After that, give some essential details like profession age and physical attributes to each of them. In doing this, bear your story/plot in mind so that the characters can fit in very well in the story.

e.g. Bayo – Mr. Bayo Olufemi. A chartered Accountant, has worked in the bank for fifteen years, and has risen to the rank of a Managing Director. Age 40
He is talk, light in complexion, clean-shaven, handsome and over-bearing.
Always in well-cut suits

At this stage, the characters are like clay in the hands of a potter. You can create your characters to be pretty or ugly, educated or illiterate, rich or poor. The important factor is that each character should act within the ambits of his/her status and temperament. Please resist the temptation of depicting a character to be exactly like someone you know in real life. Use your imagination and creative ability to create unique characters to suit specific roles in your work.

If you are writing a novel or a short story, this outline will help you in the description of your characters as the novel, progresses. Remember that these descriptions are inserted appropriately so that they will not be out of play or cause an unnecessary distraction. These descriptions about a character are sometimes given in bits to explain certain actions of a character. The reason for Okonkwo's sternness and overbearing attitude in *Things Fall Apart* is because he is afraid of being considered weak or of being a failure like his father.

...his whole life was dominated by fear,
The fear of failure and of weakness...it
was not external but lay deep in himself.
It was fear in himself, lest he should be
found to resemble his father (12 -13)

Earlier in the novel, Achebe tells the reader that when Okonkwo walked “his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody... He had a slight stammer and when he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists (3-4). This shows that he is a hot tempered man. He is also impulsive unlike Obierika who Achebe tells us was “a man who thought about things” (113). It is necessary for you to cultivate the habit of reading good novels, plays and poems with renewed interest. As you read, pay more attention to the issues we are raising in the course materials on creating writing. They will help you in your own writing. Learn from the masters but do not copy from or ape anybody.

In the course material, Creative Writing I, we dwelt mainly on motivation and consistency. Ensure that you create characters whose actions are properly motivated, and are consistent in their behaviours. Let us take Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, his hidden sense of insecurity, his “restlessness, over abundance of nervous energy, vile temper, fierce emotionalism and the predisposition to violence we discern in his character” (Palmer 54) are motivated by his fear of failure and weakness.

3.4 Language

In creative writing, you try to send a message to your readers. You can only do that through communication. We all know that communication is at the core of literature. You may wish to write in vernacular, English or pidgin. Most writers

use English, some mix pidgin with Standard English sometimes to delineate characters. Pidgin is becoming popular among literary artists. The reason is twofold: firstly, they intend to reach a wider audience and secondly, it arouses humour. Whichever medium of communication you choose, ensure that you write coherently, accurately and beautifully. Ensure that you comply with rules of grammar in the language you have chosen. Apart from the rule of grammar, you could write beautifully if you have a “rich vocabulary and the capacity to put it to effective use, utilizing the figures of speech and other devices characteristic of the language (Ike 18). In this case you will not over- use certain words and expressions. You will be in a positions to use the right words or expressions in the right places. Apart from good dictionaries, the computer is very helpful because you can check the synonyms of certain words as you write (if you are writing straight with the computer) and choose the most appropriate words. However, always refer to a regular dictionary where you could get the exact meaning of the words before you use them because some synonyms could be misleading. Also avoid using clichés.

3.5 Setting

Setting is the environment where your characters operate. Your setting or background or environment for your story could be imaginary or realistic. In choosing your setting, choose an environment that you know very well personally. It is difficult to situate your story in an environment you are not familiar with through personal experience. You will be in a better position to create a more convincing story by drawing on the things you have heard and seen.

According to Maxwell-Mahon, there are three important things any good writer must remember while locating a story.

- a. The setting must be located as quickly as possible and with minimum words.

- b. The setting must be factually and temporally credible
- c. The setting must form a unity with both character and action so as to produce the overall effect or idea that you want to convey to the reader (7).

Assuming that you want to set your story in an environment you are not physically familiar with but have heard so much about, you should visit the place. If for instance you have heard so much about the wild life park in Jos or Tinapa in Calabar and you want to set your story there, you cannot give an accurate account of the environment until you have visited the place. You need more information the setting or present incidents that take place in that venue because you will find it difficult to give accurate account of for instance, which roads leads to it, the guides, and many other things. If you are writing a novel, you may need to give a vivid description of the scenery in and out of the place, the animals, events and the people you encounter there. Did you stay in a hotel, or stayed with a friend or a relation? In answering these questions, you may find some interesting incidents or event that you could incorporate in your story.

3.5.1 Physical Setting

The physical setting as the name implies is the physical environment where the action of the story takes place. Whether your setting is imaginary or real, you must endeavour to reflect the physical environment. This includes the scenery, the prop, (drama), the houses, the roads and other physical aspects of that environment that help to situate your narrative.

In case you want to use a realist setting, you must include notable landmarks like names of towns or locations in the towns. A very good example of such realistic setting is found in Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead and Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, and also Fetus Iyayi's *The Heroes*. Sometimes the names of characters and interjections of vernacular in the forms of exclamations, phrases or

dialogue are useful pointers to the physical setting in your work. You should therefore take this into consideration while writing your own fiction. As stated earlier, read the works of the literary masters to help you improve on your style in the literary genre you wish to write.

3.5.2 Historical Setting

Historical setting refers to the time frame or possible date/period/year when the events of the story take place. The historical setting can be discerned in your work in several ways. You could insert specific dates as we find in Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. It could be through historical incidents as we find in the same play or in Festus Iyayi's *The Heroes* and other novels that deal with the Nigerian Civil War. In this novel, for instance, his characters are fictitious but General Gowon's wedding is mentioned, so you may decide to include specific historical events.

However, you may decide to discard specific historical events and concentrate on some incidents that could happen at any time. When you set your story in the past, please check your facts very well to ensure the authenticity of your setting. This is very important. When you are not sure of a particular setting, discard it.

3.6 Publishing

Any creative writer looks forward with eagerness to the day s/he will see his works in print. The joy of seeing ones works published is inexplicable. Unfortunately, the objective of writing differs from one writer to the other. Some writers write because they want to share with the readers their perspectives on certain social issues. Some others simply want to make money. Agreed, writers are expected to earn some money from their works. Actually, there are full time writers who earn their living through their writings. Economic consideration is therefore important in creative writing. In that case, you must ensure that you

produce qualitative works that can sell and also can be relevant at all times. These are hallmarks of good works. Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* deal with corruption in Nigerian politics. These books were written many ago back but the issues treated are still relevant in contemporary Nigerian politics.

The economic crunch has forced a lot of people to write. This crop of writers, write whatever they have in mind, with little or no consideration to literary devices or grammatical rules. They rush to state Ministries of Education (Curriculum development units) and push these works into the list of books for students. Self publishing has become the order of the day. Consequently, there are many sub-standard works in our markets. Some of them are hawked in buses and streets.

Here, we advise you to ensure that you write well, do not be in a hurry. There are novels that took years to complete. When you conclude your work, revise it very well and send it to a publisher. Your manuscript may be rejected but do not give up, try other publishers. Many of the renowned writers suffered rejection by publishers but they persevered. However, some of the manuscripts are rejected because they are badly written (Maxwell-Mahon Introduction 2). Send your manuscript to reputable publishers. Some of the publishers may ask you to pay fully or partly for the publishing perhaps because they are afraid that it will not sell. If you can afford it, pay but insist that your work be sent to an evaluator. The evaluator's report helps the writer to effect some corrections. At the end of this unit, I will include the evaluator's report for one of my plays *Whose Fault* to give you an idea of what an evaluator's report looks like. You can, before sending your work to the publisher, give it to someone who is knowledgeable in the area to assess for you. If you write a play, look for an opportunity to put it on stage. There is this general saying that a play is not a play until it is seen 'live' on stage. Try also to align yourself to a creative organization like Association of Nigerian

Authors (ANA). This association has branches all over the country and they organize reading sessions for their members. During these sessions, you could present your work and get objective criticisms and suggestions on how to improve your work. Below is the evaluator's report.

WHOSE FAULT: A REVIEW

1. Theme

Whose Fault is a play that questions the source of man's adversities. Is it the potency of traditional gods in an age when science and Christianity have done much to sustain a contrary point of view? Is it man's unbridled surrender to dirty passions of various kinds that plague humanity in contemporary times? A thematic statement of the play could be that any discourse on the source of man's adversities is inconclusive. Put more bluntly, in apportioning blames for man's calamities, one has to be very cautious for man's ruin emanates from reasons that are personal, sociological, political, religious, cultural as well as fatalistic. Is it Beka's refusal to be Udo's priest that ruins him? Is it his wife's adulterous relationship with Bassey, an act which she proudly protects, ostensibly to sustain the loitering economy of a once prosperous family that precipitates Beka's predicament? One is even reluctant to consider Adaku's (Beka's wife's) adulterous relationship with Bassey as part of Beka's punishment for refusing Ude priesthood. This is because immediately we meet her in the play, she cuts the figure of a no-nonsense, insatiable wife who drives her husband very hard. Nor is one very ready to consider Kene's death in a car crash. In the same regard for even the boy believes that people die when and how God (not gods) wills. These are enigmatic aspects of the play that keep

the audience contemplating the real cause of Beka's fall. Ultimately, the play contains the story of a prosperous man who dies (for insanity is a kind of death) after a tortuous fall from grace to grass. The play also touches on the issue of government's insincerity in instituting and using the results of celebrated inquiries, the national economic crunch that discourage youths from marrying and the Christian's resistance to superstition. But these are not major concerns.

ii. Plot and Structure

The play opens as two women, Osodi and Oyidi are returning from market. There are four movements in the play three of which are divided into parts. The use of movements is adequate especially as lights will be used for scenic delineation. The women discuss first the prevailing immorality in their village, Umuogom and later settle on the "beer-parlour" business and its results exemplified especially in the ruin that has overtaken the family of Beka Emenike. When the play ends they are again on their way to market and are discussing the same issue. Perhaps the suggestion here is that the major part of the play is a flashback that reveals the reason, for the initial story the market women were telling. The women hurry home when hasty movements of strong men suggest that something unusual has happened in the village. The unusual thing, we discover later, is that Beka is mad and is being sought by the strong men of the village. This is the end of the first movement.

In the second movement, Beka refuses the entreaties of the traditional village council that he should become the new priest of Udo. Beka feels that this office will reduce his chosen life style in

the city. It is also against his Christian faith. But his community, his friend, Obiora and indeed his father, Enuka bring a lot of pressure on him to accept the priesthood. Beka and wife insist and ask the community to leave them to face the wrath of the gods.

In the third movement, neighbours are consoling Adaku and are pondering over the fire that razed Beka's store, the first in his woes. A policeman arrives, and, contrary to everybody's anticipation, he announces the death of Kene, Beka's second son in a car crash. Many months later, Adaku is piqued by the dwindling standard of living of the Beka family into proposing that she would start the beer parlour business.

Unknown to Beka, his friend, Bassey now Adaku's lover, makes satisfactory arrangements for the take-off of the business. Adaku's beer parlour attracts many customers. Some discuss the sponsorship of Adaku's business and one of them informs Beka of Adaku's infidelity. Bassey is foolhardily thirsty for romance with Adaku when Onyechi (I suppose the author means Beka, p. 79) moves into the beer parlour and fires a pistol at him. A bullet hits Beka's son, Okey instead. Bassey runs away.

Fourth movement begins with a comic scene in which a drunk customer gives more details of Adaku/Bassey affair. Comedy derives from the fact that the customer is talking to Adaku in her beer parlour while insisting that he was going to Adaku's beer parlour to talk to her. Obiora confronts Bassey in Adaku's beer parlour. Bassey runs away and brother-in-law, Obiora, and sister-in-law, Adaku engage in a heated discussion on the fate of the Beka

family. Each tries to apportion blames as they try to answer the title question, whose fault? Adaku will not return to the village to help her mad husband. She will not show her son, Okey to anyone. Okey had escaped death from his fathers bullet. She insists that her family should be left to face the Udo, an expression of the fact that Udo is not responsible for her predicaments.

In part II of this movement, Bassey is in a love prattle with Adaku when Beka rushes in, tries to strangle him and drags Adaku into the inner rooms to forcefully take her to bed. She is saved early enough by two policemen who handcuff Beka. Bassey is still alive and is carried to hospital.

In part III, Umuogom village women are going to market. Osodi and Oyidi discuss Beka's madness that has defied treatment by all reputable herbalists around. While Oyidi believes that Beka's lot is a consequence of his refusal to be Udo's priest, Osodi argues to the contrary. The play ends with nobody being able still to ascertain whose fault Beka's predicaments are.

iii. Characterization

The author displays a good knowledge of characterization. Characters are plausible, consistent, convincing and well-motivated. The protagonist develops. There is nothing for which any character could be faulted. As will be expected in a play, a few major characters like Beka, Adaku, Bassey and Obiora carry the story while many others are used and quickly dispensed with.

iv. Technique

It has already been pointed out that movements 2 and 3 and in fact 4 are flashbacks that reveal the reason for the Eyidi/Osodi story about Beka's family in movement I. An interesting feature is that at the end of the play, the women are still telling the Beka story. Movement I is an interesting exposition that intimates the audience with sociological details, important characters as well as the important issue of succession to Udo priesthood. The transition from one movement to the other is logical and the plot is coherent. Conflict, for example, arises when Beka refuses the priesthood. The climax of the play is the movement 3. Movement 4 is essentially a resolution. Even part I of movement 4 which could have been less relevant carries the weighty information of Beka's madness and Okey's safety. In all, there is a well-knit plot that flows to the end.

There are no conscious efforts to create beautiful figures of speech. Dialogue is interesting but the author loses his initial intention to differentiate status of characters by their language. Muoneke's speech on p. 19 is exemplary in its carriage of traditional speech patterns. Osodi and Oyidi, the market women regrettably lose their traditional speech patterns as they suddenly speak the language of university graduates. (compare language on p.1 and p.7).

Many spelling, punctuation and other errors exist. A few examples will suffice. All identified errors have been indicated and corrected in the manuscripts. Run (p.37, line 16) is written for ruin. Please (p.2, line 26) is written for pease, greeted (p. 12, line 4) is written for greeted; especially (p.26, line 17) is written for especially. As for grammatical errors here are a few examples. "He dare not" (p.9, line

9) is written for “He dares not”. “If I were chosen, I will – (p.36, line 16) is written for “If I were chosen, I would ... There are other grammatical errors which have been identified in the manuscript.

v. Publishability

This play is publishable. It provides an interesting reading and I dare say production will be easy and entertaining. The theme is relevant as well as philosophical. It can be a good addition to your titles especially for the interest of the general reader and drama students. Please publish when some editorial work has been done.

When your work is being sent out to an evaluator, your name and all indicators to you as a person are erased. This is to enable the evaluator to give an unbiased and objective assessment of your work. In the same way, the publisher gives you the evaluator report without the evaluator’s name and other information about him/her.

4.0 CONCLUSION

You are a novelist, a playwright or a poet because you have something worth saying and have an idea of how to say it. Some people have the talent to write but may not realize that they have it. It is not only those who read English are creative writers. Cyprian Ekwensi for instance was a pharmacist. Each writer has his/her own style but there are basic devices/techniques that are expected in a good literary piece. The basic aspects are the theme, the plot, the language, characterization and the setting. However, each genre has its own unique characteristics. So before you write, arm yourself with the basic requirements of the genre you have chosen.

5.0 SUMMARY

Creative writing is a disciplined exercise. You need to plan and structure your work carefully to ensure the fusion of content and form. We have deliberately left out television, radio and film scripts. For now, let us concentrate on the general literary works such as the short story, the novel, drama and poetry.

6.0 TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Draw a character sketch for Mr. Bayo in our story and suggest a title for that story.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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Module 2 DRAMA

Unit 1: Your Subject

Unit 2: Adaptations

Unit 3: Practical Steps

Unit 4: First Draft

Unit 5: Revision

UNIT 1: YOUR SUBJECT

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Theme/Idea
 - 3.1.1 Imagination
 - 3.1.2 Personal Experience
 - 3.1.3 Another Person's Experience
 - 3.1.4 An Individual
 - 3.1.5 Environment
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Drama is primarily an imitation of human action in a mirror held up to nature and realized on stage. This means that you can base your play on incidents, concepts, persons and experiences. You will succeed more as a playwright if you have naturally acquired a sense of the dramatic and a good knowledge of the stage. In

drama, just like in other forms of creative writing, you have the task of using language in a special way to convey your message in an entertaining manner.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- List avenues that can generate ideas
- List some of such ideas
- Choose an idea to develop in your play
- Try to write a play based on that idea

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Theme/Idea

A play presents an idea which the playwright explores to draw attention to it in order to teach, to inform and to entertain the audience. It could be an idea which has been explored by other playwrights but you will fashion it artistically to present it in a fresh way. That idea becomes the theme of your play. You could have a sub-theme but for now, try to limit yourself to one theme.

As you write and practice, you will grow and mature and with maturity comes the self confidence you need to handle sub- themes. You could develop an idea from your imagination, personal experience the world around you/environment, an individual or the experiences of other people.

Ideas alone cannot make a play. For instance, corruption is an idea. If you write corruption one hundred times on the pages of your paper, it will not make sense. Let us move a step further, if you write an essay on corruption, it cannot make a play. It becomes a play or drama, through your ability to imaginatively weave a story around it and present it in dialogue form suitable for the stage.

3.1.1. Imagination

When we say that you generate an idea from your imagination, it means that the conception of the story is completely from your imagination. Sometimes, as you dramatise the story, the theme emerges. In this case the inspiration comes in form of a story. The idea that emerges from this story is the theme and the story is not based on your personal experience, a story someone told you or the experience of a close relation or friend. It may not be based on an incident you have witnessed or events in your environment. We know that some people already possess the creative talent but those who do not are using this course as a forum for apprenticeship. So attempt the exercise below.

Self Assessment Exercise (1) Imagine a short story that you have not heard before

(2) The story must reflect human experience

(3) Review that story and detect the central idea in that story

3.1.2. Personal Experience

You may wish to recall that we said that anybody who has survived his/her childhood has at least a story in him/her. You could write a play based on your personal experience. It could be a pleasant, unpleasant, traumatic, serious or unserious experience. It must not necessarily be a childhood experience so it could be a recent experience or something that happened to you a long time ago.

You will decide what to do with that experience. Did you learn a lesson from it which you want to share with others? Did it unravel an aspect of life that astounded you? Did it reveal an aspect of life which you never imagined existed and you gained positively from it? You need to ask yourself these and other similar questions to enable you choose the idea from the experiences to dramatize.

As you grow older you must have gone through many pleasant and unpleasant experiences from which you could select an idea to dramatize. You should note that you are not expected to document the experience exactly the way it happened but an aspect of it which you would recreate imaginatively and artistically.

In my play *Into The World*, I tried to recreate a personal experience but that appears in the first part of the play. Literature was one of my best subjects, and *Romeo and Juliet* was one of our prescribed texts. My classmates used to come to me to say “Kuolum Romeo and Juliet” literally meaning tell me the story of Romeo and Juliet by implication to “explicate the text for me” and I took delight in doing that. On this particular evening, one of my classmates approached me and I wanted to know which aspect as presented on pages 1-14 of the play, though I did not record it the way it was presented then.

I do not have enough space to present the entire part of the play. The idea that struck me from this experience was self reliance/empowerment. Actually, the first title of the play “Self Reliance”, *Into the World* is an expression which form five students used to indicate that they were leaving the confinement of the secondary school and were going into the world. [This slang was popular among the students especially those who were living in the boarding houses]. They contended that immediately after their school certificate examinations, they would be free and move into the world as presented in the dialogue below.

Tessy: They will really be independent then. You know that Monique was insulting me simply because I asked her to explain something to me.... She started showing off, quoting from Gregory’s first line at the beginning of the play to Prince’s last line at the end of the play.

Patsy: (laughing), serves you right. Why are you bothering yourself? Next time you would go to her, won't you? As for me sha, I have no time for anybody. I will just fulfill all righteousness and sit for my WASC examination to justify the school fees my parents paid for me. As soon as I drop my pen sha, I will go to a school of modeling abroad. Chukky has promised to sponsor me. You know that he travels abroad regularly. He will take me along as soon as I take my last paper.

Tessy: You're really moving into the world. In-to the wor...

Patsy: Wor-wor-world (they shake hands). We are the people who will talk of going into the world after our school certificate examinations. Not these blockheads who would not know how to enjoy their lives when they move into the world. Men, we're engaged forty eight hours-day and night.

Tessy: NITEL or no NITEL! Do you think that Chukky meant what he said?

This incident alone cannot produce a play with a beginning, middle and an end. I decided to follow Tessy into her world where her boyfriend Tim married her eventually. She was lazy while in school so could not concentrate on her studies. Consequently, she became a 'full-time' housewife, buying clothes and jewelries on credit for her husband to pay up later. At a point, her husband becomes tired of the scenario and stops her from buying anything on credit since, according to him, his house is not a market place. Tessy leaves her husband who marries her maid, Janet. Tessy comes back to discover that things have fallen apart and at the climatic point of the play, her two school mates, Monique and Mercy, appear to educate her on the need for her to be empowered. She opts for fashion designing in which she excels. The blurb of the play which is culled from the evaluator's report had this to say:

Into the World is instructive to the truant, careless and unserious student; to the lazy, slothful, and unproductive and extravagant housewife; and indeed to the mindless polygamist. It insists that for a harmonious relationship to exist, every individual should be hardworking and productive. With these concerns, Onyka Onyekuba joins other Nigerian Writers in the reformist role which is of great relevance in our times.

You have seen how I developed the theme of self reliance or self empowerment from an experience. You may recall that I told you in Unit 4, 3.2 above, that this play was the fastest play I wrote and that it started as a playlet requested by my elder sister for her students for a competition.

Self Assessment Exercise

Recall a personal experience and select a theme which could form the basis of a play you intend to write.

3.1.3. Another Person's Experience

Another person's experience could inspire you. As we have seen in 3.1.2. above, you could elicit an idea for a possible play from an experience. One day, I was in the luxurious bus from Lagos to Awka. At Upper Iweka, Onitsha in Anambra State, the bus stopped for some passengers to alight and as usual, many young men rushed with their wheelbarrows to scramble for the passengers' luggage. I noticed one who was lying dejectedly in his wheelbarrow watching his colleagues. I wondered why he was not struggling with the rest and what could be going on in his mind. I decided to imaginatively follow him to his house, to his childhood, to the reasons why he ended up in a profession like this. I did but, unfortunately, the manuscript is not a complete project yet. Maybe one day, it would

The idea of childlessness in marriage explored in my play *Sons for My Son* was inspired by an experience of women. The first was a woman who said that her husband is not really the biological father of her children but her pastor. Another one is a woman who got married but was unable to have a baby after three years of marriage. As a matter of fact the line below by Enyidie, her mother-in-law in the play was what her mother-in-law in real life told her, though not the way it is presented here.

Enyidie: How can a barren woman give me any rightful place? Does she have any right here? As long as I don't have grandchildren, this house and everything in it belongs to me. Now let me tell you what you don't know. The dog in this house has more rights and is recognized more than this barren fool called Ndidi. At least the dog can procreate while this man is incapable of procreation. We are tired of having her patience. Advise her to take her Ndidi elsewhere.

However, in real life the woman was told by her mother-in-law that the dog in the house was more useful than the woman since the bitch can procreate and she is barren. You can see from the dialogue that the lady was referred to as a man. The mother-in-law refers to her daughter-in-law as a “man” because men do not give birth and since this particular woman has not given birth to a child, she is in the same position with men who lack that capacity.

Self Assessment Exercise

You have friends, colleagues and relations. Choose an experience of one of them and generate an idea you could base your play on.

3.1.4 An Individual

We have seen two instances above where ideas for a play could be generated from personal experiences. An individual could also inspire you. The person could be a very good, kind, generous, wicked or brave person. The character of your boss in the office could inspire you to write a play in which you will explore the attribute(s) he/she embodies. In the example From my play, *Sons For My Son*, which I have used above for illustration, the mother-in-law could inspire a play.

Remember that an idea alone cannot make a play. When a personality inspires you, you should use your imagination to create a story and other characters that will act out that story since your story cannot be presented with only one character. This is why it is creative writing.

Self Assessment Exercise

Pick a personality and weave a story around that personality. This story is not the real-life story of the person but a fictitious one.

3.1.5. Environment

Incidents, events, and everyday life provide a lot of materials for a creative mind. Weddings, naming ceremonies, graduations, visits of important personalities and other occasions provide ideas for playwriting. I recall that a playwright, Esiaba Irobi, elicited the theme of injustice from the visit of Pope John Paul II to Nigeria in 1983. His play titled *The Pope Lied* dramatizes the plight of a soldier who is being oppressed, no promotion, no decent accommodation and is childless. This soldier, Mushe Dayan could not understand why the Pope should say that there was justice, peace and tranquility in Nigeria. What does the Pope know about him and his predicament? He contends that the Pope is only intelligent on Sundays, and that it is just once a week that “he has a flash of ecumenical intelligence”. He therefore executed a coup in which the president of his country is killed.

You have seen how the creative mind works. Nigerian dramatists in Nollywood try to create stories based on some significant events in their environment. But my observation is that in most cases, they dramatize the events with little embellishments and fictitious names. The audience is usually familiar with the original story which was dramatized in a movie but the problem with such plays is that they tend to lose as soon as the original story is forgotten by the public. In other words, they fade with the original story. A good example is the scandal involving Rev. King however, there is still a lasting lesson for all would-be Rev. Kings and all of us who are gullible religionists.

Self Assessment Exercise

Now, review some of the notable events in your environment in the past two years. Choose one event/incident and elicit a theme from it.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Playwriting is an imaginative art but, like the Romantics claim, the idea for the play could be found anywhere in the world around us. It behoves you to see beyond the ordinary in your life, the lives of others and in events around you. The first step is to detect a theme, an idea and then weave a story around that idea in a pleasant way for presentation to your audience. In this way, you let your audience see your point of view on that particular idea. Consequently, you enlighten them while at the same time entertaining them.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have seen in this unit that you can imagine an idea, draw an idea from your personal experience, the experience of others individuals and your environment. The important issue here is that if you truly want to be a playwright you must have a fertile imagination, be dramatic and see drama everywhere and in everything. You cannot dramatize all, but as you detect ideas and construct a story around

them, you will be able to drop the ones that are not viable and choose those you could dramatize.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Collate all the ideas you have chosen in all the Self Assessment Exercises in this unit.
2. Construct your subject matter (the story) on one of them.
3. Identify the theme of your story.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2: ADAPTATIONS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Adaptations
 - 3.2 Adapting from play
 - 3.3 Adapting from a novel/short story
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

So far in this course and in Creative Writing I, we have emphasized the creation of a story based on life experiences, an individual, the environment, myth, legend and history. You are expected to select an aspect or central idea and build your story around it. In this unit, we are going to discuss how to create a story based on an original work or story. We call it adaptation. In an adapted play, the incidents, the theme and the subject matter may be the same as in the original work or story, but you are not obliged to follow the same structure. You may decide to re-structure the play to suit your purpose and your environment. This means that you are re-writing the original story.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- List some adapted play
- Compare one of them with the original story

- Adapt and write a playlet based on a short story

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Adaptations

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary gives three explanations for the word adapt.

- to change something in order to make it suitable for a new use or situation
- to adapt yourself: to change your behavior in order to deal more successfully with a new situation
- to change a book or a play so that it can be made into a play, film/movie, television ...etc

The constant phrase in these definitions is “to change”. Adaptation in drama means a change from an original work or a story to a play. Many classical children's stories like *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Adventures of Robin Hood* and many others have been adapted into play for children presented mainly in form of cartoons. *Gulliver's Travels* is another popular work that has been adapted for the screen. In adaptation, you may decide to retain the original title or change the title. Sidney Sheldon's *If Tomorrow Comes* retains its original title in the adapted version for movie. Mostly, in films/movies, the original titles are retained but in stage plays, the titles are changed most of the times.

Before you set out to adapt a work, there must be a motivation. It could be that you like the story and feel that you want to recreate it in different setting or that you want to re-represent it from another perspective.

3.2. Adapting a play

It is common for dramatists through the ages to use well-known materials for the subjects of their plays. A popular novel or poem could be turned into a play. The important factor is not “...what the writer ostensibly takes from his predecessors or contemporaries, but the particular use he makes of his borrowing” (Ludowyk 258). In adaptation, you are not copying but using your creative ability to mould the material the way you wish. The audience must be able to note important departures from the original in your reworking of it.

In adapting a play from a play you derive the outline of your plot and the characters from the original play. You pay attention to salient events in the original play and within its limits, arrange your material to suit your own purpose.

Many of Shakespearean plays are adaptations of earlier plays. For instance, his *Romeo and Juliet* was adapted from *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* which was written first in Italian by Bandell and in English by Arthur Brooke. For instance, the plot of his *Twelfth Night* is popular and has featured in “various Italian, Spanish and French plays (that) developed the subject, derived ultimately from Plautus”, (Ludowyk 260). The plays present the story of twins separated by shipwreck; the female disguises herself as a boy, and takes up employment with a Lord with whom she falls in love. In his *Novelle*, Bandell tells a story which he took from an Italian comedy *Gl’Ingannatic* (The Deceived). This was translated by Belleforest in his *Histoires Tragiques*, and retold by Barnabie Rich in his *Farewell to Military Profession*. Shakespeare adds the subplot of the practical joke played on Malvolio and the characters involved in it. Apart from this, the subject is the same except for few departures from the original text.

In Hope Eghagha’s adaptation of Wole Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman*, presents the play from a different perspective. Soyinka presents the

death of the King's Horseman, Eleshi Oba who was to die for his son but did not die and his son, Olude dies, as necessary for the well-being of the society. In his own play *Death, not a Redeemer*, Eghagha revises the tragic sequence of Soyinka's play into what he refers to as "...something positive, progressive and more affirmative of the dynamics of the life-force in humans" (Preface ii). He does not believe in a decision where a young man commits suicide in place of his father when "youth itself re-affirms the beauty of life". He decided that it would be "more dynamic to situate progress in the life-force as opposed to Death (Preface iii).

You have seen two forms of adaptations. Many other Nigerian playwrights presents adaptations of other plays. The most popular among them is Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame* which is an adaptation Sophocle's *Oedipus Rex* or *Oedipus the King*.

Self Assessment Exercise Compare

Ola Rotimi's *The God's are not to Blame* with Sophocles *King Oedipus* and note points of departure by Ola Rotimi from the original play.

3.3. Adapting from a Novel

You can also, as stated in 3.1 above, adapt a play from a novel. In adaptations from a play, you could re-present the entire action of the original play with minimal modifications. It is difficult to do same in an adaptation from the novel because of the lesser time and space available to the playwright, except for the television, film or movie which do not share the limitations of the stage play. The playwright limits him/herself to an aspect of the novel because it is difficult to compress the incidents that span for several years, presented in about three hundred pages of a novel to an action of about one hour on stage in about sixty pages of a play.

In Emeka Nwabueze's *When The Arrow Rebounds*, an adaptation of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, he highlights the conflict between the Christian religion and the traditional religion and how Ezeulu falls from grace to grass. The subject matter is the same.

The play was premiered as part of the "Eagle on Iroko"; a symposium for Chinua Achebe's 60th birthday at the University of Nigeria Nsukka 12 – 18th February 1990. It presents Ezeulu, just like Chinua Achebe did, as an arrow in the hands of his god. In fighting for Ulu and seeking revenge against his people, little did he know that the arrow could re-bounce and turn the predator into the prey and the pursurer to the pursued (Eni Jones Umukoro, the Blurbs).

Remember that in the adaptation you present the story in dialogue from the beginning to the end. You may choose some remarkable dialogue from the original text.

Self Assessment Exercise Read Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* and Emeka Nwabueze's *When the Arrow Rebounds*. List the incidents in the former that are reflected in the latter and the ones created by the playwright.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The playwright does not create from his/her imagination alone. He/she could also adapt the play of another playwright or a novel by a novelist. In this case, he/she imaginatively and creatively re-structures the story to suit his purpose. He does not present the original work but adds or subtracts from it to make the new one truly his own creation.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt that you could write a play based on another play or a novel or short story. Usually, the playwright indicates that it is an adaptation of a particular work and sometimes, offers an explanation to elucidate his/her perspective.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Read a short story below and adapt it to a play. Make any necessary changes to the story to perform it on stage such as adding information to complete the play.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3: PRACTIAL STEPS IN WRITING THE PLAY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 What makes a play
 - 3.1.1 Type
 - 3.1.2 Length
 - 3.1.3 Dialogue
 - 3.1.4 Stage Direction
 - 3.1.5 Production Effects
 - 3.1.6 Conflict
 - 3.2 Writing a play
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will take practical steps to write a play by drawing an outline. Before we do that, you will be reminded of the unique features of a play.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The only objective we have here is to write an outline for a play.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What Makes a Play

There are basic elements of playwriting which a playwright must be conversant with before writing a play. Some of these elements are peculiar to the dramatic genre because it is realized mainly in performance. However, some of them apply to other genres of literature as well. You need to acquaint yourselves with them to ensure that you apply them appropriately as you write your play.

3.1.1 Type.

You will have to decide what type of play you want to write. Is it a tragedy or a comedy. Let us limit ourselves for now, to these two types. Remember that tragedy presents “an aspect of human suffering that often ends with the death the sufferer” (Maxwell-Mahon 23). However, not all tragedies end in death. The basic issue is that the tragic hero pursues an ideal that leads to a growing irrationality in his behaviour (tragic flaw) which leads him to commit an error of judgment that leads to the catastrophe. It is a serious play. Comedy teaches through amusement and has a happy ending.

3.1.2 Length

A stage play is not expected to last more than three hours. Many plays do not last more than two hours. A play that lasts up to three hours must be action-filled like *The Trials of Dedan Kimathi* by Ngugi Wa Thiong’o. However, here we should aim at writing a playlet that will not last for more than twenty minutes. If a play lasts longer than necessary, the tendency is for the audience to be bored.

3.1.3. Dialogue

There should be a message in your play, the message should be deciphered through the words and actions of your characters as individuals in the play. Remember that your role is to entertain your audience and not to bore them with

slogans and lectures. Your dialogue must therefore be true to life like everyday speech and sound convincing. Do not use your characters to preach a doctrine or advance propaganda.

Make your dialogue as lively as possible. Remember that in real life conversations, speakers interrupt one another with approval and disapproval comments. Sometimes, a person may not allow the speaker to end what he/she is saying before cutting in with counter-arguments. Strive as much as possible to reproduce the life-like disjointed conversation in your play especially at “moments of emotional crisis” (Maxwell Mahon 36).

3.1.4 Stage Directions

This is very important because you cannot represent every detail in dialogue. You therefore use stage direction to “fill-in the gaps”. It is in stage direction that you can give added information on the appearance, dressing, movement and positioning of the actors and actresses (on stage) as the play progresses. You could also include more information on the setting and the general environment of the play through the stage direction. This means that you must be acquainted with the stage geography and see your characters as actors on stage. This enables you to present only possible and plausible actions on stage.

3.1.5 Production Effects

You should be conversant with lighting and sound effects in the theatre. There are many types of stage but let us limit ourselves to the picture-frame stage called the proscenium stage. The use of light and sound effects are also included in the stage direction.

3.1.6 Conflict

You must create an element of opposition, in which forces come against one another.

3.2. Writing the play

We will now write our playlet of about 3-8 pages. Draw an outline of the playlet based on either of the following:

- Turn a historical event into a dramatic script by identifying one historical event. Study the characters involved in this event and their motivations. Learn all you can about the period it took place in and then write a play to explore this event.

OR

- Develop a personal experience into an original play. In it, explore a philosophical idea like why is there evil in the world or why do good people suffer.

You are free to use a serious (tragedy) or humorous (comedy) tone, but the play must come out of your own experience or research.

I have decided to write a tragedy based on an imaginative experience.

1. Outline

- Man returns from a foreign country
- He joins politics and decides to vie for a senatorial seat in an election
- He is honest and desires to make a change
- Pursues his objective
- Refuses to give up despite attack on him/his family
- Betrayed by his party members
- Option A4
- Slumps and has stroke

2. His opposition: Politics

- Another contestant from another party and who has been a minister before
- Semi-literate dubious man
- Has thugs, kills and maims at will
- Shares money to people and threatens to destroy the town if he is not voted for.
- Voted in, out of fear by the people
- Characters
- Man, his political associates his wife his opponent(s)

Have you completed your own outline? If you have, congratulations but if you have not, do so immediately.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Drama is a unique genre of literature because it is not only realized in performance but also presented in dialogue. As a playwright, you should have a stage in mind before you can write a good play.

This stage geography will help you to present plausible interaction of characters engaged in plausible actions. This means that literally, you should block the play as you write because part of the blocking during the staging of a play is presented in the stage direction. The playwright indicates the entrances, exits and other major actions of the characters in the stage direction.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have tried to refresh our memory on the basic steps in playwriting. We have also presented an outline for the play we will write in the next unit.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Present the outline of your play, list your characters and summarize the plot.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Maxwell-Mahon, W.D. (2005) *Van Schaik's Guide to Creative Writing*. Pretoria:
J.L. Van Schaik.

UNIT 4: THE PLAYLET

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Playlet
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 Reference/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will try to put what we have learnt about playwriting into practice. We cannot present a full-length play here so we will write a playlet.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The only objective we have here is to write a playlet.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Playlet

In the last unit, I presented an outline for a play but will try to compress it into a playlet. The title is Option A4.

OPTION A4: A Playlet

Dramatis Personae

Igwebuike – An honest politician, who returns to his state with an intention to help his people.

Uchechi – His wife

Egobuike – Another corrupt politician

Ubanese

Dike

Agagwuncha

Mezue

Bogudu - The I.N.E.C. official

} other politicians

Other men and women who appear on the Election Day to cast their votes.

Part I

(In a well-furnished sitting room.)

Igwebuike: We have made our final arrangements. The campaign is progressing as planned. Our major opposition is Chief Egobuike but I don't regard him as a force to reckon with

Uchechi. Why?

Igwebuike: Considering his antecedents, he is a tout, a semi-illiterate and a scoundrel. Who will vote for such a person to rule a state that has produced enlightened people in all spheres of life. What can he offer the people except to loot the treasury like his predecessors.

Uchechi: You are wrong. Our society is not enlightened. The political awareness is very low.

Igwebuike: Not as low as you think. I have been attending political meetings, rallies and other gatherings. The consensus is that the people have refused to be fooled.

Uchechi: I have a contrary view. Your political associates are telling you what you want to hear. Open your eyes and see that they are suckers... suckers... suckers...

Igwebuike: Why are you so pessimistic?

Uchechi: I am not pessimistic but practical. Can't you see that I have stopped attending your meetings? Darling, please listen to me. These so called political associates of yours are here to milk you dry. Politics here is not for honest people. It is not yet late. Give up the struggle or you will be consumed by the level of disappointment you will get.

These people are not interested in building the state but in plundering the state. They do not need you because they do not want a builder but a destroyer.

Igwebuike: I don't share your views. I interact with them. The people are disenchanted and are clamouring for a change.

Uchechi: On the contrary, the people have been impoverished so much that they are interested in their daily bread. They are interested in putting food on their tables today. So what do they do? They rush to anyone who dangles a morsel of food before them.

Igwebuike: Things have changed

Uchechi: Things will never change... at least not in our generation. It is only in this country that people applaud what ordinarily should be taken for granted. They pay tax, yet there are no roads, pipe- borne water

is history. The rich have boreholes and the meagre resources of the poor are used to buy water from the rich. I say buy...buy water, meanwhile we have streams...good streams that could provide clean water for all. Look around you, whenever there is electricity (light) people jubilate...unbelievable. If one kilometre of road is tarred, people jubilate. The list is endless.

Igwebuike: Darling, this is why I have decided to make a change. All I need is your support and the support of every citizen of the state. I hope to...there is a knock, (Uchechi opens the door for Ubanese and leaves). You're welcome my friend. Sit down. (Uchechi returns with drinks, places them on the table and leaves).

Ubanese: Chief, we have finalized all the arrangements. We need about One hundred Million Naira for the final grossroot mobilization.

Igwebuike: One hundred million naira? (Uchechi re-enters)

Uchechi: I...I..., please pardon my intrusion, what did you say? Ten Million Naira for grassroots mobilization. Darling, you see ...if you have One Hundred Million Naira, choose one hundred families in this state and give each one million and your job is done. Please leave these people.

Ubanese: Madam, politics is money and money is politics. You spend the money, win the election and recoup what you spent one million times. Politics is business. Politics is investment, real investment. Real investment madam

Uchechi: We are here to change the lives of the people and not to...

Ubanese: Exactly. Change their lives. The money I am demanding is for the people. Give them sufficient money and you get sufficient votes.

Uchechi: You don't need to buy vote. Canvass for votes. Convince the people by presenting a credible, workable and people-oriented manifesto and programme. You will get their votes.

Ubanese: Not in this place. Chief Egobuike is having an upperhand. He has been distributing money, food, clothes and has given some people motorbikes. The hundred million I am asking for is just for us to start.

Igwebuike: No my friend, the truth is that I don't have that kind of money. And even if I have, I will prefer to initiate programmes that would empower the people. Anyway, we will discuss further in the evening. We scheduled to meet in the evening, didn't we? (exit Uchechi).

Ubanese: Yes, yes we did but I thought that I could get some fund for the mobilization of Ward 2 so that in the evening I would present my report.

Igwebuike: It's alright but there is no fund here, now. We meet in the evening.

Ubanese: (Disappointed) if you say so. But I thought...

Igwebuike: Don't worry. We will take care of everything in the evening.

Ubanese: Chief, there is no time. Election is next week. Anyway, you see in the evening. Exit.

Light fades

Part Two

(At the Party House)

Mezue: Chief, as I was saying, your Oyibo ways are too much. The sheep says that if the soldier ants carry a dance to his house, if he does not know how to dance, he will start jumping. You don't seem to know how to dance the dance of politics in this place but you can at least jump. Chief jump, jump, and jump. The important thing is result. Chief... result. We need result. We need to win this election you must spend money. Bring out a few dollars, we change it and the money will be so much that one's jaw would break while counting it.

Agagwuncha: Chief he is right. We need victory and we have to work for it. We need money but the way you're going about it... ah...ah I don't understand. Bring money, you provide peanuts. Hire thugs, no. Do this, no. do that no. Let me ask you, do we see a baby's first tooth with empty hands?

Igwebuike: Let me explain...

Agagwunchi: Sorry Chief that I am cutting in. Politics in Obodo Oyibo is different from politics here. You are in our own Rome now, please behave like Romans to ensure victory at the polls.

Mezue: I am your Campaign Manager and I have nothing to show for it. My name is Mezue. Mezuelum Kanm and Mezuelugi. Meet my demands and I will meet yours by delivering the state to you.

Igwebuike: I thought that we are in it together. It is not my victory but our victory. Alone, I cannot do anything but together we will triumph.

Ubanese: A person's name looks for him. Igwebuike – unity is strength. You are right. But you are the flag bearer. It is our victory but it is you that the electorate knows and when you win, you only admit the people you like to the State House. You lead and we follow. Provide the funds and we deliver the state to you.

Igwebuike: Gentlemen, you talk as if I have not provided funds for the campaigns. No doubt, you need money...for logistics and not for sharing. You will recall that I allocated sufficient funds for the youth wing, the women's wings and foot the bills for the campaigns transportation, and other expenditures you presented. I don't understand this money-sharing aspect. Do we call people together and start.

Ubanese: Leave that to us. We know how to do it. We did not join politics today. Provide the fund and we deliver the state to you.

Mezue: Gbam.

Agagwuncha: Chief, you can see that we are not paupers. We are not begging for money to share among ourselves. Gboo, Ibe anyi (they nod their

heads in support). We need this money to give to voters. To strategize, if others are carrying five ballot boxes we will carry twenty. If they are employing one hundred agents we employ one thousand. If others are...(an explosion is heard outside, some youths storm the centre. There is commotion outside the place).

Light fades

Part Three

(At home)

Chief Igwebuike has bandages on his head and shoulder. He walks with the aid of a working stick)

Uchechi: Darling, please leave these people and lets go back to U.S.

Igwebuike: He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day. We need people to sanitize the system. If we all run away who will be here to improve the lives of these people, to liberate the oppressed, to speak for the voiceless, to...

Uchechi: Enough of these slogans. We point to the ruins of what used to be the valiant's house from the house of a coward. Your life and our lives are more important to us. Your car has been destroyed and if not for God's grace, this house have been burnt down. They may come back to complete their assignment

Igwebuike: These are the prices we have to pay for the well being of the people

Uchechi: Which people

Igwebuike: Our people. The suffering, the oppressed and the impoverished people of this state.

Uchechi: The people you are fighting for are not interested in you. You have refused to share money like your opponents.

Igwebuike: And I will never share any money

Uchechi: And you hope to win an election

Igwebuike: Yes. My constituency have seen a little of what I would do. There is now a borehole in every village square in this town. I have provided transformers at strategic places to improve electricity. I have graded virtually all the roads and tarred some in my community. If as an individual I am able to impact on the lives of the people this way...

Uchechi: That is the problem. As long as, as individuals, they don't get money from you forget it. I move around with the women's wings. I feel their pulse. They are not happy with you.

Igwebuike: You are wrong. Don't you see the tumultuous crowd at our rallies?

Uchechi: The same crowd appear at other rallies. Listen to the voice of reason. Listen to your family. Listen to your mother. Remember your friends advice (light moves to another part of the room where Igwebuike and his friend Eziokwu are discussing).

Eziokwu: You are very obstinate. A hen in a new environment stands on one leg but you are not just on your two legs but you are fluttering all over the place. Your values are different from the values of the people you are dealing with. What matters here is money. Money speaks, money determines, money controls.

Igwebuike: I am surprised...

Eziokwu: (cuts in) When you told me about your intention, I tried to dissuade you but you refused. I have followed the campaigns, the meetings and the so called strategies closely. My verdict is that you are dealing with insensitive and heartless rogues. They kill with the gods and organize funerals with humans. Be careful. They will ruin you. It is not yet late, you can step down or step aside before the system destroys you.

Igwebuike: My friend...please allow me to conclude you are not a politician, the way we know it here. You have a good profession, and business. Go back to the States if you want to or settle here. Establish here. Join politics if you want to but you have to study the environment and decide whether to plunge head long or participate from the periphery. These men you are dealing with are mean. They will squander your money and still vote for the highest bidder and not for the most qualified.

Igwebuike: What of party loyalty.

Eziokwu: (laughs) You exhibit your ignorance. Party loyalty does not manifest on empty pocket. Their hands must be full for them to be loyal. How

many of them are funding the party...only you. Their interest is their gains and the higher the gains the greater their loyalty.

Igwebuike: Remember that the election will not be through secret ballot but the Option A4.

Eziokwu: That is the problem but will open your eyes to reality. As long as you continue with this stance, your party members will stand behind those they collected money from. Your opponents are not as clean as you are. Before they give anyone any substantial amount of money, they will take the person to a shrine to swear that the person must vote for them, so, where does that leave you?

Igwebuike: No, no... I don't believe that these people will do...

Eziokwu: Lets wait and see. I am trying to show you the cow but you prefer to look for its footprints. You are my friend and brother. I have done my duty. Here is my resignation letter from the party.

Igwebuike: No I can't accept it. (Eziokwu tears it and leaves)

Uchechi: He was right. Look at you, battered, shattered and heading to bankruptcy. Check your bank balance, almost in red. I hope that you will not have a heart attack when you see the result of the election.

Light fades.

Part Four

(At the polling booth. The crowd has gathered and people are discussing in smaller groups. The noise is like what obtains in a market. The INEC officials and other political agents, Bogudu are trying to maintain order).

Bogudu: Please listen. The campaigns ended yesterday. Anybody who campaigns here will be arrested. This is a new electoral process. As you can see, we do not have ballot boxes. You know the candidates and their parties. If any of the candidates are in this constituency, she/he will stand and his supporters, no, those who want to vote for him will stand behind him. Where the candidate is not available, one of his/her supporters will stand in front with his/her poster and those who want to vote for him/her will stand behind the supporter. I hope that this is clear (there is noise, murmuring, some affirmations, some consternations, etc)

Man: After standing behind what happens

Bogudu: Yes, I was coming to that

Another woman: Come quickly, I am on my way to the farm

Bogudu: We will count the number of people in each line. The counting will be loud enough for everybody to hear. We will record the number. Each agent will record the number, and in the end, we will announce the result in this ward. It means that immediately after the election you will know who wins in your ward. It is open. No mago mago, no wuru wuru.

A woman: Na so. There must be wuru wuru. Politicians. Tufiakwa.

Bogudu: (calls out each party and their representatives): PPA – stand here. AAP – stand here. PAD – stand there DDP – stand there. Yes they are complete. Face the people and lift your posters. (Addresses the crowd) we will give you five minutes to identify the candidate or party of your choice. (Some people move around. Others are in clusters discussing or chatting). Okay...okay. Now stand behind your candidate (the crowd obeys and at the end of the exercise, only Uchechi stands behind her husband. Igwebuikwe did not turn back but as the counting begins, Bogudu starts with him). One! Two...record...PPA – two votes. He looks back and gazes for a while and slumps. (There is commotion. People run to carry him).

Light fades.

Part Five

(At home)

Eziokwu: Here are the tickets. I have booked the flight. Your son Uche has made arrangements for the hospital. You will be able to leave by 3pm tomorrow. I hope that you are set. The ambulance that will convey him to the airport is ready.

Uchechi: Thank you very much. But I have my misgivings. I don't think that he will survive this attack. (Sobs) I warned him...we warned him.

Eziokwu: It's alright. This is not the time for blame but for action. Let's see what we can do to save his life.

Uchechi: But he is still in coma. Will they allow him on board.

Eziokwu: That has been taken care of. You are going with a chartered flight and a Medical Doctor will travel with you

Uchechi: God bless you

Black out

4.0 CONCLUSION

In the written play, we try to create a plot, characters, a conflict that builds up the play to a climax and then a resolution.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have tried to write a playlet.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Read the playlet carefully:

- who is the protagonist
- identify the conflict
- what is Igwebuiké's tragic flaw
- identify the flashback.
- Then write your own playlet.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Read as many plays as you can, to learn from renowned playwrights.

UNIT 5: REVISION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Theme
 - 3.2 Plot
 - 3.3 Character
 - 3.4 Language
 - 3.5 Setting
 - 3.6 Length
 - 3.7 Other devices
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will revise the plays each of you has written. As you read through this unit, keep your play by your side and ensure that you apply each segment of this unit to your play. This will enable you assess what you have written.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Outline the plot of your play
- List your characters
- Match language to your characters
- Identify your setting through dialogue, characters or landmarks

- Discuss other dramatic devices which you have utilized.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Theme

What is the idea you have explored? Is it obvious? Why did you decide to explore this idea? Have you succeeded in sending a message?

3.2. Plot

Go back to your play. How is the plot? Does it run chronologically and causally from beginning to the end? Are there interruptions? If yes, what type of interruption? Did you start the story from the end, from the middle or do you have flash backs? Are there any obstacles which your hero is trying to surmount? Did he eventually succeed? How? Can you identify the beginning, the middle and the end? Do you have sub-plots? Does your story build up to a climax? How have you been able to achieve your resolution? Is there a philosophical question that you are asking? Have you written a tragedy or a comedy? Did you divide your play into acts, scenes, movements or parts? Do you have a reason for your choice?

3.3. Characters

List your characters. Have you created life-like characters? Have you given your protagonist, hero or heroine strong tasks and actions? Have you created a visual that will embody your character's actions? Have you created an obstacle that will keep this character from getting what she/he wants? How much is at stake for this character? Can you change the obstacle so that she/he will have greater force to contend with? Can you group your characters into major and minor ones? Are their actions properly motivated and logical? Are these actions possible and plausible? Did you use language to delineate characters? If yes, are you consistent?

3.4 Language

Is your language accessible or obscure? Is your dialogue life-like, like everyday conversation? Pay attention to your grammar, syntax, subject-verb agreement, tenses, and spellings. Correct all grammatical errors. Have you given information on the characters and action through your dialogue and stage direction? Cut lengthy dialogues to avoid drabness. Are your dialogues short and lively to enable you inject action in the play? Have you used your characters to preach or presented propaganda through their dialogue?

3.5 Setting

Where is your play set – the geographical and the historical settings? How can your audience identify this? Do the names of characters reflect their background? Are there interjections of a local language or dialect? Are there songs, proverbs, transliterations that indicate the setting? Are there known landmarks like names of towns or references to historical or contemporary events?

3.6 Length

In the earliest form of drama in Greece, “the time for performing a play corresponds to the time during which the events of the play would occur in real life” (Maxwell-Mahon 27). But in contemporary times, a one-act play lasts for about thirty minutes while a full length play is not expected to last for more than two to three hours. Did you bear this in mind while writing? How long do you think that it will take to present your play on stage? If it is too long, cut, if it is too short, expand.

3.7 Other Dramatic Devices

What are the other dramatic devices you have used in your play? Do you have flashbacks, play within the play, monologue, etc.

Self Assessment Exercise List the dramatic elements and devices you identified in your playlet.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Revision is a very important aspect of playwriting, you must pay serious attention to the revision of your work. After your first draft and revision, give your play to a knowledgeable person to help you read it. If you have an opportunity, present it on stage before the final revision.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have tried to lead you through some important devices aspect of playwriting to consider in the revision of your play. We hope that you have done that honestly because you will submit it as your T.M.A for this course.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Just ensure that you revise your playlet very well and submit.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Maxwell-Mahon, W. D.(2005) *Van Schaik's Guide to Creative Writing*. Pretoria:
J. L. Van Schaik.

MODULE 3 POETRY

UNIT 1: THE FIRST STEPS

UNIT 2: THE VOICE

UNIT 3: STRUCTURE

UNIT 4: POETIC LANGUAGE

UNIT 5: THE POEM

UNIT 1: THE FIRST STEPS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Writing Habit
 - 3.2 Notebook
 - 3.2.1 Observations
 - 3.2.2 Recording events
 - 3.2.3 Record of Readings
 - 3.3 Drafting
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will introduce you to practical steps in the process of writing a poem. We will review our writing habit, see the importance of a writer's notebook to a writer, especially the poet. We have learnt so far that poetry writing is spontaneous. It is possible for a poet to start and write a poem in a very short time

though she/he is expected to revise the poem later. In this unit, we will look at poetic writing from another perspective. Here, we will try to write a poem through a gradual process.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Develop your own writing habit
- Get your own notebook
- Record your observations
- Record events
- Record part of what you have read
- Record news items
- Choose a method

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Writing Habit

We have talked a lot about inspirations, ideas, themes which could come to the writer or emanate from his/her imagination and so on. Do not make the mistake of believing that you will have to fold your hands and wait for inspiration. Some people erroneously fear that if they write in a formal setting/environment or at routine times, there would be no inspiration or that they may not write well. You need to understand that even if you are inspired at public places or in what one may regard as odd places, you still need some skills and discipline to make it work. You recall the example we have with Akachi Ezeigbo's "Inspiration Bug". She got the inspiration but was able to get an excellent story from it. She is able to do that because she has learnt the skills, been practicing it and has indeed made writing a habit. She has written many novels and collections of short stories because she has over the years developed a good writing habit. According to

Aristotle, “Excellence is not an act, but a habit” (18); create time for writing, do not wait for inspiration, instead

Court inspiration; make yourself
Available. Inspiration comes most often
Through the habit of work, unexpectedly,
In form of sudden ideas, ways and means,
Wonderful words and phrases, and sometimes
Complete breakthroughs (Anderson 17).

The implication here is that if you want to succeed as a writer, you must develop a writer’s habit; once you start writing, learn to practice regularly. One of the ways of developing a writing habit is to keep a notebook. So get a notebook now.

3.2 Writer’s Notebook

A notebook is an essential companion for any writer. We noted earlier that your own life, what you see, experience, think, feel, other people’s experiences are sources of inspiration for the writer. If these experiences are not recorded, the tendency is that they will be obliterated from our memory. In your life, there are incidents you can recollect vividly but there are some you may have forgotten. To illustrate this point, ask yourself, how many of your classmates in the primary and secondary schools you still remember their names. As we grow older, events grow dimmer in our memories. This is why you need a notebook. Sometimes too, there could be an inspiration but if it is not recorded, it fades and you may not be able to recollect it again.

This notebook should contain whatever will be helpful to you or what ‘fuels’ your writing. The notebook should be small so that you can carry it around always. You may choose to keep another notebook, a bigger one, at home or office for further and more reflective writing. You will choose how to organize your notebook. You

may choose to create sections, for example, a section for recording your personal thoughts and feelings and another section for recording events ‘outside’ your personal feelings or imagination. On the other hand, you may wish to record spontaneously whatever comes to your mind or whatever you encounter; either way, the notebook is a useful companion for a writer.

3.2.1 Observations

Just like the playwright, the poet is keenly interested in the environment. As you go about in your daily activities, at school, in your office, everywhere, jot down anything that strikes you as interesting. These could be ideas, aspects of conversations, expressions and so on. Once you train your mind to be alert to your environment through constant practice, you will marvel at the success you will achieve in developing your writer’s habit. If you capture your impressions immediately and not later, they will be fresh and before you realize it, you find yourself developing the impression.

Self Assessment Exercise: (1) As you are walking along the street or relaxing in front of your house at night, focus your attention on the dark night, jot your impression on your notebook. You could use torchlight to see your recordings.

- (2) Try to develop your impression into four or more short phrases or sentences when you get to a more illuminated place.
- (3) Compare your impression with the ones below which are excerpts from poems on night.

Your hand is heavy, night upon my brow,
I bear no heart mercuric like the clouds,
Exacerbation from your subtle plough

Hide me now when night children haunt the earth
I must hear none. These misted calls will yet
Undo me, naked, unbidden, at nights muted birth
(Soyinka: "Night" 46)

When nights deepen
The touts tumble in eager
The wrecks limp in excited
Diplomatic cars drive in anxious
Each carts away a bunch...

The ocean of night
Flows across the earth
Where they prowl streets for power
A night alive with tremors of panthers
(Ezenwa-Ohaeto "Night of Funerals" 31 – 32)

- c. Night, companion and master
night, dictator and director
night has the pages of memory
keep the dreams in your mind
let darkness cloak your brow
fondle your thoughts and deeds
walk with the dusk into the night
(Ezenwa-Ohaeto "The Mouth of the Night" p. 25)

- d. I live in the dark quarters of the world
without light, without life,
they are slave quarters

worlds of misery. Dark quarters
where will is watered down
and men have been confused
with things
(Agostinho Neto “Night” 50)

Sleep well, my love, sleep well;
The harbour lights glaze over restless docks
Police cars cockroach through the tunnel streets;
From shanties creaking iron-sheets
Violence like a bug infested rag is tossed
And fear is imminent as sound in the hand-swing bell;

The long day’s anger pants from sand and rocks;
But for this breathing night at least;
My land, my love, sleep well
(Dennis Brutus “Nightsong: City” p. 24)

You can see that the dark night connotes different things for the poets above and their impressions are recorded. Get the anthologies as listed in 7.0 below and read the poems in full.

In your exercise above try to make use of similes and metaphors in a comparison that can enhance your writing as you see night in a new way apart from being the period for sleep and of rest. Try to see likeness in unlike things.

3.2.2 Recording Events

Use your notebook to record events around you. What is your reaction to people who are engaged in a heated argument or disagreement? How do you react to

celebrations, mishaps, violence, relationships and other events. Remember that you can never transfer these events the way they occur in reality into your notebook. You can only paraphrase but it is better to jot, in addition, your reaction or impression. However, remember that you are to jot **only** those things you feel would be useful to you in your writing career. You may not use them immediately, so, your notebook becomes a kind of bank or storehouse of/for materials for your poem sooner or later. If however a poem flows from a particular event, do not hesitate to put it down in full as it flows. However, you can paraphrase if you lack the time and space to record it fully but try to do that as soon as possible.

Self Assessment Exercise

Go to any major bus stop or garage and listen to the sing-song calls by the touts or conductors and the hustle and bustle of the commuters. Record your impression in your notebook, to be used in a poem “Bus-Stop” “Motor Park” or “Motor Garage”.

3.2.3. Record of Readings

If you want to be a successful writer you must be a keen reader. Reading exposes you to the works of others, widens your scope, enriches your vocabulary and expands your horizon on styles and techniques in your chosen field. Apart from reading poems, you should read the experiences of poets, how they get their inspiration and create desired effects in their poems.

In reading the poems, you draw inspiration and learn from the masterpieces. You can also learn from the badly written ones. How, you may ask? You review the flawed poems, detect the faults and try to avoid such pitfalls in your own poem.

Self Assessment Exercise

- (1) Read the poem below. It is an excerpt from a poem written by one of my students at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Continuing Education Programme (CEP) Lagos Outreach. It is a good poem but try to detect the flaws in it.
- (2) Record the faults in your notebook.
- (3) Rewrite the poem by taking care of the flaws.

My Name

I have a great treasure to keep,
It is indeed my name,
Its worth exceed that of gold
And a value greater than diamond

What treasure must I protect?
It is indeed my name,
A good name is an unfading glory,
And an honour to brag of.....

- Ojiri, Blessing Ijeoma (300 Level).

3.3. Drafting

You start your poem with a draft, and may have several drafts before you get your final poem. This means that writing a poem is not necessarily a single action but a continuous process. Once you get your first draft, each subsequent draft is a revision of the preceding one. You could choose any of the jottings in your notebook and write your first draft. Do not bother about the technique, the sequence or grammar but write what comes to your mind. After that, revise it as

many times as possible. As you are revising, you will be arranging, rearranging and paying attention to grammatical structure.

As a student writer, you need to make an effort to write. Do not wait for inspiration, start a poem now based on your observations and jottings. At this stage, don't worry about the definition of a poem, do not worry about rhyme, images or figures of speech. Just sit down, choose a subject from your notebook and write for about 10 – 15 minutes without pausing. The subject you choose must engage you enough for you to write on it. It must be interesting for you to continue the writing. Don't just imagine them, but put them down on paper. According to W. N. Herbert "Thinking on paper is the beginning of drafting, and it's always easier to tidy up a messy set of notes than to touch a neat draft" (71). The implication here is that if you have a "neat draft" you will not need to revise anything.

In case you are recording your draft in the computer, save every stage of the draft. You can do that by printing each draft. You may have to refer to them before the final copy.

Just like the dramatist, the poet considers his/her audience. Though the poem is an expression of your inner feeling, you must keep your audience in mind. Your poem reaches its perfection stage with a good revision of your drafts. When you conclude, read the poem aloud to yourself and later to a close friend. These will help immensely as you get a final draft that is thematically relevant and artistically satisfying.

Self Assessment Exercise

Below are two poems written by students during a writers workshop organised by The Women Writers of Nigeria (WRITER). These poems were written spontaneously by the participants so we regard them as first drafts.

POEM

Doors, Doors, Doors

There are different types of doors,

Doors of success, doors of failure

Doors of life, doors of death

Doors of peace, doors of chaos

Doors of joy, doors of sadness,

Doors of laughter, doors of cries

Doors of heaven, doors of hell

I keep praying to God Almighty, to open the door of success love, life, peace, joy, laughter and heaven unto me but I hope and pray that I don't even smell the key to the door of failure, death chaos, sadness, cries, and least of all hell.

-Adesemoye Abiola, 11 yrs, International School, UNILAG, SS 1

Earth

The Earth, the Earth, the Earth

A very funny place to stay

A very big and round place

Filled with peace love and harmony

A place with rich and poor

A place with innocent and guilty

A place with the fine and the ugly

A place where people sin and pray
A place with peace and love. There is no place like it
The Earth

-Ziandi Funmilola, Queen's College 11 years, JSS 2

1. Revise one of the poems
2. Read the first draft
3. revise it again
4. read it in the class and listen to comments by your classmates
5. incorporate their suggestions which you feel are necessary
6. produce the final draft
7. compare it with the original draft

4.0 CONCLUSION

Writing a poem is not as easy as pouring your overflow of powerful emotions on paper. It involves many processes. The processes include recording your observations in your notebook and using them to write your first draft. It is not compulsory that you will use the jottings in your notebook for all the poems you write. You might write impulsively but in any case it needs to be recorded in a draft. You will have as many drafts as possible as you revise each draft. If you revise your drafts painstakingly, the result will be an entertaining poem.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have introduced you to the first steps in poetry writing. If you adhered to the steps and did the self assessment exercises, you would be surprised that you will have at least a poem before you now. If you do, Congratulations. However, it is not yet a masterpiece. In the next unit, we will consider some of the techniques that would make it a masterpiece.

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UNIT 2: THE VOICE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Title
 - 3.2 Voice
 - 3.3 Persona
 - 3.4 Narrative
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

You may have written a poem by now though without attention to the fundamentals of poetry writing. In this unit, you will be introduced to the voice of the poet. We have all along been discussing the poet's imagination, emotion and expression. In this unit, we are going to look at the concrete expression – how the poet presents his or her poem. In this regard, we will start with the title. It is deliberate as you will see as we go on.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Choose the title of your poem
- Present your poem from a particular perspective
- Choose a persona for your poem

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. The Title

I have decided to start our main discussion in this unit with the title. You will recall that we have produced a draft poem in the last unit. Our draft is still untitled. You were asked to just continue writing.

The title is very important because the reader sees your title before reading your poem. Your title, to a large extent attracts the reader to your poem. You should therefore be careful in choosing your title. Remember that your title reflects the subject of your poem. We have two types of title – descriptive and evocative.

The descriptive title is usually direct and summarizes the poem. Most titles are descriptive. The evocative title is more enticing but does not really reflect the subject. The descriptive title, has an air of authority that is like a definition, J. P. Clark’s “Night Rain” is a descriptive title which talks about rain on a particular night and in a particular place.

Sometimes, it is difficult to draw a line between the two as a title could be evocative and descriptive. “Night Rain” above is also evocative, it raises an unresolved question. What is special about night rain? Is it on a particular night or does it refer to all the rains that fall at night? Does it reflect night rain in Maiduguri, Jos, Awka or Yenagoa?

This categorization is not very important for now. In your draft, choose a title that to a large extent reflects the subject of your poem. Let your title be direct and not obscure. List about five possible titles and, like in every outline, arrange and rearrange with the most viable on top of your table of preferences. Eliminate the rest but like your drafts, do not discard them completely. Ensure that the one you have chosen will arrest your readers’ attention and make your work memorable.

Self Assessment Exercise Find below a list of titles. Choose one of them and write a draft that will reflect that title.

- Mother
- Friends
- Colours
- Love
- Friendship
- My dream

3.2. The Voice

What is voice in poetry? Everyone of us has a unique way of speaking. The inflexion of tone, the accent and how we reflect other nuances of the particular language we speak is what I refer to here as the voice. Just as we have a unique way of speaking, we also have a unique way of writing.

However, this does not mean that all the poems we write must be presented in a particular style or pattern. Some scholars talk of public and private poets. In my own understanding the public poets treat public issues that touch generality of populace. They highlight injustice in the society and therefore choose to speak for the poor people. They therefore become the voice for the voiceless, using their poems to speak out against the ills in the society.

On the other hand, the private poet is content with expressing the beauty and tranquility around him/her or about other issues. They present personal or private issues or emotion and perspectives. The public poet writes in voices that are strong and critical while voices of the private poet are passive, soothing and placid.

The voice here could be likened to tone in poetry but I deliberately decided to use voice, you choose your own voice. If you read the poems on “Night” you will notice that all the poets use night as a metaphor to criticize by highlighting the ills in that society. The poet’s voice is to a large extent influenced by his/her background, education, upbringing and other mannerisms she/he has acquired as she/he was growing up.

Self Assessment Exercise:

Read the two poems below and indicate the public and private voices.

And so it came to pass...

And so it came to pass
Many seasons after the death of one Saviour
That a new crop of saviours, armed with party programmes
Came cascading down our rivers of hope;
Poised for the poisoning of our Atlantic reservoir
They sought out the foxes in the family
To whom they gave their thirty pieces of silver
In local and foreign exchange
For the secrets of the passage –
Way into the castle of our skins...

Men we had taken for fearless warriors
As protectors of our secret recipes
Suddenly turned crabs, carapace and all
Shedding shame like water from duck-backs,
Seeing sideways beyond the good of all
To the comfort of the selves;

And with their divination bags of tricks
Slung over arrogant shoulders
They crawl over our dreams
Under the cover of moonless nights
Sidestepping traps, destroying hope
They turn our green august of rains,
Of showers with which to persuade crops
Towards harvest-circles
Around whose fire we would have exchanged
Happy tales of toil
Into an orgy of furious flames
And so it came to pass
That our saviours gave us a gift of tragedy
For which we are too dumb-struck to find a melody.

-Funso Aiyejina

The Dry Season

The year is withering; the wind
Blows down the leaves;
Men stand under eaves
And overhear the secrets
Of the cold dry wind,
Of the half-bare trees.

The grasses are tall and tinted,
Straw-gold hues of dryness,
And the contradicting awryness,
Of the dusty roads a –scatter
With the pools of colourful leaves,

With ghosts of the dreaming year.

And soon, soon the fires,
The fires will begin to burn,
The hawk will flutter and turn
On its wings and swoop for the mouse,
The dogs will run for the hare,
The hare for its little life.

-Kwesi Brew

3.3. Persona

We know that poetry is mainly about self expression. However, that does not mean that the pronoun 'I' which we find in some poems refer to the poet. In some cases the poet gives a particular voice to a character in the poem. That character is called the persona. The poet masks him/herself with that persona and speaks through the persona.

Speaking through a persona is usually very effective as the persona could be a male, while the poet is a female. The important factor here is that you must ensure that the experiences are related appropriately. The gender or the age of the poet could be different from that of the persona but the poet in the poem masks him/herself by assuming the personality of the character whose experiences are being presented.

The persona can be a historical figure, a character from somebody else's fiction, an object or a phenomenon. In trying to speak through other voices, the poet gains more insights into the nature of that group. A very good example of the use of persona is found in Wole Soyinka's "Abiku".

In fact Wole Soyinka uses persona a lot as many of his poems are presented in the 1st person pronoun “I”. Read all his poems in the Anthology edited by Senanu and Vincent and identify the persona in each poem.

3.4. Narrative

Some poems like other genres of literature tell a story. The only difference here is that the story is told in verse. However, there are narrative poems like the epics that are not presented strictly in verse.

Apart from epic, many poets use verse to tell stories that have recognizable plot lines and are close to reality. Poets have written poems about nature, relationships and other issues in verse. Here is an example

Moon in the Bucket

Look!

Look out there

In the bucket

The rusty bucket

With water unclean

Look!

A luminous plate is floating –

The moon, dancing to the gentle night wind

Look! All you shout across the wall

With a million hates. Look at the dancing moon

It is peace unsoiled by the murk

And dirt of this bucket war.

- Gabriel Imomotime Okara

Self Assessment Exercise: Think of an **unusual** incident that happened to you recently or something odd you have witnessed or heard reported in the news. You will have many of them in your notebook. Choose one of them

- Write about the incident for about 10 – 15 minutes without pausing or stopping
- Write it in a narrative form using the 3rd person pronoun. Concentrate on the details filling in from your imagination when necessary
- Prepare your draft for revisions

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this last exercise, I have asked you to move away from reality. This is to show that you can write about both imagined and unrealistic incidents. For centuries, poets have written about issues of this world and about those in heaven and hell. So in the exercise above, try to move beyond the ordinary, from your immediate surrounding and feelings to explore other issues.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have been introduced to voice in poetry. You need to choose your own voice and mode of presentation. You will decide to present your poem through a persona, using your own voice or through a third person.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Write a draft on “Abiku” “Ogbanje” or “An Angel”

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Senanu, K. E. & Vincent (ed) (2003). A Selection of African Poetry. New Edition. Harlow Essex. Longman

UNIT 3: STRUCTURE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Form
 - 3.2 Metre
 - 3.3 Rhyme
 - 3.4 Stanza
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last two units, we have tried to write a story but did not bother about how to arrange it in a particular order. In this unit we will try to arrange that story to give it a particular shape. This arrangement is called the structure. The structure of a poem helps to a large extent in the determination of the type of it is.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Construct the form of your poem
- Present your story in a particular sequence
- Divide your story into stanzas
- Present it in a rhyming pattern

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Form

Form is the pattern and structure of the poem. It also refers to style, the devices and techniques used by the writer. Generally, in literature we talk of content and form. Content is the theme and subject matter while form is how the theme is expressed in the work. In this case, form encapsulates all the stylistic elements that the writer utilizes in explicating his/her theme. Conventionally, the novelist presents his/her work in chapters, the playwrights in acts and scenes and the poet in lines and stanzas. The poet utilizes words to produce rhythm which is the hallmark of poetry.

In prose and drama, words are arranged continuously from the left margin to the right margin of the page. But in poetry it is not like that. The poem is arranged in lines that are usually very short except in narrative poems. Unlike the novelists and the playwright, the poet is conscious of producing a kind of musicality which we call rhythm. She/he arranges the words in a special way to achieve that effect. In doing this, the poem assumes a particular shape. Each poet presents his/her poem in a form suits his/her purpose or that would best convey his/her message and emotion to the audience.

Each poem is significant and peculiar in its own way, so, we do not expect a poet to present all his poems in a particular structure. Here are three short poems from a collection of poems by Abdul Yesufu.

1.

You are...

Your beauty weaves a spell
That makes me dream of sleeping and dreaming

Your eyes are morning mimosa

On the fields of my initiation

The gems sheltered behind your nectars are cassava pulp
The Kilimanjaro peak is Cimmerian beside them

And the smile that dances on your cheeks
Depletes the mystic smile of Mona Lisa

2.

River Nile at Jinga: A Haiku

A Mighty teardrop
Breaking away from the Swollen eye
Of the overburdened watery Nyanza

3. Of Despair and Hope

Flow on
Black stream of despair
Flow on
Over deep undercurrents of faith
Like paraffin on water
I will not be drowned
Flow on
My roots are moored
In the resilience

You have seen that the structure of each poem is different.

Self Assessment Exercise Arrange the story you wrote in the last unit in a particular order to produce the form (shape) you desire. Do this in 10 mins.

3.2. Metre

The most important aspect of poetry is that the poet creates sound patterns. Just like in learning to speak a language you do not just know its grammar and syntax but you also learn to pronounce it correctly. In pronouncing words, you create a sound pattern dictated by the stressed and unstressed syllables. You are trying to write your poem in English language therefore you should note that the “English words usually have their stress on the second syllable; another general rule is that strong stresses in most cases have a weak stress separating them e.g. division

(Maxwell-Mahon 62). This means that the word has three syllables in which the central one is stressed.

Metre in poetry therefore is established by the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in its lines. This metric pattern helps you, as stated earlier, to create sound patterns which in turn produce the rhythmic pattern in a poem.

The units of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poem are called feet, and the number of feet determines the type of metre. For instance, when there are five feet consisting of an unstressed syllable and a stressed syllable in each line of a poem especially as in a sonnet, it is called pentimetre. We will concentrate on the identification of feet and metre in a poem. Let us take, two lines from a poem we have used for illustration earlier and identify the feet there in.

Sleep well, my love, sleep well
The harbour lights glaze over restless docks
(Dennis Brutus “Night Song City”)

Self Assessment Exercise Follow this pattern and try to put stress on each syllable of two lines of the poem you are trying to write. You can substitute some of the words with other words to enable you create the feet you desire.

3.3. Line

Line in poetry as the name implies, is a line of words in the poem. Each line may or may not make sense when it stands alone. A line ranges from one word to as many words as possible. It may be a phrase, a sentence or just one or two words that do not qualify to be called a phrase. Let us look at some examples below.

Your preoccupation in creating your line is not the meaning but the sound pattern. However you will bear in mind that in the end of a stanza, or a few lines, the words should make sense. Some poets use the punctuation mark to demarcate each unit of thought or to enhance the rhythm of the poem. The punctuation could be at the end of a line or in the middle. Let us read Kalu Uka's "Earth to Earth" below:

As if man hung here unblown,
Their middlewed buds of love like pollen
Late caught, damp in a swollen
Drop of rain; or like the hot
Tear that chills a fevered pit
After heads into bodies socket

You may have observed that this first stanza of the poem flows from the first line to the last without a full stop. If you read the rest of the poem you will encounter the full stop in the third stanza.

It means that you can choose to break your sentence, clause, phrase at any point in order to make your poem meaningful. The following tips by W. H. Herbert will help you in the determination of where and when to break a line.

Where you choose to break a phrase in
Order to begin a new line has a
Consequence for the entire poem. If we
Break it at the end of a clause or
Sentence, then we reinforce grammatical
Sense with an unspoken emphasis. If we
Break within a phrase, then we introduce a sense
Through the poem, almost demanding that

We make sense of the line by reading on.
Conversely, if we break within a phrase
And follow that with a space, whether an
Indentation or a stanza break, then we
Create a note of suspension, implying
That the normal progression of a
Sentence can contain spaces where
The reader can pause

3.3 Rhyme

We have talked about sound patterns in poetry and in discussing line, we imply that the poem is expected to convey a meaning. In other words, it must make sense. You must therefore try to create a balance between sound and sense. If not you would be babbling. Rhyme helps to project sound pattern in a poem.

It involves an act of linkage, an awareness of pattern. It explores the “associativeness of sound [and] doesn’t simply take place at the end of lines,…” (Herbert 224). Rhyme could occur at any point in a poem. This is achieved through literary devices like assonance, consonance and alliteration. In a poem, rhyme contributes to a large extent, to form. It aids the “integration of the sound of language with the particular shape, tone and sense of a poem” (Herbert 224).

You may have noticed that a lot of modern poets do not pay much attention to rhyme. That should not bother you because not all poems are conventional in the real sense of the word. Ensure that you pay particular attention to rhyme in your poem. Enrich and enlarge your vocabulary so that you can easily select words that rhyme and at the same time convey your emotion and meaning to your audience. Rhyme is the occurrence of similar sound patterns/rhyming words in the last

stressed vowel and speech sounds following it. Assonance and alliteration are also identified in a poem through similar sound patterns.

Self Assessment Exercise

1. Read the “Night Song City” again and note the rhyming of words like ‘streets’ and ‘sheets’ and in the first line.
2. Identify other words that rhyme in the poem and note their effects in the sound musical quality of the poem.

3.4. Stanza

Stanza is simply the division of your poem into segments or groups of lines according to fixed conventional patterns. In a poem, “ the basic unit of poetic form is the *verse*, which is the *line*. Lines are organised into longer unit of thought and feelings called *stanza*.(Akporobaro 88). There are as different types of stanza forms as there are poems. The number of lines in each stanza that is organised in a particular rhyme pattern produce different types of stanzaic forms like the couplet, tercet, quatrain and many others. I do not want to go into the stanza forms obtained in classical literature because not all contemporary poets adhere to those conventions. However here as some examples of well- known stanzaic forms:

Couplet

This is one of the basic forms of poetry and consists of two lines of verse with similar end-rhymes. Ideally, it is a two-line stanza with “both grammatical structure and idea complete within itself” (Akporobaro 88).

Example:

A birth is death awaited

A death is birth anticipated;

...

I walk in the chains of memories

What bond links these memories,

- From Ezenwa-Ohaeto “The living and the dead”

Tercet

This is a stanza of three lines in which each line ends with the same rhyme.

Example:

The moon kisses

My daughter’s emerging breasts

And my son’s dimples dimples.

- From Okot p’Bitek “Cattle egret”

Quatrain

A stanza of a poem with four lines.

The important factor is for you to know that you could present your poem in a stanza form or in a continuous form. There is no rule on the number of line that should be grouped to make up a stanza. It ranges from one line to as many lines as possible. This is evident in the poem below.

Song of Malaya (excerpts)

Sister prostitutes

Wherever you are

I salute you

Wealth and health

To us all

I Kabiru

Welcome ashore

You vigorous young sailor,

I see you scanning the horizon

In search of dry land

I hear your heart drumming
Tum-tum-tu-tu-tum...
That time bomb
Pulsating in your loin
Surely weighs you down
Oh...oh

(Okot P' Bitek)

Each stanza is separated by a consciously created gaps. That gap indicates the separation of stanzas.

Self Assessment Exercise:

Read as many poems as you can and note the construction of the stanzas.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The structure of a poem is very important. It gives your poem its unique character. You can only build this structure by paying serious attention to your choice of words, the arrangement of the words into lines and subsequently into stanzas.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have been led through the basic steps in structuring your poem. You have been exposed, through some practical steps, to the creation of line, rhyme, and stanza in your poem.

6.0 TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Divide the poem you have written into stanzas, bearing in mind the rhyming scheme of the poem.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4: POETIC LANGUAGE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Images
 - 3.1.1 Literal image
 - 3.1.2. Figurative image
 - 3.2 Symbols
 - 3.3 Figures of speech
 - 3.4 Figures of sound
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

So far, we have been trying to write a poem. By now we have a framework of what we might refer to as a poem. We have tried to present it in a particular form or pattern. In this unit, we will revisit that poem and try to re-write it, using appropriate poetic language.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Identify and use images/imagery in a poem
- Identify and utilize symbols in a poem
- Identify and use figures of speech in a poem
- Identify and use figures of sounds in a poem

- Infuse these poetic elements into your own poem

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Poetic language is unique and through constant practice and reading, you will master it. The poet uses the written words to make the audience to see, to hear and to feel the objects, emotions and ideas he expresses or describes in his/her poem. In a very small space, she/he leads the audience to have a glimpse of the truth she/he conveys through the poem. Poetic language is realised through the choice of words/diction. Prose is defined by Coleridge as words in their best order and poetry as the best words in their best order. It means that the arrangement of words in a very good pattern is the hallmark of literature, but in poetry the poet must make sure that she/he chooses the best words. This is vital because she/he does not have the time and space which the novelist and, to a lesser extent the playwright, has. Moreso, you need to choose the best words that will help you in the expression of your emotion and human situations. It does not matter the type of poem, from the lengthy narrative poem like the epic, to the short lyric that expresses emotion in songlike form; from the ballad and the sonnet to the avant garde and contemporary poems that have defied classification, the choice of words is very important.

Akporobaro summarises poetic language thus:

whereas prose or scientific language is lucid, clear, abstract and denotative, poetical language is figurative and embellished so as to be emotive, picturesque, connotative, suggestive and evocative (24 – 25).

3.1. Image

In poetry, the poet recreates his/her “sensory and intellectual experiences in the minds of his readers” (Maxwell-Mahon 57). Words are the only tools she/he needs in this recreative enterprise. The words she/he chooses determine the success or

failure of the enterprise. It is impossible for anyone to describe something or an experience exactly as it is, so the poet relies on the imagination of his readers to bridge the gap between the things/experiences and the words used to describe them. This is achieved through the choice of words, images and symbols.

An image, according to *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* is (as it relates to this work) “a mental picture that you have of what somebody or something is like or looks like”

2. A copy of something or somebody in form of picture or statue
3. A word or phrase used with a different meaning from its normal one, in order to describe something in a way that produces a strong picture in the mind...to look very like somebody/something else (743).

The last definition gives a clearer picture of an image as a literal and concrete representation of a sensory experience of an object, an idea or an experience. Imagery is the language that produces pictures in the minds of people reading or listening (743). It is the act of presenting images in a poetry.

If you understand what image is and are able to use it in your poem, you would then be in a position to familiarize your “readers with unknown or exotic phenomena and defamiliarise the overtly familiar...represent the world to us as we have never seen it before. In both cases, it expands the range of our experience” (Herbert 207). In other words, with an appropriate use of images you can make unfamiliar things familiar and the common ones unfamiliar.

It means that by the use of image, you would be presenting comparisons between like terms and unlike terms. You should be able to transmit your impressions of objects ideas and human experiences. For instance the poem below is about a salaried worker who is unable to meet his financial obligations.

PAY DAY

The Pay-day
Is a gay day
For the 'salarian'
If only he forgets
The landlord's share
Of the booty he laboured for
The bill he must pay
For the fledging power supply
The dues he owes for the tap
That is too shy to spit
The brother-in-law's fees
That cry for settlement
Or the madam's wardrobe
That begs for an update
For peace to reign
The contribution to the village
For aged parents' upkeep
Ah, the mechanic's demand
For the automobile's overhauling
He looks at the chopped sole of his shoes
The tiny holes on his trouser
The fade on his shirt
All are wolves
Against his meager pay sheep.

– **Solomon Iguanre**

Self Assessment Exercise

What image of the 'salarian' does the poem present?

Note that if the images are not applied appropriately they could mar your poetry. An image can disrupt the free flow of thought in your poem so be careful and cautious in the use of image. There are two types images the literal and the figurative.

3.1.1. Literal Image

As the name implies, the literal image in a poem gives the real meaning of the images that are used in the poem. The poet here paints the picture or represents objects in actuality or as you see them in reality. A good example is seen in some of the nursery rhymes that we are familiar with.

Apart from nursery rhymes, some poets use literal images. Such poems are accessible, they are very easy to understand. Many budding poets start with the application of literal images in their poems. The poem below captures the image of a mother caring for her emaciated starving son during the war. The image:

Refugee Mother and Child

No Madonna and Child could touch
that picture of a mother's tenderness
for a son she soon would have to forget.

The air was heavy with odours
of diarrhea of unwashed children
with washed-out ribs and dried-up
bottoms struggling in laboured
steps behind blown empty bellies. Most

mothers there had long ceased
to care but not this one; she held
a ghost smile between her teeth
and in her eyes the ghost of a mother's
pride as she combed the rust-coloured
hair left on his skull and then –
singing in her eyes - began carefully
to part it...In another life this
would have been a little daily
act of no consequence before his
breakfast and school; now she
did it like putting flowers
on a tiny grave.

Chinua Achebe

3.1.2 Figurative Image

Figurative image extends the literal meaning of an object/idea/experience to other meanings. It is an extension of factual, ordinary and familiar descriptions to enable the reader see things in new and more striking ways. It helps the poet paint pictures and stir appropriate feelings. In the poem below, Olu Obafemi presents religious leaders as the Do-Gooders.

Do-Gooders

The bloated stomachs
In stinking gutters
The naked ribs
Of sprawling skeletons
5 Hoot for a Time bomb.
I say

- Horror begets horror
To nullify horror
- The flatulent do-gooders
10 Climbing pulpits
In deserted churches
Damnable mosques
Wretched palm-groves;
- The vicar and the Imam
15 The babalawo and the Aladura
Who close your eyes and open theirs
Who chew the flesh and you the bone
Must be tied to stakes
Blazed in flames and flakes
- 20 Clear woe
With an all-ending woe
That woe may NEVER BE

Self Assessment Exercise

List words/phrases that help to accentuate the image of suffering in the poem.

2. Underline the lines in the poem that evoke the image of deceit and exploitative tendencies of religious leaders.
3. Revisit the poem you are writing. Identify the image you are presenting and choose the best words to convey it (them)

3.2. Symbols

A symbol is a word, an object, person or a group of words that retains its meaning and could be used to convey another meaning. For instance, a sword is a weapon but it represents war, or justice. Symbol stands for something which it represents. A cross in the literal sense is an intersection but a symbol of Christianity or on further extension, a symbol of the crucified Christ – suffering, sacrifice, redemption. For the Catholics, the Eucharistic bread and wine are symbols of Christ's body and blood while the host in the monstrance is a symbol of Christ's eternal presence with his people and also symbolizes Christ himself. Many of the titles of novels, poems and plays are symbols.

The meaning and significance of a symbol crystalises within the framework of a system of ideas or things of which the symbol is also a part. This means that an object assumes a symbolic meaning within a particular context. Some scholars believe that “some of the poems, which are considered great, are those, which have a symbolic significance like in the poem below.

Guiles and Smiles

You smile you laugh
And pat me on the back and say
That everything is okay
But I know that nothing is okay.

You say to me that I'm welcome
The welcome of Antipas to Jean Baptiste
I already see my crown on a platter
A thoughtless token to slake the sizzling caprice
Of dancing beauty

You cuddle me in amity
Your cheeks touch mine one after the other
But I am not deceived
As if a magic mirror threw the muck of your mind
On a screen of celluloid
I see your designs

Your Hand of friendship is the coil of a python
Killing with its patina of burnished beauty
Your genial smile the scowl of Iblis
Your willing welcome that of the lion
To the stray duiker to his den

Since I know the masks that your snares wear
I will on brave muted toes of the wind sidestep them
And arrive at the last station of my journey
The lone hunter in a Tutuolan forest of the spirits
Who has seen more wonders than one tongue can tell
-Abdrasheed Yesufu

Self Assessment Exercise

Identify two words in the fourth stanza used as symbols to suggest that the friendship is fake.

3.4 Figures of Speech

These are literary devices which the poet uses to appeal to the imagination of the reader. These devices help him/her to evoke appropriate pictures in the minds of the reader. In the last unit of your course material – Creative Writing I, listed some literary devices. I believe that by now you must have acquainted yourself with all of them. The commonest forms are “simile” and “metaphor”, and many others. I want to draw your attention to “metonymy” because it helps the poet in his use of images and symbols in the poem. Metonymy is the employment of a feature or an attribute of an object to stand for the whole of that object in “the pen is mightier than the sword”, pen here represents the act of writing and what is written while sword stands for conflict, war or the act of destruction by force/ intellect vs brute force/might. The mastery of the figures of speech will help you in the creation of a great poem.

3.5 Figures of sound

The figures of sound are similar to the figures of speech. The difference is that they aid the sound which creates rhythm in a poem. The figures of sound could be in form of the sound of a particular word as we find in Onomatopoeia. Here the sound evokes the image of the object, animal or person. For instance, the “buzzing of the bee” or “mewing of a cat” try to create the sounds made by a flying bee and a cat respectively.

The figures of sound can also come in form of the repetition of the same consonant sounds (alliteration) or the same vowel sounds (assonance and consonance).

Sound in poetry does not exist in isolation but in a “reflective relation to meaning, form and mood of the poem”. It reinforces and suggests the meaning and is in turn evoked and suggested by the meanings of the poem (Akporobaro 141); so figures of sound enhance the meaning of a given poem by evoking a wide range of ideas and meanings.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Poetry thrives on imagination. The poet imagines and creates his or her poem. He uses images, symbols, figures of speech and sound to create a picture that appeal to the readers’ imagination. These poetic devices help the poet to say so much in such a little space.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have encountered more poetic devices that help the poet to recreate his mental pictures on paper. Some of the pictures convey literal meanings while some of the meanings are shrouded in symbols.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Revisit your poem and identify figures of speech and figures of sound in it. If you are not satisfied, re-write it and infuse more literary devices.

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UNIT 5: THE POEM

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Writing a poem
 - 3.2 Poetic license
 - 3.3 Re-drafting
 - 3.4 The final draft
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 Reference/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will lead you to different definitions of poetry by poets/critics throughout the ages. The intent is to show that poetry means different things to different people but some basic elements like the peculiarity of poetical language and rhythm seem to be constant. This is expected to help you in writing your poem. This is because it will help you to define poetry in your own words, and to apply your definition or any other one in writing your poem.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Examine various definitions of poetry
- Define poetry in your own words
- Apply your definition or any other one in writing your own poem

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Writing a poem

Let us examine the classical meaning of poetry and some definitions of poetry. You may wonder why I left the definition of poetry till now. The reason is that I assumed that you have a basic knowledge poetry and poem right from your primary school through secondary school. The essence of this section is to reinforce that knowledge now to assist you in writing your own poem.

The terms poem, poet, poetry, poetic and poetics are derived from the Greek word “poesis” which denotatively means “making or to make”. As you know already, the poet is the person who writes a poem, poetic is generally associated with poems and poems are embodiments of poetry. Poetry according to Agwonorobo Eruubetine, poetry is “a type of discourse which addresses its effect through rhythm, sound patterns, imagery... evokes emotions, sensations... conveys loftiness of tone...(and, lends force to ideas” (8). It is really difficult to put the poetical experience in a straight-jacket definition. This is why we have decided to present some attempts at the definition of poetry by some scholars culled from F. B. O. Akporobaro’s *Introduction to Poetry*, as follows:

1. I would define the poetry of as the rhythmical creation of beauty. Its sole arbiter is taste. With the intellect or with the conscience it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with duty or with truth.

- Edgar Allan Poe

2. Poetry is the imaginative expression of strong feeling, usually rhythmical, the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility

- William Wordsworth

3. The proper and immediate object of science is the acquirement or communication of truth; the proper and immediate object of poetry is the communication of pleasure.
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge
4. Poetry a criticism of life under the condition fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and beauty
- Matthew Arnord
5. Absolute poetry is the concrete and artistic of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language.
- Theodore Watts Dunton
6. Speech framed to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above its interest of meaning.
- Gerard Manley Hopkins
7. An actual poem is the succession of experiences – sounds, images, and thoughts, emotions – through which we pass when we are reading as poetically as we can.
- Andrew Bradley
8. The rhythmic inevitably narrative, movement from an overclothed blindness to a naked vision.
- Dylan Thomas
9. The presentment, in musical form, to the imagination, of noble grounds for the noble emotions
- John Ruskin

10. If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that it is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that it is poetry.
- Emily Dickinson
11. Poetry is a language that tells us, through a more or less emotional reaction, something that cannot be said. All poetry, great or small, does this.
- Edwin Arlington Robinson
12. The art, which uses words as both speech and song to reveal the realities that the senses record, the feeling salute, the mind perceives, and the happing imagination orders.
- Babette Deutsch

He then summarises the definitions above in the following way:

1. Poetry is the arrangement of words in verse, especially a rhythmical composition, sometimes rhymed and expressing human experiences, ideas and imagination
2. poetry exploits the modes of rhythm, imagery and experiences to transform thoughts and feelings into artistic forms of expression
3. emotions, thoughts, intuitions and personal experiences are the subject matter and sources of poetry
4. poetry differs from ordinary speech by being more selective in its use of words and symbolism
5. as an artistic form of expression, poetry has specific forms or modes of being. These forms are its genres.

Self Assessment Exercise:

Define poetry in your own words

3.2. Poetic License

Poetic licence refers to the right or privilege which allows a poet to depart from the normal form or convention in writing his poem. This departure could be in the use of diction, rhyme, metrical pattern and other conventions. This means that a poet can deviate or depart completely from the accepted convention in writing poems. In many such cases, the poet's intention is to establish a particular poetic effect. This perhaps is what has given rise to different forms in poetry. Some poets no longer pay proper attention to diction, rhyme, imagery to ensure that their poems conform to the order of metrical pattern. This is because they have the poetic license to write the way they feel. However, do not claim that you have poetic license, so use archaic words or spell words wrongly. The emphasis is/should be on language deviation or the poet's freedom from conventional rules of language.

Self Assessment Exercise Read the poem you have written. Which definition above suits your poem? Underline the deviations from conventional use of language which you could call poetic licence.

3.3. Re-drafting

This is the most important aspect of creative writing generally and writing of a poem in particular. Most often, when we are reading what we have written, the tendency is for us to read what is in our minds/heads. Sometimes in creative writing, the meaning of the final work is not the original meaning you started with. The same goes for the form. As you were being led through the process of writing a poem in this module, you have re-drafted your poem several times.

Now, get your poem and start the actual re-drafting. Pay particular attention to your idea/meaning, the diction, the figures of speech,/sound patterns the images and finally the form. One good step that helps in re-drafting is to read your poem aloud to yourself and to another person. Then re-draft, paying particular attention to the areas of deficiency. Finally give the poem to another person, someone who has a good ear and a good or, at least, passable knowledge of poetry. Evaluate the person's opinion and incorporate the necessary ones.

3.4 The Final Draft

You may wonder why I call it the final draft instead of the poem. You are a student and what you have at this stage is still subject to evaluation by your guide/facilitator. What he or she approves becomes your poem.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Poetry is an experience which has defied a single definition like “drama is an imitation of life”. However, scholars have attempted to define it. The definitions are influenced by the individual's perceptions of poetry. Poetic licence is the right of the poet to use language in whatever form in his poem fashion his/her poem in whatever form.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have reviewed various definitions of poetry and have produced your own definition. You have also re-drafted and edited your poem to produce the final draft.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Present your poem for evaluation.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 4 PROSE FICTION

CONTENTS

UNIT 1: THE SHORT STORY

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 2.1 What is a short story
 - 2.2 The Characters
 - 2.3 Point Of View
 - 2.4 The First Paragraph
 - 2.5 Continuing
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- 3.0 Conclusion
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Tutor- Marked Assignment
- 6.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

So far we have tried to write or have written a poem and a playlet. However, I believe that some of you wrote full length plays. In this unit, you will try to write a short story. Make sure you write along with me.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The only objective here is to develop a short story.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What is a Short Story

As the name implies, the short story is a story that is very short. It develops around a central character. It is presented in a prose narrative form like the novel but shorter in length than the novel. It is so short that it is expected to be read at a sitting. This means that you could start and conclude a short story in less than an hour. However the actual length is determined by the individual author's preference submission guidelines relevant to the story's actual market. Guidelines vary greatly among publishers. You may have known that there are many literary competitions especially in short story writing. In many cases, the organizers of such competitions stipulate the required length. Apart from such guidelines, usually, a short story should have one dominant impression, and unified effect. You should choose your words carefully to ensure that every word counts and adds to the meaning in the story. Every incident leads consistently to the central idea and character.

The central idea must be obvious so that the reader does not miss it. Your characters, situations setting and action must be related to the central idea or your message. Although it is short, it must have a beginning, middle and an end, with its attendant conflicts, climax and resolution. Unlike the novel where the writer has more time and space to explore more ideas, the short story concentrates on one idea and compresses the characters and incidents to give an immediate impression which the novel cannot give.

The short story begins as close as possible to the conclusion. So, once you start, you should not waste time on copious descriptions of landscapes, environments and characters. Try to arrest the readers' attention from the first line and move at a racy pace to the conclusion.

There is no fixed length for a short story. A short story could be between three (about 750 to 1500 words) to 20 pages (about 4000 – 7000 words) or slightly more. The short story should be so short that it could be read within a very short time not one or two lines, so “stories less than 200 words are close to anecdotes; a story that exceeds 10,000 words is approaching the category of a novella or short novel”(Maxwell-Mahon 2).

The essential element in short story is brevity of expression. You must strive for economy in the use of words. You should therefore leave out all descriptions and comments that do not meaningfully advance your theme, reveal your characters or propel your plot.

3.2 The Characters

The short story’s limitation on length does not allow for use of many characters. Structure your story around one character. Do not include any characters that do not relate with this character or contribute to the central idea. Try to develop your character fully as soon as they are presented to the reader. However some other aspects of their personalities could be disclosed as the plot unfolds.

In choosing your characters, you should also decide on your point of view. Who is your narrator? You have learnt all you need to know about the strengths and weaknesses of various points of views. The use of the first person, “I” helps you to produce direct impressions and first hand emotions which boost the authenticity of your account. The omniscient narrative helps you to explore and reach out more effectively.

Remember to use dialogue when necessary irrespective of the point view you have chosen. In prose narratives, dialogue is usually more effective in producing, immediate effects in your story than indirect speech.

You can choose a realistic or imaginary setting where your characters can interact. In doing this, try to choose an environment you are familiar with. It is easier for you to write a convincing story based on a locality you know very well. If for instance, you have been hearing of the Tinapa in Calabar, the Obudu ranch in Obudu, the Game Research in Bauchi or the Wildlife Park or Shere Hills in Jos but you have never visited any of them, you can never write an authentic convincing story based on what you read or heard.

3.3 The First Paragraph

Are you ready? By now you must have known what to write. Let us try to write the first paragraph of a story that will not be more than three pages.

“This is my house” and if you utter another word, I kick you out of this house” Okeke, bellowed. You know me very well, I am not emotional and..., Tessy his wife murmured “there is a world outside this house”, and sneaked away through the backdoor. Tessy, a pretty young lady, intelligent, hard working but very humble, sits outside sobbing. As the tears flowed freely, her twenty years of marriage flooded back. “what am I still doing in this hell”, she ruminates.

Have you written your first paragraph. Is it catchy? Did you create a suspense? The story I am about to write here is a very simple one based on domestic affairs. You may or may not be able to guess what follows. In the middle of the story we will get the main story.

3.4 Continuing

“I can’t take it any longer” she concluded. She got into her room and packed a few dresses in a small bag. As she is about to leave her room, her youngest child, Dede who is five years old embraced her. “Mummy where are you going” he asked. Tessy fought back the tears that welled up in her eyes, patted him and asked him to go and watch the television. “I will be back soon”. She promised. Buy biscuits for me”, he said and ran off.

Tessy left the house, uncertain of her next action. She walked aimlessly for a while, at last, she went to the church, knelt there and cried herself to sleep. When she woke, she determined not to go back, children or no children. She decided to go to her friend’s house where she was welcomed with open arms. Her friend is also married but left her husband when he married another wife because she had only three girls. She left with her three girls.

Her friend Mono, prepared supper and they ate, she said “I have always told you that you tell people, through your conduct, how to treat you. The Bible asked you to submit to your husband but you submitted to the point of stupidity. Meanwhile you forget that the same Bible asked men to love their wives. Since you got married, what signs of love has he shown you? “My sister none! He reminds me every time that he is not emotional, he is not sentimental” Tessy replied.

Throughout her married life, Tessy cannot recall any kind word or action from her husband. No birthdays, no anniversaries. She recalls her first year of marriage when she bought a birthday card for him, he scolded her for wasting money and on a Valentine day, she got another card, he gave her a severe warning not to waste their hard earned resources on frivolities.

Meanwhile, this is a graduate, a lawyer by profession who claims to know everything. She works in an oil company and has a reasonable salary but each time she buys a new dress, she is in trouble. Once she collects her salary her husband ensures that he collects at least seventy percent of that money which he claims is for project. He threatens to kick her out of the house they built together. Meanwhile, she finds it difficult to maintain her car, he talks to her as if she is his maid and sometimes hits her in the presence of her children. She endured all these because she is afraid of what people might say, she is afraid that she may be excommunicated since the church does not allow divorce. She is afraid of what might happen to her two lovely boys. She had internalized the hurts and the result is that she has plunged into self pity and an erosion of self worth. She may have become a psychiatric case if she did not meet Mono who helped to revive her self confidence and inculcated in her the necessity for her to live. She could not train her children the way she wanted because each time she corrects them for wrong doing her husband intervenes and tells her that she had no justification to scold the children since she herself is disobedient and lazy. She therefore has no regrets in leaving them for him to bring them up the way he likes.

After she left, her husband shouted from his bedroom as usual “Te-ss-y! Te-ss-e-y”! When he did not get any response, he sent one of his sons to call their mother, the younger one informed him that she went out. “What! he bellowed. “And without my permission”. Enraged beyond imaginable limits he locked their main gate.

After some hours and it was getting dark, the children were hungry and kept on telling him so. He called his wife on phone and as usual shouted orders to her. She took the insults, abuses and threats calmly. When he finally orders her to come

back immediately, she replied. “I have decided not to wait for you to kick me out of the house but have left “YOUR HOUSE FOR YOU” and she switched off the phone. He could not get through to her again that night.

Okeke could not believe what he heard. He went to his wife’s room, everything seemed untouched. He went outside, her car was packed there. He felt that she may be joking. He tried in vain to reach her through the phone. Meanwhile, the children are crying that they are hungry. He was forced to go to the kitchen. He did not know where to start but luckily he found soup in the fridge, warmed the soup, prepared garri and bathed the children. As they sat to eat, they reminded him that they ate garri in the afternoon so preferred rice or spaghetti. He shouted at them, but did not succeed in forcing them to eat. Later they settled for tea and bread.

The following morning, he woke up late managed to bathe the children. By the time he was through with breakfast, the children were late for school. The school bus left them so he had to drop them off. They reminded him of their snacks, he bought biscuits for them but they insisted that they needed the cake, meat pie, or even fried fish which mummy used to prepare for them. He snapped at them and drove off. This continued for about a week. He could not answer their queries on their mother’s whereabouts. The kitchen was smelling. The bathroom was something else. All his corrections and instructions on the things that were not done well in the kitchen... “you did not cover this pot properly”, “I will not eat that food”.... “you did not sweep the kitchen”... “I can’t eat the same soup twice in a day”... “you put only two pieces of meat for me”... you this you that... “I will deal with you...you do not know me...ask people... I don’t care, even if the Pope comes here I will still do what I want to do...”. He could not carry out any of his previous instructions, directions and orders.

He decided to get a house help. He literally drove all the house helps his wife had because of his over-bearing, dictatorial and violent nature. He has tried several times to reach his wife.

He could not reach her on phone and has not been allowed to go to her office. Each time he gets to the gate, they will call her and she tells them that she does not wish to see anybody.

Initially, he refused to tell anybody. But who would he tell? He does not have friends. He does not believe in friendship because according to him they do not contribute anything to his growth. He could not call his parents-in-law because he drove his mother-in-law from his house and gave a standing order that he does not want any of them in his house. Later he told one of his neighbours who expressed shock but could not help him. He registered with agencies but has not been successful in getting a maid that appealed to him. The dirty clothes have piled up and he could not remember the last time he washed clothes. He used to tell his wife that he could not “soak” his hands in water. The teachers send letters to him that his children are becoming very dirty, unkempt and moody in the class.

One day he resolves to end it all. He goes to the Chevron office where his wife works, as usual he was refused access.

3.5 Concluding

He resolved before he left his house that he must be heard. He could not understand what education has done to the women. He recalled that whenever his father entered their house everyone scampered to safety. Even when he beat their mother, she did not raise her voice, she will only sob quietly and still do his bidding. He recalled also that at meals, his mother used to fill his father’s plate with meat, fish, stockfish or whatever delicacies in the soup or stew and they got just bits, bones and pieces of the leftover. Sometimes special meals were prepared

for his father alone. Unfortunately for him now, his wife has insisted that the children need protein more than adult and has stubbornly refused to give him meat/fish as much as he desired. She has also insisted that she does not have the time to cook special meals for him. The most annoying part is that even when he desires pepper soup, she must ensure that every member of the family partakes of it as if he she does not realize that children must not eat every meal prepared in the home. Instead, she calls him a bush man with primitive ideas about marriage. Okeke could not comprehend his wife's claim that it is a marriage of equals. She used to say that he sees marriage as enslavement. "But a man and a woman can never be equal" he pondered. He is the head of the family so must dictate what should be done in his house but his wife sees it as interference.

He gets to the Chevron Gate and as usual, they barred him from entering. He started shouting. "I am a lawyer, I must see my wife". He caused a lot of stir and as the security men are about to force him out of the premises, one of the Directors in his car intervened. He listened to his case but insisted that the establishment cannot force its staff to see a person she does not want to see. He however promised to intervene in the case.

Reluctantly, Okeke went home to meet the dirty dishes, dirty clothes, stinking bathrooms/toilets and sobbing children.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In simple terms, the short story is seen as a miniature novel. The writer tells his/her story using any point of view that she/he likes. However, because the time and space available to the writer is limited, the characters are few, though well-developed in most cases. The writer also cuts down on description of incidents, events and characters. Brevity in the use of words is the watchword for you if you intend to focus on that type of prose fiction.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have tried to write a short story. I hope that while reading the short story written here you have been able to write your own, which will serve as your TMA.

6.0 TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Submit your short story to your facilitator.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Achebe, Chinua (1977). *Girls at War and Other Stories*. London: Heinemann.

Ajayi, Tolu (1991). *Eyes of the Night*. Lagos: Granny Fatima

Ekwensi, Cyprain (1975). *Restless City and Christmas Gold*. Ibadan: Heinemann.

Ezeigbo, Akachi (2003). *Echoes in the Mind*. Lagos.

Ezeigbo, Akachi (2006). *Fractures & Fragments*. Lagos African Cultural Institute.

Maxwell-Mahon, W. D. (1984). *Van Schaik's Guide to Creative Writing*.

Pretoria: J. L. Van Shaik

UNIT 2: THE NOVEL

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition
 - 3.2 Types of novel
 - 3.3 Length
 - 3.4 Outline
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor- Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We tried to write a short story. I hope that you have written and submitted your own. In this unit, we will examine the definition of the novel by different scholars and arrive at our own definition. This will help us to get a clearer understanding of what a novel is or should be before we attempt to write one.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define the novel
- Draw an outline of a proposed novel
- Give a title to your novel
- List the major characters in the proposed novel

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition

The novel has been defined differently by different scholars. The definitions are as varied as the novelists. Here we will take a few definitions to widen our scope and also help us in our own personal conception of what constitutes a novel. E. M. Forster sees story telling as the fundamental aspect of the novel (40). W. D. Maxwell-Mahon starts by stating what a novel is not.

The novel is not an extended short story nor is it a collection of short stories with a multiplicity of characters and a diversity of incidents. Generally speaking, the novel is a narrative in prose of extended length that combines characterization with various temporal and causal effects in the development of a particular theme or subject matter. (ii)

We can deduce from this definition that the novel is a form of narrative that is presented in prose form. It is like a story that is being told by the author and could be presented in any language. This distinguishes it from other genres of literature like drama that is presented in dialogue and poetry that is presented in verse. Like in drama, the novelist presents characters whose lives and experiences constitute the story. In this story she/he explores a theme with the aid of the characters, events and incidents that are causally presented. Oakley Hall sees the novel as “unfolding of a tale, the events of which exist before writing, only in the writer’s mind. His effort is to enable the reader to experience those events he has seen in his imagination”. To do this, he must evoke those events in details so that his audience will react to the characters and events that are not real but only ink smudges on paper (3).

We have seen here that the novel is a product of the writer's imagination which he tries to make real through the use of language and vivid presentation of events. In this way the reader feels them as real when in actual sense they are not.

Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture defines the novel simply as "a long written story not in poetry dealing with invented people and events".

The novel is written for several reasons. These include: interpretation of life, entertainment, escape, propaganda, reportage, as agent of change in language and thought, expression of the spirit of its age, creation of life a style, or/and reflection of a historical event. The main elements of the novel which you are aware of include: plot, character, scene or setting, narrative method or point of view.

I have listed the definitions above to help you decide your intention before writing your proposed novel. Do you want to write for mere entertainment, create a life style or to advocate social justice. Your intention, to a large extent will influence your style and the infusion of other elements of the novel.

3.2 Types of Novels

There are so many types of novels as can be seen from the list below which I culled from the internet. (<http://www.virtualsalt.com/lit/novelty.htm>).

Here is a list of some of the types of novel. Some novels fall under more than one type. It is possible, for example, to have an epistolary, detective, psychological, regional novel. Some techniques used in writing novels (satire, metafiction) might also be argued as their own types. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to show the variety of types.

Adventure novel, allegorical novel, anti-novel, apologue, autobiographical novel, best seller or pulp fiction novel, bildungsroman or apprenticeship novel, children's novel, Christian novel, cult or coterie novel, detective, mystery, thriller novel, dime novel, dystopian novel, epistolary novel, erotic novel, fantasy novel, gothic novel, graphic novel, historical novel, hypertext novel, interactive novel, multicultural novel, novel of manners, novella, pastoral novel, picaresque novel, post modern novel, prequel, proletarian novel, psychological novel, regional novel, roman a clef, roman fleuve (river novel), romance novel, science fiction novel, sentimental novel, sequel, series novel, spy novel, utopian novel, western novel

Some of these types of novels are categorized according to years of historical experience. The earliest forms of novel are the romance and the picaresque. In the latter, the protagonist is usually a social underdog, who is involved in a series of episodic adventures in which he sees much of the world around him and comments satirically upon it. The historical novel embraces event-filled romances and strives to convey the essence of life in a certain time and place.

The classification of novels help in determining or “indicating the breath and diversity of the form, ... the great novel transcends such categorization” (<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/ent/A0860064.html>). You should therefore strive to write a great novel instead of trying to confine yourself to a particular type. Besides, some novels fall into one, two or more categories.

3.3 Length

Just like the length of stories, real or imagined, told in everyday life vary, the length of the novel varies too. It depends on the story and the teller. Some story tellers possess the gift of elongating their stories through giving details and vivid description of events and incidents. Others tell stories with less emphasis on the

details. Either way, the important factor is the end product. One may fill his stories with unnecessary details that could mar the story. On the other hand, lack of necessary details could make the story dull and uninteresting. So the length depends on you and what you want to write. According to Mahon, “a novel of average length would be approximately 75,000 words... about 2500 words per chapter”. (12). This calculation would give you an average of about 30 chapters. However, some novels do not exceed 12 or 15 chapters. As stated earlier, everything depends on your subject and the way you treat it.

This does not mean that you should count the words as you write. Just continue writing but don't write too much or too little. The figures above would serve as a guide for you.

3.4 Outline

We have always emphasized that there are no specific rules for creative writing in any literary genre. However, some helpful tips are given to the budding artists. Some writers, just start their novels and as they progress, the characters are developed as events unfold. Others draw their outlines and characters sketches before they start. For the purpose of this course, we will adopt the latter approach. We will draw an outline, but this will be different from the outlines we have drawn so far. We will draw an outline based on a published novel. We will use Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* for illustration for the rest of this module. This is because we do not have the time and space to write a novel here. However, as we go along, you should be working on a novel you could.

Self Assessment Exercise

If you were to write the novel, *Things Fall Apart* draw an outline of not more than 10 sentences or phrases. Compare what you have done with my own presented below.

1. Okonkwo grows up with a lazy father
2. He determines never to be like his father
3. He works very hard
4. Record great achievements
5. Makes some mistakes
6. The colonial masters arrive with their religion
7. He goes on exile
8. As he comes back the society is no longer the same
9. He fails to recognize or adapt to the changes and dies in the process

This outline could produce *Things Fall Apart* or any other novel. What makes your novel classic like this novel is your ability to demonstrate “...such mastery of plot construction, such keen psychological insight and such an ability to hold your themes steadily before your mind and pursue them to a logical conclusion” (Palmer 48). Achebe did this in his masterpiece, *Things Fall Apart*, which you should pick read carefully. Can you identify the theme that Achebe kept steadily in mind. You will see it on page 160. “He (referring to the white man) has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart”.

In this novel, Achebe presents a once stable community unified by a common belief system and government. The colonial masters came with their own religion and government and destroyed this harmonious society. You can still tell this story differently and achieve the same purpose.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Whenever the novel is mentioned, we think of a story. This means that the fundamental aspect of the novel is the story telling aspect of it. What distinguishes one story from the other is not just the story but how it is told. The same story could be told differently by different people. One may be interesting, while the other may be boring. There are different types of novel but the most popular one is

the realistic novel. The realistic novel presents a slice of life (verisimilitude). The content of this novel is not reality but presents life as it is lived. We advise that you start by writing in the realistic mode and in a moderate length.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have tried to present the definition of the novel by different scholars. This is not exhaustive and can never be. You too can define the novel from your own perspective. You have seen that there are different types of novel and that length of the novel varies. You have seen also that you may start your novel based on an idea in your imagination and as you develop the idea, the plot evolves and your characters emerge. You may also draw an outline, create your characters and even give a synopsis of your story before you start writing. The important factor is that you should keep that idea constantly in your mind, develop it from the beginning, through the middle and on a to logical end.

6.0 TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Write, in not more than one page, the synopsis of the novel you intend to write.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Ezeigbo, T. Akachi (1998). *A Companion to the Novel*. Lagos: Vista.

Forster, E. M. (1981). *Aspects of the Novel*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

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UNIT 3: THE LAST WORD

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main content

3.1 Qualification

3.2 Possibility

3.3 Beginning/Ending

3.4 Approaches

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor- Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION.

In this unit we are going to summarize some of basic guidelines that can guide you in your desire to be a successful novelist. We believe that if you imbibe them you will be in a position to write your first or next novel in at least, hundred days as you will see in the next unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Decide to write a novel
- Make a sketch of your story

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Qualification

Sometimes, after reading a novel you feel that you could have written something like it. This is a very positive feeling. As I said earlier, anybody who survived childhood has at least a story in him or her. We could now modify it to read that "...all of us... carry at least one novel around in our heads or our hearts".(Ike 32) This novel in your head or mind will never emerge until you start and conclude it. Do not procrastinate but start now. Write the story as it comes to your mind. It could be presented in a few lines or a few paragraphs. According to the novelist, Toni Morrison, "If there's a book you really want to read but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it."

It is not easy to write a novel, yet many books are being published. Statistics show that in 1996, according to Books in Print, 1.3 million book titles were in print. The number of books published in 1996 alone was 140,000 in the United States. If the 140,000 books were written by people, why can't you be among them. (quoted in Hall 142)

What qualifies you to be a novelist is your ability to write simple English sentences (after all, that's what made Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* a masterpiece). Another important qualification is your ability to be alert to the world around you, and determination to write an interesting and sellable novel. You may take ten courses in creative writing, attend workshops, learn all there is to learn about how to write a novel but if you are not really determined to write, then you cannot do it. Writing comes from within you so when you have learnt the rudiments, you need to take the bold step of actually writing.

3.2 Possibility.

Writing requires a lot of discipline. It is not easy to squeeze in an hour or two a day (or night) of writing in the midst of other responsibilities that are yearning for attention. It is not easy to write a novel especially when you have a full time job, family, and responsibilities, but it is possible. It can be done. Others have done it so you too can do it. Most writers in this country, in fact, have had to carry on two lives while they wrote their novel. The reward comes when you see your name in print and you start selling. How would you feel as you walk through a market or bookstore people are asking for your book? You may be lucky and your novel could win an award and you rise to fame. It is possible that you are going to be another Achebe or Ernest Hemingway. It is worse for a woman who has to combine a full time job, motherhood, other aspects of family life, commitments to their communities and the writing of a novel. It is possible. Yes, you have a job. Yes, you are a woman, you are a wife and mother, you have a family. None of these has stopped great writers in the past. It has been done as we have names like Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo, Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Zaynab Alkali and many others. However, as a man or a woman, once you sell your first book, than maybe you will be in the position to quit your full time job and start writing full time.

That you are a student of Literature in English offering this course is an added advantage for you. Many of the great writers did not study the course yet they wrote masterpieces. The poet Wallace Stevens was a vice president of an insurance company and an expert on the bond market. The young T.S. Eliot was a banker. William Carlos Williams was a pediatrician. Robert Frost was a poultry farmer. Cyprain Ekwensi was a pharmacist. Hart Crane packed candy in his father's warehouse, and later wrote advertising copy. Stephen Crane was a war

correspondent. Marianne Moore worked at the New York Public Library. James Dickey worked for an advertising agency. Archibald MacLeish was Director of the Office of Facts and Figures during World War II.

3.3. Beginning and Ending.

We have mentioned some of the issues to be discussed here earlier in this material and the material on Creative Writing but you are expected to apply them now as you read this. There is one Igbo adage that says that the beginning of a cry is usually difficult but once started, the crier enjoys it so much that she/he may not want to stop until the emotion is satiated. Sometimes it is the same with writing a novel. It is not usually easy to start but once you start, you are likely going to complete it faster than you anticipated. Some writers like to map out their story ahead of time which is what we recommend in this course. Other writers jump into the story and the story evolves as they wrote on but bear in mind that writing is not always a perfect process. It can be approached and completed in different ways. It proceeds backwards, inside out, or upside down more often than forwards. You may decide to jettison the suggestions here and add more detailed steps of your own. As **The Writer**, the decision is yours.

You may start with a title. Once you have a story in mind, choose a title. This title may be the name of the major character or a reflection of the subject matter of the novel. For me I will prefer to choose a title early as it helps to keep me focused on the central idea of the novel.

You may also start with the plot. Decide the type of story you want to write. The way you arrange the story to determine which action comes before the other is called the plot. To start, decide what the novel is about. It could be about a pirate captain who voyages through the seven seas or a knight who defends his fortress from cruel invaders or a concentration camp escapee. Once you have the central

idea it will develop into a full fledged plot. A plot needs a beginning, middle, and an end. It also must have conflict and a resolution based on a believable motivation that will make your writing boring.

Next, list your characters and identify them by names. In giving names to your characters, try as much as possible to avoid using "...names that are readily identifiable with well known local personalities" to avoid "possible litigation" (Ike 133). Some of your friends may quarrel with you for using their names in your works especially if such characters are presented with inglorious traits. You may choose only the major characters but if possible identify all your characters as early as possible. It is very easy to get the names of your characters. Choose the from among the names you came across at school, from your primary school, through secondary school to the university. Also, you can pick names from newspapers, your office and your general environment. The names of your characters can reflect their actions, posture or position in the society especially if you are using traditional/local names.

In creating your main characters, ensure that there is a main good person (protagonist) and a main bad person (antagonist). There are several ways to do this. One way could be to draw rough sketches of them. Another could be to write up a list of questions (name? age? pastimes? fetishes? flaws? temptation?) and answer them for each character. It is important for you to ensure that your characters are believable and natural. Remember that no one in real life is perfectly flawless so do not create a protagonist that is flawless. Pay special attention to the development of the characters by revealing them in appropriate scenes that tell the reader something more about the character. This will help the readers feel more strongly about him or her. In the same way, your antagonists should not be completely bad. If they have no good or human qualities, your readers will not be able to identify with them, and they will seem impassive. You

should also create your other characters. Do not make the mistake of thinking secondary characters are unimportant. Your major characters cannot exist in isolation. These minor characters inhabit the backdrop of the novel and must help to bring the place alive. However, as you explore these characters remember that they should not get in the way of the protagonist.

If you have successfully selected your characters, your novel is almost completed because you are now aware of the actions they would be engaged in. That, to a large extent, determines that length of your novel. The next step is to present your outline for each proposed chapter. Once that is done, start writing, reviewing and revising appropriately.

One important advice that is given to budding novelists is “show, don’t tell”. It means that you are expected to present your story in such a graphic manner that your reader will feel with the characters, perceive smells, and actually see the events as vividly as possible. You are expected to dramatize the events and not summarize them. In practical sense, it means that instead of writing, ‘the door opened and we saw two soldiers walk into the bar’, you write “just then, the door was kicked open. We turn and stare as two soldiers enter, dripping wet from the rain, guns slung over their shoulders” (Helon Habila *Waiting for an Angel* 370). Here is another example: instead of writing; ‘he was angry’, you write; He screwed the piece of paper into a tight ball and threw it so hard it bounced off the wall and the table before landing back at his feet” (Neale 127). In telling or showing your story, you have to choose a point of view. By now you are conversant with the points view at your disposal. The third person point of view is the most popular as it enables you present your story naturally in a narrative form. With the third person point of view, you will be in a position to really show instead of telling your story. The third person omniscient narrator is the most wide-ranging and authoritative point of view (Anderson 115). This point of view

will enable you enter the character's consciousness; describe his/her appearance, speech, behaviour, thoughts, history, and motivations. You will also be in a position to present events or incidents that happen elsewhere or in the past and what will happen in the future. You, as the omniscient narrator can also make comments on the action, present forewarnings of future events or wise reflections on life. The point of view helps you to say a lot about your characters, theme, environment and period.

You may decide not to use the third person point of view and use any other one. The decision is yours but you must ensure consistency. Once you have chosen a particular point of view for your novel, it is important to stick to it with clarity and consistency.

3.4. Approaches.

Here we will summarize some of the major approaches to novel writing culled from the internet. You can now choose the one that is most suitable for you.

The first approach is the one we have presented above. Here you **begin with the ending in mind**. In this case you draw your outline before writing. If you know the ending of the story, it can help you form the theme, the plot, the settings, the characters, and it can help you progress more easily toward that ending.

The second approach is the one called **the big picture approach**. Here you try to create the world (the overall setting and environment), and then build on it to create your novel. Create geography, races, towns, cities, capitals, cults, factions, governments, etc. For a novice, this will be a bit problematic as she/he might find it difficult to control the scope of the story. The consequence will be a tendency towards unavoidable digressions.

The third approach is **The Dive in approach**. This may also be referred to as impulsive writing. Here, you make a list of ideas, choose one of them you start writing while it's still fresh in your mind. You may recall that we did something like that in earlier when we asked you to write out ten ideas that come to your mind concerning an object like the door or the universe. You were asked to choose one of such ideas and then, write. That was when we were discussing creative writing generally.

The last one is the **Start with character approach**. **In this case, you will** create three or four characters and let the plot build up around them. A budding writer who adopts this method is encouraged to try to draw a sketchy plot around those characters. This will allow the characters to be more embedded in the plot.

3.5. The Last Word

This section is sub-titled the last words because they contain mainly some tips on how to sustain and complete the novel which I believe you must have started or have decided to write

- **Make the Commitment.** You do need to understand what you're undertaking. Many wonderful writers go unnoticed and unread because their drawers are filled with unfinished novels. You must say to your self that if this novel does not get written then you can only blame yourself. Try to set small goals. This will keep you motivated.

Make your writing a habit by writing everyday, whether it is a sentence, a chapter, or more, you must regularly dedicate some time to your novel. We have discussed that. Set aside a quiet hour where everyone must leave you alone. Morning or night, it doesn't matter, although some writers work better at certain times of the

day. Just make sure you write daily! You may give yourself a deadline. Many writers write better when there is a deadline to face.

- Create a writing space. Find a cozy place where you can relax and there are no distractions. Get a good chair to sit in which won't give you back pains after hours and hours of sitting and writing. You don't write a book in an hour, it takes months, so protect your back.
- **Seek constructive feedback.** Never show your precious writing to someone you don't completely trust. Your writing is in its “baby stage” and it needs nurture and love. You need someone encouraging, but who isn't afraid to be honest and completely blunt with you. You must not hesitate to take criticism from a friend as long as you know they are being honest with you, otherwise it is better to get criticism from an editor or agent.
- **Consider joining an online or offline writing community.** This can provide support, feedback, and peer reviews. Check the internet for online groups. You can also join a literary organization like Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). It has branches in many states of the federation.
- **Rewrite.** Do not hesitate to rewrite your story at any point. Editing and rewriting is what makes the story good. The writing stage is when you set your ideas down. The rewriting stage is the time to make it great. But be careful not to over-edit. It is possible to rip out your story while you straighten your grammar. Check with two or more "personal editors" among your friends, family, teachers, or

colleagues. However, remember that before you do a massive edit (although your opinion is the final decision it is not always the right answer). Always save the first draft in a safe place. Sometimes you DO go overboard with the editing and end up wanting to go back to that first draft.

Keep rewriting. A great story is never truly finished, and as an amateur, you really don't have any time restrictions. "A story is never finished, only abandoned."

Publish your work. This is the conclusion that most writers aim for. Whether you choose a well known publishing company, an online e-publisher, or self-publish.

A good way to start writing a novel is to think about what interests you. If you don't write for yourself, your novel will seem superficial and plastic. It's better to share your plans with someone else, but only if it seems comfortable. Just do what you think is right and with the computer you can always check your spellings. Write what you know and make it easy on yourself.

One more simple tip is to make it casual and simple. Sagas are okay if you are completely ready for them. Do not keep blabbering about how characters are walking but stick to the point. Only use key interactions. Especially show the reader not by telling them how a character feels but by showing them like:

"Janet looked up at the overcast sky as her green eyes filled with tears." This tells the reader three things; she is sad, she has green eyes and it is a cloudy day. It also makes the reader wonder; Why is she crying, what will happen next? It will also set a mood. These are all the things you should keep in mind when writing.

Keep it simple.

Use writing advice that works best for you. Different writers write differently.

- "It is better to write for yourself and have no public than to write for the public and have no self." Write your story the way you want. There are markets for all genres, and there will always be a slot for your story if it's well written and interesting.
- Keep a record of any ideas you may have. You might want them later.
- It is good to have more material than you actually need in your first draft. Long paragraphs of description can be trimmed later, but those are things that YOU need to know during the early writing process.
- Do not make your story "episodic": sure, bomb threats and explosions are great hooks and very engaging – but only in the right context. If you throw dynamite in for effect, your reader will start to lose faith in you to tell a good story.
- Do not expect too much from yourself. Remember that rewriting can only do good for your story.
- Have self confidence. If you expect yourself to fail, you will.
- Do not write expecting bundles of money. Money in writing is all about luck. And good luck to you.
- Avoid using too many clichés or stock phrases. They have their place, but over using them is boring and uninventive.
- Try not to lose heart in your book. For example, when you get to a boring bit and stop for the night, you might not want to go back to that part. If you feel that way, try writing an exciting bit to get yourself motivated again.
- Do not be disappointed if you lose heart. Many writers write tens, even hundreds of stories a year, some which never get past the first page let alone the first chapter! You'll know after a while if a story you're writing

has really captivated your attention and imagination. If you don't feel this right away, keep developing ideas and trying! Sometimes it helps to listen to music in between moments when you're writing. It helps you think of different scenarios and chapters, and how characters might feel about these adventures, themselves or even other characters around them.

- Never give up! Some people will discourage you but many more will love what you write if you love it as well. Write with passion.
- Jot down your thoughts while writing; even when you're not, its good to see what you were thinking before on the subject just in case another day you think differently. It might become a handy argument and you could see within yourself for the way you truly think and believe.
- Have fun with your writing and let your imagination go wild. Play with words and enjoy yourself. Never get discouraged or let people bring you down.
- Keep a dictionary and Thesaurus with you while writing.
- Read Literature often to improve your writing skills.

Things You Will Need

- A quiet place to work and think, A computer, Paper and pen, A note pad or journal.
- An open mind, Imagination and determination, A good story idea.
- A plot line with a beginning, middle and an end.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Creative writing is a personal enterprise. You must make up your mind to write. What we are trying to do in this course is to guide you in this task which you have decided to undertake. The only thing you need is discipline.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have been exposed to some of the features you need to be a good novelist, poet or playwright. It is up to you to utilize the advice.

6.0 TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENT.

Draw your writing schedule and an outline of a novel you intend to write in the next unit.

7.0. REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Read as many works on Creative Writing.

Go to the Internet and search for creative writing, how to write a novel, a play or a poem.

UNIT 4 REALISM AND THE NOVEL

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Realism
 - 3.2 Realistic Characters
 - 3.3. Realistic Experience
 - 3.4 Realistic Setting
 - 3.5 Plot and Structure
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

I have decided to include this unit before you commence on the actual writing of your novel in the next unit. Realism is a very important aspect of the novel. The novel is expected to present a slice of life and this unit presents an elaborate guide on ways of ensuring that the novel you are about to write will satisfy that requirement.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Create realistic characters in your work
- Present realistic experience
- Employ setting in illuminating your characters

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Realism is the defining characteristics which differentiates the works of early 18th Century novelists from previous fiction. The novel is realistic not only because it presents the mean side of life but because of its attempt to portray a wide range of human experience. Realism in the novel is not so much as what is presented but how it is presented. This means that you should pay particular attention to the way you present your story in the novel you are about to write in the next unit.

Realism therefore is a concept associated with the illusion of reality presented in prose fiction, especially the novel. It distinguishes the novel from the plot of earlier writings. The plot of the novel is not usually taken from myth, history or legend so it deviates from the use of traditional plot found in these earlier prose narratives. In the novel, there are realistic characterization and setting. The characters are given proper names that we find in everyday life and are seen as particular individuals in the contemporary social environment.

Time process is very important in the novel (you must have learnt more about time and space in the novel in the course material, *Introduction to Prose Fiction*). Time process enables the round characters to gain experience and grow to maturity in the fictional world of the novel. When you present realistic characters, your reader would sympathise, empathize, and identify with them. Time and space differentiates drama from the novel because the playwright condenses information about the character in dialogue and short descriptions in the stage direction. The novelist on the other hand has the time and space to present the minutest details about the characters and this includes their innermost thoughts.

Realism is applied exclusively to the novel through the presentation of credible incidents that must be as close as possible to life. In spirit of realism, you as the author should take a bit of information, character traits from different people and artistically synthesizes the various traits of living people and combines them in a single character whose existence is fictitious but whose traits are a conglomeration of various people, past and present.

One major factor in realism is realistic details through vivid description of characters and their actions so strive for that.

3.2 Realistic Characters

The novel deals realistically with human relationships, with Man in society in relation to other beings. You should therefore expose your protagonist to other characters and through their inter- personal interaction, he gains in experience, progresses from innocence to knowledge and may have to come to terms with reality. The novel differs from the short story and drama you have the time and space to be much more discursive and relaxed in your presentation. Where the short story concentrates on a particular situation or episode making rather sparing use of dialogue, In the novel you have the liberty to expose your characters to several situations and episodes, exploring each in depth and making use of a great deal of dialogue. You should bear in mind that all novels that are “successful works of art contained two elements- life and pattern” (Kettle 28). This means that your novel must be a reflection of life and of human experience. You must therefore to your reader with words, a representation of a realistic world peopled by realistic men and women that are engaged in realistic activity.

The detailed description of the individual’s inner life could also be a component of realism. However this depends on the point of view you are using. You recall the discussion on different points of view. Which point of view would you use if you intend to explore the inner life of your characters? It is not every novel that includes minute and detailed descriptions of places and objects but try to do so. Different novelists will balance this aspect of the novel in varying proportions. The important point here is that the world you present in the novel should reflect normal human activity, that the people should look like realistic men and women

and the subject matter, relationships and incidents should be plausible and applicable to the human race. This will indicate according Ian Watt that a novels realism resides not just in the kind of life it presents but also in the way it presents it (11). You are therefore obliged to convince your reader of the reality of the world he has created and you can only achieve this through your technique.

3.3. Realistic Experience

A good novel is expected to have the capacity to enrich the readers' understanding of life, expand the range of their range experience, sympathies, develop their minds, deepen their knowledge of the socio-political, cultural and historical issues of the world around them. You should bear this in mind and ask yourself if your work is going to do that. Novelists have written about almost all the themes you can think about. We have read a lot about colonialism, wars, corruption, greed in developing countries, political instabilities, bad leadership, injustice, oppression and other vices that plague the society. We have also read about rich cultural heritage of a people, upholding of values and standards which have a universal applicability in novels. It means that you are not saying anything new but what makes your work new and unique is your manner of presentation. Your ability to create a coherent unified work marks your work as good. You should therefore pay serious attention to your technique. Narrative technique is not just the narrative method or first or third person narrative but the various devices you can employ to tell his story in such a way that it presents the desired spice of life. You can achieve this through the management of judgment and the blending of scenes, summary, and description of events and actions.

A great novel is expected to present a coherent unified, fictions prose narrative, with a beginning, middle, and an end "...with the materials

deployed in such a way as to give the image coherence, continuity, and wholeness, and with certain tensions and anticipations regarding central characters carried through the entire length of the work to be resolved only at the end” (Stevick 4).

Some novelists tell and others show but good novelists do not tell, he must show remember our discussion on showing and telling. You must strive to show through dramatization of action and impersonal and objective presentation of your subject matter. Impersonality is very important because “The act of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of a story as a matter to be shown, to be so exhibited, that it will tell itself (Lubbock38). Impersonal narration or showing has the advantage of involving your reader more easily in the fictional world since your reader would see the events through the eyes of one or more of the characters.

3.4. Realistic Setting

Setting is a very important aspect of the successful novel. The detailed presentation of all aspects of the characters environment is one of the things that will give solidity and a sense of realism to your novel. It involves not just the physical and historical setting, the creation of an appropriate atmosphere or background but you can also use setting to illuminate your characters by employing it much more meaningfully to reflect the character’s changing moods, fortunes or state of mind.

3.5. Plot and Structure

The formal elements of plot structure and coherence are very important but in addition there should be a significance and moral design in your plot. You are not expected to present merely a photographic copy of life or a reportorial account of it in the name of realism, you should imply

what you think of the aspect of life you are presenting. You should not just copy life but must clarify and evaluate issues situations and characters. You should try to enlarge your readers, sympathies or expose them to areas of experience they never thought existed. In your plot structure you should attempt to “...impose some order on the chaos of experience ...for characters to be real... the plot ought to cause surprise” (Forster 91) so suspense is equally important in you plot.

Some writers project their moral or social designs. In this case the writer starts with an idea, a message or some moral significance he wishes to convey, and then sets out to create characters and situations to embody the idea. If you are in this group, don't be so preoccupied with your message that will fail to create realistic characters and situations that will convincingly carry the message. If you fail to do that, you may end up writing a moral fable or a propaganda tract.

Plot and structure are aspects of the shape of the novel but let us distinguish the two. Plot is the summary of the events of the novel and in addition, it is the sequence of events as they are brought about by the interaction of character, thoughts, actions and changes in fortunes. Structure is simply how the plot is organized. The division of the work into chapters or parts or movements depicts the structure. The use of chapters or parts depends on the discretion of the writer but most writers use chapters. In a good structure a succeeding chapter is expected to balance an earlier one and linked to the preceding one. Even when there are flashbacks, there is always a link between the chapters and this adds to the unity and coherence of novel.

You could present human experience in a linear chronological sequence with events moving from the beginning through a series of complications in the middle to the resolution in the end. On the other hand, you could dispense with chronology but ensure that your flashbacks and digressions

are logically related. There is nothing wrong with any sequence as long as there is some coherence, some logic in its organization.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In the novel you are about to write, ensure that you achieve realism and you can only do this through the technique you adopt because it is not possible to discuss your novel as a work of art without discussing the technique. It is important for your reader to pay attention to what you have to say novelists has to say but more important to pay attention to the way in which you say it. Remember that you must not separate technique and subject matter. The totality of a novel's impact and meaning is an amalgamation of subject matter, plot, structure, style, and narrative method- all the various facets of the novel. You should therefore that you study, understand and apply the various elements and devices of the novel so that in the end you will be able to produce an enriching artistically satisfying novel.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have seen in this unit that writing your novel, you must present a fully realized body of life and create realistic characters and situations. This shows that realism is a very important component of the successful novel, although it is difficult to define realism. You have a duty to convince the reader of the individuality of your characters by highlighting in detail their particular traits and defining their environment precisely. I will advise you to read one of these classical novels and note the description of incidents, episodes, places, objects and actions in minute details. Some of the novels are Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* And Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and note in particular the application of realistic sense of time in these and some other African novels.

5.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

List four areas you would pay particular attention to, to ensure that you achieve realism in the novel you are about to write.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Forster, E. M (1981). *Aspects of the Novel Abinger Edition*. Middlesex: Penguin.

Stevick, Philip ed.(1967). *The Theory of the Novel*. New York: The Free Press.

Kettle Arnold(1960). *An Introduction to the English Novel*. New York: Harper Touchbooks,

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UNIT 5: WRITE A NOVEL IN 100 DAYS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Day 1 – 20 The Basics

3.2 Day 21 – 29 Starting

3.3. Day 30 – 60 Writing

3.4 Day 6- - 80 Re-writing

3.6 Day 81 – 100 Revision, Editing

8.0 Conclusion

9.0 Summary

10.0 Tutor- Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, which is the last, you are going to put into practice all you have learnt. Try to follow this schedule and see if you can write a novel in 100 days! I saw this on the internet and decided to present it to you with some modifications. You can visit the internet on your own. There are many essays and guidelines on novel writing on the net.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to write a novel following the day to day schedule.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 *Write a novel in 100 days – The Basics Day 1 - 20*

On this your first day of writing your novel, make a promise to yourself that you are going to do it. This is critical. Without that commitment, you may as well save

your pencils and paper. It is not going to be easy but it can happen. Remember, write as often as you can. That is what writers do – they write.

Each writer has his or her own writing hours. For instance, it is said that “Graham Greene wrote before breakfast, Balzac wrote into the night, Dickens wrote during the day, while Trollope worked daily from 5.am and wrote 2,500 words before going to work. Zola wrote everyday from 10.am to 1.pm covering 4 – 5 quarto sheets each day” (Ike 130). Chukwuemeka Ike explains that as a Registrar of a University, he used to work from 8.am to 6.00pm. this means that by supper time, he was too tired to write, yet he had a “burning urge to write” so he started writing from 4.00am till 6.00am and it became part of him.

Carve out specific time to write. This is important because in the course of writing a novel, you’ll get discouraged, bored, angry, or otherwise fed up, and when you start feeling that way, you’ll need clearly defined patterns to keep yourself working.

In the first week, decide upon the story you are going to write. You might not work out every detail, but today you are going to begin the process. You are not going to procrastinate – procrastination is your enemy. The time has come to stop merely talking about writing your novel. Plan it now. What kind of novel appeals to you? What really gets your juices flowing? Is it a good murder mystery, science fiction, a thriller, romance or general fiction?

It doesn’t matter what kind of book you decide to write. There are no rules other than that the story has to be very, very interesting. It can be exciting, scary, fun, funny or sad – but it must not bore the reader. Although there are no rules about the story ideas, I would offer you one caution: think small. One of the worst mistakes most beginning novelists make is thinking big, trying to come up with an

end of the world story, in the belief that big is better. That is not true. Keep your story/idea small and focused. Look into your creative soul and search for a little story but one that has real meaning to you. We are all part of the human family. If you create a story that has deep meaning to you, chances are that it will have deep meaning for the rest of us. Present your experience truthfully.

Start writing but don't be afraid to write down scenes or sections that don't lead anywhere. Don't discard them if they are not leading anywhere. Follow the advise of Joan Didion who pins them on a board with the idea of picking them up later. Quite early in her novel. *A Book of Common Prayer*, she says, she wrote about Charlotte Douglas going to the airport, it was a couple of pages of prose that she liked, but she couldn't find a place for it. "I kept picking this part up and putting it in different places", she writes, "but it kept stopping the narrative; it was wrong everywhere, but I was determined to use it". She finally found a spot for it in the middle of the book. "Sometimes you can get away with things in the middle of the book" (Internet).

Apart from writing about something you know, you can write about something you love. It does not matter what it is, just love it, what you need here is research. Undertake a thorough research to ensure that you present an authentic experience.

Let your events proceed from the individual to the group to create a vivid picture. For instance never say that the bomb exploded and 15,000 people were killed. Start with "Jamie and Suzy were walking in the park with their grandmother when the earth opened up or when the bomb exploded and killed Jamie and several others.

More about formula. When Ernest Hemmingway started as a young reporter for the Kansas City Star, he was given a style sheet with four basic rules:

- Use short sentences
- Use short first paragraphs
- Use vigorous English
- Be positive, never negative (Internet)

Asked about these rules years later, he said, “Those were the best rules I ever learned in the business of writing. I’ve never forgotten them. No one with any talent, who feels and writes truly about the things he is trying to say, can fail to write well if he abides by them”. So abide by these rules as your thoughts flow freely on your paper.

Another formula which we could borrow from John Baldwin which he used to structure his novel is hereby presented.

1. The hero is an expert
2. The villain is an expert
3. You must watch all of the villainy over the shoulder of the villain
4. The hero has a team of experts in various fields behind him\
5. Two or more on the team must fall in love
6. Two or more on the team must die
7. The villain must turn his attention from his initial goal to the team.
8. The villain and the hero must live to conclude the story (Internet).

3.2 Starting Day 21 - 29

Some characters will be major ones, around whom the story will pivot; others will play bit parts, but these will be critical too, as every player must have a reason for being in the story. If they don’t have a reason for being in your novel, they’ll slow down the story, and slowness bores readers. Keep asking questions, “why?” as you reach the end of the second week of defining characters, you will have a stack of 5x7 character cards that spell out intimate details about the personal life of each

and every character in your story, down to their waist measurement and favourite colour.

Voice

Your “voice” is your choice. Your “style” is your style. Don’t attempt to “sound like” some famous writer. Many beginning writers feel that they have to add something to their “voice” on the printed page. Who you are on the page is who you are in life, just as sophisticated, just as worldly, or not. It doesn’t matter. Keep writing and keep cutting away at the awkwardness that might creep into your writing. Be natural. As the French novelist, Francois Rene de Chateaubriand wrote, “The original writer is not one who imitates nobody, but one whom nobody can imitate”(Ike 34).

Outline

Prepare a rough outline of the story’s action from Chapter One through to the end. Commit yourself to a point of view early in your planning. This way the reader can get a footing in the story. Once you have decided which character will be the viewpoint character, stick with your decision. Do not shift point of view. If you decide on multiple points of view, show the story through one character at a time, in order to avoid confusing the reader. When using characters to present clues, do not forget body language. Nonverbal signals can communicate much more effectively than words.

Do nothing – absolutely nothing – on your novel in terms of actual writing until your plotting (along with your characters and their roles in the drama) is complete and down on paper. Remember that plot must have a beginning, middle and an end. Do not fall victim to that old author line: “I just start out with a basic idea and a couple of characters. I never know where I’m going. I let the characters tell the story for me”. That may work for brilliant and experienced novelists, but most of

us need a clear road map if we aren't going to get ourselves and our readers hopelessly lost.

Hang the cards and outline you have developed around your office or room so that they can be easily read.

3.3 Day 30 – 60 Writing

Now you have made:

1. a commitment to write
2. a working schedule
3. a story idea
4. a list of characters
5. a detailed plot of the entire story
6. a short description of what your novel is about

Set a goal for yourself to write at least four pages a day. That is 300 – 325 words, double-spaced. Some days you will write one page; others you will write 15 pages. Try to average at least four pages a day.

Your novel is a work of fiction, but that does not mean that you do not need to present your facts in a straight forward manner. Nothing turns a reader off quite as fast as a wrong fact. And nothing gives a story the ring of authenticity like the right fact or detail. Use the Internet for research. It's fast, easy, and inexpensive. Every library in the world is open to you. Look, too, at magazines and newspapers published at the same time and place as the setting of your novel.

Inject dialogue as you write. Conversation is not dialogue. Dialogue has a purpose. It pushes the story forward. It keeps the reader tuned in to the story, and makes a person feel at the heart of the action. Therefore, don't describe distant events

second hand. Put the reader in the middle of your story's action and your dialogue will sing naturally. Keep your talk efficient and forceful. And always make certain the reader knows who is speaking.

Without descriptions the reader doesn't have a sense of place and time and mood which are very critical for your story. But with too much, your story will bog down and get boring. Get in, give the telling details. Then get out. Don't drown in your descriptions. Let each sentence count. Grab your readers attention from the first line. (or your ideas, new and unique – that's what surprises, satisfies and pleases readers. Write with imagination.

Don't get discouraged. Keep writing. Remember the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Ironweed* by William Kenney was rejected by 13 publishers before Saul Bellow intervened on its behalf. Bear in mind that writing a novel is not like writing a letter. Writing a novel is mentally exhausting, far harder than a nine-to-five job. When you write a novel, you live the lives of your characters. Persistence is what is required. Novelist Harlan Ellison once said that "...if anybody can stop you from being a writer, then don't be one".

Go to the library and browse through books on food and gardening. Authors of these books describe smells, tastes, touches, and even sound in precise detail. When writing, always mention scents and tactile sensations. Good description observes all the senses. Select your details, but be specific, present concrete experiences. In the words of Strunk and White in *The Elements of Style*, "if those who have studied the art of writing are in accord on one point it is on this: The surest way to arouse and hold the reader is to be specific, definite and concrete" (quoted in Hall 340).

There's an old adage in writing: "Don't tell, show". It means, don't tell us about anger, show us the anger. We then will read and feel the anger. Don't tell the reader what to feel. Show the reader the characters and situation, and that feeling of anger (or sorrow, love, honesty, justice, etc) will awaken in them.

3.4 Day 61 – 80 Re-Writing

If you have written five pages a day for the last 60 days, you have written about 90,000 words. It is time to begin to rewrite and edit your novel.

You have written approximately 300 pages but are these pages a novel? Do they have a beginning, a middle, and an end? Re-read your novel and ask yourself: have I raised a question or presented a puzzle, and then solved it? If you can give a satisfactory answer to this question, then continue. Do a spell check of your book. Print out your book. Place the book in a safe place and leave it alone for two weeks.

Now that you've been away from it for a while, it is time to start editing your novel. Go back and read the whole novel from start to finish, noting lines and phrases that are awkward, but keep reading. Don't bother to rewrite, not yet. Do chunk editing. Cut away from the bone of the story. Go chapter by chapter and get rid of irrelevances. Re-read your pages – one at a time – out loud to yourself to eliminate any awkward sentence structure. Go back and cut out one excessive metaphor or simile from each page. But please never cut anything out of a book you regret later. Cut out one adjective or adverb in each paragraph. Re-read your novel again and look just for the clichés. Cut: "one fell swoop," "pretty as a picture," "in my mind's eye," "right as rain".

3.5 Editing/Revision

Review your manuscript and make sure you have given your readers a picture of your characters early in the story. Readers don't need to know everything, but they do need to know what is physically important about each character. Use the five senses to get your characters down on paper.

Identify the climactic scene at the end of your book, a scene that resolves the conflict. Re-read the endings of your favourite novels and re-read your own. How does your book match up?

Don't mail your novel yet. It is now time to research and find the right publisher. Write a brief synopsis – one paragraph, no more – of your novel. Make it strong and lively. This is an important sales tool. Make a photocopy or print out the first fifty pages or so of your novel. Try to leave off at a point where the reader will want to know more of the story. Write a very brief letter to publisher include the one-paragraph description of your novel. And include one brief paragraph about yourself. Do sound professional. Do not say, "I always wanted to be a writer..." or "I can write better than the junk I see.."

If you are sending your manuscript to more than one publisher at the same time, you **MUST** tell them that this is "a multiple submission." Entrust your manuscript to FedEx. Keep your receipt. Note the date on your calendar. Don't expect to hear anything for two months. Buy yourself a drink. Amuse yourself by thinking about who should star in your next novel. Remind yourself that you still have to wait for two months or more. Do not call the publisher. If two full months pass and you hear nothing, you can write a brief note of inquiry.

Remind yourself that everyone – everyone! – gets rejected while you are waiting, start another novel so that you will not lose the plan and rhythm you have created for creative writing.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Writing a novel is not an easy task. You need to create a schedule and stick to it. For you to succeed, you must write something everyday. We suggest an average of four pages a day. You may decide to write in longhand before using the computer or you may use the computer straight. I leave you with the advice of Ernest Hemingway “You must be prepared to work always without applause. When you are excited about something is when the first draft is done. But no one can see it until you have gone over it again and again; until you have communicated the emotions, the sights, and the sounds to the reader” (quoted in Hall 142)

5.0 SUMMARY

We have tried to lead you to write a novel in 100 days. As I said in the introduction, I got this from the Internet and modified it to suit our purpose. For more detailed information on this visit <http://www.peacecorpswriters.org> “How to write a novel in 100 days or less” by John Coyne.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Submit the synopsis of the novel you are writing.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Coyne, John (2010) “How to write a Novel in 100 Days or Less”

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Press

MODULE 5: CREATIVE WRITING IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM.

UNIT I: OTHER GUIDES FOR EFFECTIVE WRITING

CONTENTS

- 1.0. Introduction
- 2.0. Objectives
- 3.0. Main Content
 - 3.1 Global Village
 - 3.2 Research
 - 3.3 Write
 - 3.4 Publish
- 4.0. Conclusion
- 5.0. Summary
- 6.0. Tutor- Marked Assignment
- 7.0. References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We have concluded the course in the last unit. I hope that by now you must have written a poem, a playlet and a short story. You must have made up your mind to be a creative writer and you must have chosen the genre you would want to write. This work will not be complete if we do not mention the opportunities that are available to you on the internet. In this last module therefore, you will be informed of how you can improve your writing or even publish the one you have written on the internet.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module, you should be able to

- Identify some helpful sites on the internet
- Enter for some literary competitions

- Attend creative writing workshops if you can afford it.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Global Village

We hear the expression that the world is becoming a global village. I think that it is already global villages especially with the introduction of the internet where you can find almost any thing you want. People buy goods and services, read national and international news from the internet. If you are conducting a research on any field, the internet provides abundant materials for you. All you need is to log on to Google and search for the word/phrase or the term/name you are looking for. You will be surprised at the result you will get. So as a student and especially as a creative writer, in addition to your dictionary, make the internet your companion.

Once you enter the word or phrase you are searching for, a list of “results will appear”. Read through them and open the one that is likely to contain information on your quest. Usually, I start with the Wikipedia and in many instances, it provides the desired information. If you are not satisfied with the information given and you need more you close that result and open another one. Continue like that until you are satisfied.

3.2 Research

Remember that we said that you can write on any subject as long as you are passionate about it. Once you love it you can write a masterpiece on it but you need to carry out a research to ensure that you are presenting an authentic account. In this form of creative writing you may not necessarily come from that environment or belong to that age but through adequate research, you can write it. Ola Rotimi and Ahmed Yerima who have written classical historical plays did not live in the age where the events took place but were able to present authentic accounts of the clash between the colonial masters in their plays *Oba Ovoranmwem Nogbaisi* and *Attahiru* respectively. In the preface to *Attahiru*,

Yerima acknowledged those who assisted him during his research before the play was written.

In this millennium which is popularly referred to as the information age, this type of research becomes easier. You may not need to travel to Sokoto as Yerima did but could obtain the basic information about Attahiru and how he resisted the colonial incursion to his caliphate. As we said in Module 1, all you need is to get the basic authentic information and present your story from your perspective depending on the message you want to send to your audience.

3.3 Write

You can find many sites on the internet that offer courses in creative writing. Some of them offer guides and tips that could help you in your writing career but there are some institutes where you need to register, pay some fees, enroll and take the courses. These institutes in most cases, assign instructors to their students and the students are given tests which the instructors evaluate and as they work closely, such tests are given and evaluated until a particular work is completed. All these are conducted on-line so for you to participate adequately, you must be connected to the Internet. Institute of Children's Literature guide interested candidates to write children's literature. However, before you are admitted, you are given aptitude tests. Your performance in the test determines your enrolment because you **MUST** pass this test before you are enrolled. According to the information they provided on-line, "...unlike courses that accept all applicants, no one can enroll in Writing for Children and Teenagers without passing this test". However there is a promise that:

By the time you finish our course, you will complete at least one manuscript suitable for submission to an editor or publisher; we'll show you how to sell your

work to them; and we will teach you how to continue on you own as a freelance writer.

They went further to state the advantages of aptitude testing:

Your test results tell us much more than whether or not you are ready for your course. They also help your instructor to determine the right level at which to begin your training.

As you progress, your needs and goals will probably change; as they do, your instructor's teaching plan for you will change, too. Your instructor's prime objective is to help you achieve your writing goals (<http://www.institutechildrenslit.com/download.htm>)

You can get more of such institutes on the internet depending on the genre you are interested in. There are also writers' workshops that are organized annually. The website will be provided for you in the reference section of this module.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The internet is a valuable asset for the creative writer, you can conduct your research, or even look up the meaning of words, check synonyms to enrich your writing. It provides an opportunity for you to enroll in creative writing institutes on-line or attend workshops that will improve your writing.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have seen in this unit that creative writing in this millennium is an exciting experience. The Internet is there for your research and it provides guides for effective writing. In addition, the computer provides a better alternative to the typewriter. You can enrich your vocabulary as you write

with the computer facilities for cross-checking spellings and synonyms and antonyms. All these help to make you work better. You also have an opportunity of publishing your work on-line.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT.

List at least five websites that could be useful to you as a literary artist

7.0 REFERENCES /FURTHER READING

http://www.institutechildrenlit.com/how_we_teach.htm

“Creativity Workshop” <admin@creativityworkshops.com>