



ENG 863

**STUDIES IN WRITTEN AFRICAN LITERATURE
COURSE MODULE/GUIDE**

**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA
2020**

UNIT 1: Course Outline for ENG 863: Studies in Written African Literature.

Introduction:

The beginnings of African theatrical writings are rooted in the rituals, the sacrifice, the magic, the festivals and the community celebrations that characterized traditional Nigerian societies. The rituals comprised enactments by the elders, at the death or burials of an initiate or the recounting of significant activities or events related to victories during inter-tribal wars. The sacrifices were offerings by village-heads, titled men and chief priests of ancestral shrines, for propitiation, protection and care. The magic of witch-doctors and seers helped the living to communicate with their dead ancestors. The witch doctors also had the powers of securing life in contiguity.

The festival dances of the farmers were organized to praise the gods for fertility and for helping to increase agricultural produce, while the community celebrations at the end of the year or season, were organized to thank the gods for good health and preservation during the year. The moonlight stories, folktales, jokes and recitals were performed as recreation, relaxation, entertainment and education, usually by the young people. The elders engaged themselves in wise-sayings, proverbs and tongue-twists as they drank the evening palm-wine and enjoyed themselves in heart-warming arguments about the incidents of the day, of yesterday's memories and of tomorrow's hopes. They discussed such issues and community relations, marriage and family issues, preservation of societal norms and values and mutual co-existence. All these formed the sources of written African drama.

Written African drama dates as far back as the mid-1940s when a few educated Africans felt the need to document their experiences, stories of their lives to written form to be enacted. They saw the need to focus on exerting their identity and preserve their values. For the early African writers, African literature was to espouse the thoughts and aspirations of a people craving for identity and national consciousness, preservation of African culture and the need to speak with one voice against an identified common enemy - the colonialists. The meaning of their culture and the beauty of their arts was close to their heart. The destruction and brutalization of their image, culture and traditions by colonialism tended to make African culture irrelevant in world history. They saw the need to rise to the challenge of giving valency to African traditions and cultures by demonstrating through their works the need to defend "the wounded and denigrated African" who was seen as savage without humanity. The early writers therefore saw their writings as a way of showing their oneness as a people, fighting for a cause. It

must be emphasized that written African drama is culture-based and derived its strength from traditional sources and that the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of African culture, traditions and history slowed down the development and documentation of African history.

However, as African writing and literature developed certain traits or characteristics began to emerge. For example the drama from West Africa was replete with issues of cultural identity, culture conflict between western culture and traditional African Culture, a culture which brought confusion in the mind of the African. At times the African found himself at the crossroads of the two cultures and found it difficult lay claim to any clear identity. For the South African writers and playwrights, their major concerns were with the issue of apartheid and racial discrimination by the white settlers in their land. It was such a dominant feature of their literature that almost every genre of their literature – poetry, prose, drama and orature used it to cry for liberation and freedom. East African literature was characterized by the fight for liberation and independence from white domination and freedom from their hands and from being enslaved and dehumanized. It was a story of comfort in desolation, a fight for liberation from oppression from power drunkenness, from poverty and from deceitfulness. It is against these characteristics that early African dramatic literature sprang before the 1970s.

Course Aims and Objectives:

(a) Course No. and Title: ENG 863: Studies in Written African Literature.

(b) Course Description

The course is a 3 unit course on written African drama, designed to acquaint the student with the works of major playwrights in contemporary written African literature as it relates to the relevant issues and concerns of the people. It will identify some selected dramatists, examine their works and initiate a discussion on the themes, plot, language and characterization in those works. The course will sharpen the insight and intelligence with which students read dramatic compositions of the time. It is expected that the student will study the chosen texts carefully and respond to the questions at the end of each unit. The course has been broken into 8 units consisting of 14 texts. The playwrights to be studied are: Femi Osofisan, Wole Soyinka, Tess Onwueme, Zulu Sofola from Nigeria and Ama Ata Aidoo of Ghana, representing West Africa. Athol Fugard represents South Africa and Ngugi Wa Thiongo represents East Africa. Two plays from each playwright were examined and this yielded a total of 14 play texts to be studied for this course.

(c) Prerequisite:

It is expected that a student registered in this course must have taken ENG 162: Elements of Drama.

Course Aims and Objectives:

(a) **Course Aims:**

- a. To expose the student to the enjoyment of drama as a reflection of the peoples' life and culture.
- b. To acquaint the student with the general outlook of written African drama from West Africa, East Africa and South Africa.
- c. To encourage the student to appreciate the fact that every written African drama is guided by a theme upon which the whole story revolves.

(b) **Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course, participants in the study programme should be able to:

- (a) Read a minimum of 10 drama texts out of the 14 in this course, from at least 2 regions of Africa. (from either West Africa and East Africa or West Africa and South Africa or South Africa and West Africa).
- (b) Identify the themes in modern African drama and their relevance in the chosen texts.
- (c) Explain a convincing nature of the plot or story line of each text.
- (d) State the peculiarity of any language or linguistic device employed in the play and in creating convincing characters.
- (e) Narrate how African drama reflects the lives and culture of the people at the time the text was written.
- (f) Examine how successful each playwright was, in the handling of the theme of the chosen play.
- (g) Discuss the staging possibilities of the play studied.
- (h) Explain in which way each of the studied texts has appealed to you most (in education, as an entertainment piece, in passing on relevant information, as a persuasive piece of argument or as a motivation towards action).
- (i) Write and submit a one-act drama piece with a current theme, plot and believable characters.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Examine the major aims and objectives of the course on written African literature.

2. Explain the traditional sources of written African drama.
3. “The content of Post-Colonial African drama was a reaction to the poor relationship existing between Africans and their colonizers at the time”. Discuss.

UNIT 2

In this unit, we will study two of Osofisan's plays namely; *The Chattering and the Song* and *Morontudun*.

Professor Babafemi Adeyemi Osofisan, popularly known as Osofisan is a multi-talented creative artist and scholar of remarkable versatility and richness. He is a playwright, director, poet, fiction writer, translator and newspaper columnist. Born in Erunwon, near Ijebu-Ode in 1946 (of an Idomila father) He had his higher education at the Universities of Ibadan, Dakar in Senegal and the Sorbonne in Paris.

Osofisan's flair for literature was revealed when, while still a student at GCI (Government College Ibadan) he won the WNBs Independence Anniversary Essay Prize in 1965. He has produced plays such: *A Restless Run of Locusts*, *The Chattering and the Song*, *The Women of Owu*, *Who's Afraid of Solarin*, *Once Upon Four Robbers*, *Morountodun*, *The Oriki of a Grasshopper*, *Birthdays Are Not For Dying*, *Farwell to a Cannibal Rage*, *Esu and the Vagabond* and several others. He is equally prolific in his scholarly output, where his works in literary criticism have won him respect among his professional colleagues in the academia. He is among the foremost contemporary Nigerian playwrights. The picture he paints of his society shows him as a dramatist with a sensitive eye for the problems of his people.

The Chattering and the Song: is the response to the dictatorial atrocities perpetrated by most African despots and the call for a revolt against oppression, autocracy and dictatorship that will usher in a new society where there will be equality and social justice.

Plot:

This play is structured into a Prologue, Part One, Part Two and Epilogue. The play opens after a wild party with Sontri, drunk. This drunken state indicates/depicts his level of moral collapse and his lack of self-control. It also shows his split personality, depressed mind and the alienating consequences of clashes which made him turn alcoholic as a way out of oppression.

In the prologue, the playwright sows the seed of anticipated revolution, which is announced through the riddle that concentrates on the love affair between Sontri and Tajin. This riddle mirrors the eventual change of status quo. Here, Osofisan subtly foreshadows a change in the status quo when the vampires that suck on the blood of toiling citizens were relieved of their positions of power. In this part, the focus shifts to wedding preparations.

Part 2 is the real centre of dramatic action. Osofisan takes us to the heart of the play. Osofisan employs his typical play-within-a-play technique, to show the crises between Alafin and Latoye, the oppressor and oppressed. In the play-within-the-play, Osofisan recreates the history of Old Oyo Empire during the oppressive and anarchical reign of Bashorun Gaha, who overthrew the reigning Alafin and became a despotic leader. It was said that he killed all the Princes of Oyo except Abiodun because he was crippled on one leg. By the time Abiodun grew up he saw the need for him to challenge and dethrone Bashorun Gaha and bring sanity into the empire.

The story became a good material for Osofisan's use to achieve his vision.

In the playlet, Abiodun is depicted as an automatic leader. The whole playlet, reveals the oppression of the masses in the hands of the despotic rulers. It also showed the gap between the rich and the poor and the determination of the masses, represented by the young revolutionaries like Tajin, Mokan, Leje and Sontri to revolt against the oppressive systems in the society.

Latoye is accused of subversive activities and is brought for trial before Alafin Abiodun. A conversation between him and Latoye reveals the reason why he overthrows the reign of Latoye's father.

Abiodun overthrows the regime of Latoye's father as a rebel, a tyrant and a usurper. But as soon as she gets to the corridors of power, he becomes more intoxicated with power and begins to do the very things he accused Latoye's father of. This is typical of most African military rulers.

Language:

The success of Osofisan's drama rests on his adept use of language to communicate to his audiences and readers. He succinctly matches language to communicate effectively with his audiences and readers. He believes that the English language can be manipulated, transformed to accommodate the vagaries of mood and temper that the African dramatic tradition creates.

Osofisan has good command and use of metaphors that can give force and meaning to his expressions. For example, in the play "the Chattering and the Song", the use of riddle, parables and storytelling techniques are some of the means he employs to communicate with his audience and readers. For example when he asked this question through Latoye ... "but in your reign Abiodun, the elephant eats and nothing remains for the antelope". ... "the buffalo drinks and there is drought in the land", is good use of proverbs to communicate effectively.

Characterization:

In drama, characterization is the creation of human personages with distinct roles and habits, within specific habitat to reflect and match the desired vision and idea of the playwright in a particular play. He portrays that in the African society the individual is an extension of the people, and a whole unto himself, meaning no one is complete without others in the community. Sontri and Leji in collaboration with their new found lovers and disciples, Funlola and Yajin, jointly engineered the eventful dethronement of the king, Alafin Abiodun who has been adjudged to be corrupt, oppressive and tyrannical.

Another character Latoye, a common man, played a complementary role in Sontri and Leji in the process of the king's dethronement.

Self-assessment Exercise

1. Examine the role of "the play within a play".
2. What role did the technique play in advancing the plot of the play?

Tutor Marked Assignment

1. From your study of this play, how can good leadership be achieved?
2. Write briefly on the dramatic techniques employed in the play.
3. Discuss briefly the significance of the weaver birds in the play.
4. Identify the major themes in the play and discuss any 3 of name.

Morontodun

Plot:

The play is crafted from the cleverly selected aspects of the myth Moremi. In this play, the playwright emphasizes the needs for self-sacrifice. If people must evolve a better society, they must be ready to make sacrifices.

Titubi, the protagonist of this play, is fashioned after Moremi in many ways. Titubi, experiences the degrading life of the poor as opposed to her normal luxurious life. While in the camp, she experiences how the oppressed live. She is appalled at the injustices they live with. Having noticed the injustice meted out by the privileged class on the suffering masses, she opts to align with the oppressed to fight and end the injustice. Just as Moremi was involved in a self-sacrificing struggle for peace, Titubi also embarks on this path and like Moremi, she becomes a symbol of hope for the ailing society. After being goaded and humiliated by the Superintendent, Titubi volunteers to help end the revolution by arresting the leader. She emulates Moremi by allowing herself to be arrested.

The revolutionary trait in the play is captured in a play within the play technique. In the Agbokeya peasant uprising (which is similar to the Ibo raiders' episode in Ile-Ife), Titubi is captured and detained. When the peasants raided the prison to release their colleagues, they inadvertently released Titubi as well and she became a friend to Marshal, the peasant leader and gets married to him.

Language:

Osofisan imaginatively reworks the diction of his characters to suit the local milieu of the play. He uses metaphors to give force and meaning to his expression. The use of riddles, parables, storytelling and music is not left out. In this play the technique of oral tradition is used with the storyteller / narrator represented by the director. Through him, the playwright conveys some of his messages. He is the chief source of enlightenment for the audience.

Characterization:

Titubi (Moremi) is the feminine protagonist who engineered the eventual deliverance of her people from the invaders that had plundered the community for years. It is instructive that Titubi abandons her world of aristocratic splendour to come and fight for the poor and the needy on the streets, despite her own class. Marshal, Baba, Kokondi, and Bogunde are the ordinary peasant farmers who organized themselves revolted against oppression, injustice and exploitation by the government in the play. These peasants had shown to the

poor, but hardworking people who “raise chicken without eating them” because they sell them for money, which is an attitude of poor people.

The peasant farmers’ revolt is caused by the poor living conditions and oppressive tax regimes and unjust use of power by the government officials. In spite of the fact that they pay their taxes, the government fails to provide the necessary infrastructure and amenities such as good road, pipe-borne water, hospitals and electricity.

Self-Assessment Exercise:

1. What is the major concern of the playwright in this play?
2. What leadership traits of Queen Moremi have been ascribed to Morontudun?

Tutor-Marked Assignment:

1. Examine the implication of making Titubi play the lead role of redemption of the people in a male dominated society in the play.
2. Discuss characterization in the play Moremi.
3. Write briefly on the significance of Titubi’s transformation in the play.

References / Further Readings

Osofisan Femi. *The Chattering and the Song*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press; 1977.

Osofisan Femi. *Morontudun*. Ibadan: Longman; 1982.

Obafemi, Olu. *Contemporary Nigeria Theatre: Cultural Heritage and Social Vision*. Lagos: CBAAC; 1996.

Nwamuo Chris “Nigerian Theatre in Retrospect: A critical evaluation” *Theatre Forum No. 2*. Ibadan: Universities Theatre Association; 1987

UNIT 3

In this unit we shall consider 2 of Wole Soyinka's plays namely; *The Strong Breed* and *Death and the King's Horseman*.

Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka was born in Ijebu Isara, near Abeokuta in Western Nigeria, on July 13, 1934.

Soyinka grew up, with exposure to both Yoruba and Western culture. After graduation at the University of Leeds in England, he joined London's Royal Court Theatre as a script-writer and then as a writer.

He has written many plays, as well as poetry, criticism and an autobiography. Some of his plays include: *The Swamp Dwellers*, *A Dance of the Forest*, *Death and the King's Horseman*, *The Strong Breed*, *Kongi's Harvest*, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, *The Road*, *The Beatification of Area Boys*, *The Lion and the Jewel*, *Mad Men and Specialists*.

In 1986, he became the first African writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. Soyinka is a well-known intellectual and in Nigeria he is a political activist, speaking and writing against government, corruption and social ills.

The Strong Breed

Introduction:

This is one of the best known plays by Wole Soyinka. It is a tragic play that ends with an individual's sacrifice for the sake of communal benefit. The play centers on the Egungun tradition, a Yoruba festival of the New Year and the ritual of sacrificing a "carrier" of the previous year's evil.

The play refers to the folk tradition by which one person becomes the carrier of community evil and symbolically purifies the village in an annual ritual. Soyinka critically analyses Nigerian culture through this play. Eman the protagonist, takes the role of "carrier" knowing it will result in beating and exile. He does this to spare a young simpleton, the fate.

Plot:

A community in the part of the country in which *The Strong Breed* is set, wants a sacrificial scapegoat to carry the burden of its sins at the beginning of a new year. Usually the scapegoat is a stranger. Eman is a young man, who just came to the village at the onset of his arrival, Sunma, a young lady who liked him summoned and urges him to leave the village before evening because the village has an annual New Year purification rite in which the wrong doings of the villages are heaped on a "carrier" – a stranger- so that community may be

redeemed of its sins and have rejuvenation in all sense. Also that the society will get spiritually strengthened as an aftermath of this sacrifice. He also gets to know about a young simpleton who has been chosen for the deed, against his will. So he (Eman) the stranger in the community, sees it as being wrong and objects to Ifada being an unwilling victim. He said: “why did you pick on a helpless boy?” Obviously he is willing. In my home town, we believe that a man should be willing. A village which cannot produce its own carrier contains no men” (pp: 128-129).

Driven by the blood of a “strong breed” as his family has been termed, he decides to be the carrier and save the child from such humiliating responsibility. Eman becomes the carrier that is whipped, hunted and killed.

His actions re-enact both Christ’s sacrifice and Ogun’s crossing of the abyss between man and the gods.

During his chase, his (Eman) mind is full of his past, about which he learns in a series of flashbacks, how he rebelled against the hypocrisy of an elder responsible for initiation and left the village in a vain search for some kind of truth. He returned after many years to his village and married Omae who, however, dies during child birth, just as the mothers of the strong breed do. In this grief, Eman left his home again to escape being the carrier of his community’s sins in the footsteps of his father. In Eman’s village their custom of cleansing the burden / yoke of the community and its people is slightly different from theirs. In his community, sins are floated away by the flood. Eman’s father has been performing this task for many years: “I have taken down each year’s evils for over twenty years. I hope you would follow me” (p. 133). During the flashback, just before his death, Eman saw his father preparing to undergo the same humiliation he was suffering. Just like his father, he was destined for that. His sacrifice is modelled after Christ, who acted the role as demanded by his father.

By becoming a willing sacrifice which has never been seen or heard of, Eman has not only cleansed the community of sins, but has thrown it into turmoil that challenges the thinking of the past. The fact that a stranger is consciously and willingly sacrificing himself for the ungrateful land got the people and the executioner horrified. Thus he said Eman’s death leaves the community ill at ease with itself which is the worst form of burden to bear.

Characterization:

Soyinka in his plays shows that every character has a significant role to play. He (Soyinka) also uses role names as a means of delineating his characters’

personalities and that names serve as “some sort” of containers carrying meaningful components”. The naming in the play is symbolic.

Eman:

This is a name clipped from Emmanuel, which denotes “God with us” as in (Matt. 3:25). Just as the Messiah (Jesus Christ), Eman prefers to die for the society in place of Ifada the unwilling carrier who is referred to as an idiot. He repudiated his sacramental priest-like role, inherited from his father. As a member of the strong breed family, he was destined to die as a carrier, even though he ran away from his home town, trying to escape from following his father’s footsteps. He couldn’t run that far, it still caught up with him. Eman is sensitive to human needs regardless of kinship. a stranger is required to bear the evil of the village, a task no villager has the moral strength to do. He died for greedy set of people, just like Christ for humans.

There are many aspects to Eman’s acceptance of the role of a carrier. In the first place, he is motivated by his heritage. He offers himself to redeem others; he is a willing scapegoat. This is his way of expressing love, for as he told Sunma, “love comes easily with strangers”.

Old Man:

Eman’s father, who is also a strong breed and has been performing the ritual act of carrying the burden / yolk of his folk to the river for 20 year. He tries to encourage his son Eman to follow the family way of being a strong breed too and to carry the burden of his folks. The old man is not only Eman’s father, but also the immortal spirit of the archetypal carrier, which indicates why he has knowledge of the future. (Just like God our Saviour’s father) which can be evidenced in 2 respects; (1) that Eman would be a carrier, “stay longer and you will answer the urge of your blood”, (pp134) an also that Omae will die during childbirth. “Since you sent her to stay with me, I lived the burden of knowing that this child would die bearing your son”. (PP 183).

Sunma:

Eman’s lover / girlfriend, looking at the symbolic meaning of the name Sunma (it is the end of a period or year) which suggests the time of the play. This name is said to be homophonous to sun man. Componentially the sun has the following attributes: harshness + heat + light. All these attributes come to form “sun man”. This indicate the irony of naming in the play. As the light in the village, she is the only one who doesn’t approve of her people’s culture of annual human sacrifice. As a strong and stern person, she is the only person who

engages her father Jaguna (Army Chief) in a physical combat (p. 28). As seen in her father's statement "... my own daughter? ... and for a stranger... (p. 29)".

It shows that as Eman's girlfriend, she tried defending her stranger friend. The norm is that Sunma will display the attributes of a "sun like" person (i.e soldier's daughter) and not being an idiot just because of a stranger.

Ifada:

Ifada is a Yoruba expression Ifa da denoting (the oracle divines or godsend). He is not valued because he is a stranger, as seen in the conversation below;

Eman; Yes. But why did you pick on the helpless boy. Obviously he is not willing.

Jagunda: What is the man talking about? Ifada is a godsend. Does he have to be willing?

Eman: In my home, we believe a man should be willing (p. 18).

Oroge: Mister Eman ... No one in his right senses would do such job. Why do you think we give refuge to idiots like him? You see there is a purpose in that (p.19). The answer is not far-fetched – he is accommodated to be used for sacrifice. He lives to die.

Jagunda:

Jagunda is a Yoruba expression for "fight the ground battle" (an imperative mood). Jagunda in this text is Sunma's father, (Chief of Army). He is the assailant of the 2 strangers (Ifada and Eman) in the play. As a fighter he is to fight with perceived enemies and strangers like Eman and Ifada. The end is to indicate the bravery and loyalty to profession. In the play his end is to ensure a carrier is provided for ritual ceremony. He eventually gets a willing carrier in Eman. This led to a physical combat with his daughter who had become the stranger's friend.

Oroge:

Extracted or coined from the Yoruba expression "Orojeje" meaning speak soft words. He (Orogoe) is a speaker of soft words. He speaks those words with the aim of pacifying tensed situations like the arrest of Ifada and during the dispute between Jagunda and his daughter Sunma. The act is affirming the Yoruba saying that when the tone is calm, the bearer mediates in quarrels, also that soft words attract kolanut from docket, while harsh words attract word from a sheath. He manifests all the qualities highlighted above. In a smiling mood he convinced Eman that Ifada will be "the most joyous creature in the festival" if the later can

be released to him. He settles quarrel for Jagunda and Sunma. He cautions Jagunda (who advances aggressively) against the use of force on Eman as seen below thus:

Oroge: Patience Jagunda ... if you want the new year to cushion Oroge than be gentle. Jagunda even accuses him of not shouting at Eman (as a carrier) in the extract.

Jagunda: You were ... looking at him ... why didn't you shout? (pp. 27).

Soyinka's character in the text bears different names which reflect diverse ethnolinguistic values.

Language:

Soyinka uses English to create a text based on the tradition of Yoruba land and uses English innovatively to dive into the world of the Yoruba proverbs.

Almost all the characters in *The Strong Breed* aside from Eman, bear names coined out of a Yoruba proverb or adage. He endows his play with a strong Yoruba sentiment through his vast knowledge of Yoruba proverbs.

The characters act, based on the meaning of their name. The play is full of metaphors, proverbs and speech functions such as affirmations, command etc.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the view that the tradition of Egungun sacrifice really cleanses the land.
2. Examine the relevance of Eman's selfless sacrifice.

Tutor-Marked Assignment:

1. Identify the major theme examined in this play and discuss any 2 of them exhaustively.
2. How significant is Ifada in the play?
3. In what ways do worship, belief, the family and tradition control human behaviour as discussed in this play?

Death and the King's Horseman

This is a play by Wole Soyinka based on a real incident that took place in Nigeria during British Colonial rule. The horseman of a Yoruba King was prevented from committing ritual suicide by the colonial authorities.

In addition to the British intervention, Wole Soyinka calls the horseman's own conviction towards suicide into question, posing a problem that throws off the community's balance.

Soyinka wrote the play in Cambridge, where he was a fellow at Churchill College during his political exile from Nigeria. He has also written a preface to the play, explaining what he sees as the greatest misconceptions in understanding it.

In particular, he says that the play should be considered as "clash of culture". Rather, the play demonstrates the need for interaction between African and European cultures, as per Soyinka's post – Biafran cultural philosophy.

Plot:

Death and the King's Horseman is built on a true story. According to Yoruba tradition, the death of the king must be followed by the ritual death of the King's Horseman as well as the King's dog and horse, because the spirit of the King's Horseman is essential in helping the chief's priest ascend to the afterlife. Otherwise, the king's spirit will wander the earth and bring harm to the Yoruba people. The first half of the play documents the process of this ritual, with the potent life-living figure Elesin, living out his final day in celebration, before the ritual process begins. At the last minute, the local British Colonial ruler Simon Pilkings intervenes. The suicide which is viewed as barbaric and illegal by the British authorities.

In the play, the result for the community is catastrophic, as the breaking of the ritual means the disruption of the cosmic order of the universe and thus the well-being and future of the collectivity is in doubt. The community blames Elesin as much as Pilkings, accusing him of being too attached to the earth to fulfill his spiritual obligations. Events lead to tragedy when Elesin's son, Olunde, who has returned to Nigeria from studying medicine in Europe, takes on the responsibility of his father and commits ritual suicide in his place so as to restore the honour of his family and the order of the universe. Consequently, Elesin kills himself, condemning his soul to a degraded existence in the next world. In addition, the dialogue of the native suggests that this may have been insufficient and that the world is now "adrift in the void".

Language:

Death and the King's Horseman demonstrates an innovative use of English by creating a text that dives into the world of Yoruba proverbs.

Almost every character in Death and the King's Horseman at some point uses a traditional Yoruba proverb. Through his vast knowledge of Yoruba proverbs. Soyinka is able to endow his play with a strong Yoruba sentiment.

Characters often employ Yoruba proverbs primarily as a means of bolstering their opinions and persuading others to take their point of view. The praise-singer gets annoyed with Elesin for his decision to take a new wife and tries to dissuade him: because the man approaches a brand new wife, he forgets the long faithful mother of his children. Ariyaw-ko-iyale.

Similarly, Iyaloja tries to admonish Elesin against his earthly attachments and stay true to the ritual upon which the good of his society depend. He said thus: Eating the awusa nut is not so difficult as drinking water afterwards. Ati je asala (awusa) ko to ati mu omi si!

Another common way in which Soyinka uses proverbs is with Elesin. Elesin himself uses several proverbs in order to convince his peers that he is going to comply with their ritual and thus join the ancestors Orun: The kite makes for wide spaces and the wind creeps up behind its tail; can the kite say less than thank you, the quicker the better?

Awodi to'o Ibara, efufu taa n'idi pa o ni ise ku ku ya.

The Elephant trails no tethering rope; that king is not yet crowned will peg an elephant. Ajanaku kuro ninn'mo ri nkan firi, bi a ba ri erin ki a ni ri' erin.

The river is never so high that the eyes of a fish are covered. Odu ki ikun bo eja I'aju.

The final way in which proverbs appear in the play is when Iyaloja and the praise – singer harass Elesin while he is imprisoned for failing to complete his role within ritual? What we have no intention of eating should not be held up to the nose. Ohun ti a ki ye a ki ifif run imu.

“We said you were the hunter returning home in triumph, a slain buffalo pressing down on his neck; you said wait, I first must turn up this cricket hole with my toes”. A ki iru eran erin lori ki a maa fese wa ire n'ile.

The river which fills up before our eyes does not sweep us away in its flood. Odo ti a t'oju eni kun ki igbe 'ni lo.

Characterization:

Elesin Oba; a man of “enormous vitality”, was the chief horseman of the dead King. As the King’s companion, Elesin enjoyed a luxurious life of rich food and fine clothing, the rewards of a man of his position. He enjoyed that life and now that the King has been dead for a month and is ready for burial, Elesin is expected to complete the horseman’s duty and commit ritual suicide. The play opens on the evening of Elesin’s last day of life; at midnight he will die. He says repeatedly that he is ready to give his life and he knows the importance of fulfilling his responsibility.

But Elesin, well-known for his many sexual conquests, sees a young woman of great beauty and demands that he be allowed to take her to bed before he dies. Just after leaving the wedding chamber, Elesin begins his passage into the next world, and dances in a hypnotic dream-like trance. But when Simon’s men come to arrest Elesin, he couldn’t summon the strength to resist them and continue through the transitional state into the next world. Instead, he lives and brings shames to himself and chaos to the land.

Amusa:

Amusa is a sergeant in the native administration police, a black African working for the white British Colonialists. His position is a difficult one; he is not trusted by Simon Rilkings, his superior, because Simon cannot conceive of an African as being intelligent or honest, and he is no longer trusted by villagers because he works with the whites to enforce “the laws of strangers” Amusa was converted to Christianity two years before the play begins, but he still feels profound respect for native beliefs. He will not speak with Simon so long as Simon is wearing the Egungun garments, but Amusa does not hesitate to follow Simon’s orders and arrest Elesin to prevent his suicide.

Bride:

The bride does not speak at all during the play. Already engaged to Iyaloja’s son, the Bride is seen by Elesin and taken to bed by him; no one asks for her consent. When Elesin is arrested she sits silently beside him, and upon his death she closes his eyes in fulfilment of her wifely duty.

Iyaloja:

Iyaloja is the mother of the market, the spokesperson and leader of the women of the village. She is the voice of wisdom in the play, the one who can see beyond

Elesin's charms to the danger he represents when he swerves from his responsibility. When Elesin asks for the young woman as his bride, Iyaloja has no choice but to hand her over, even though the young woman is engaged to Iyaloja's own son. Iyaloja knows the power of the forces of the universe and she understands that refusing the request of a man who is "already touched by the waiting fingers of our departed" will "set this world adrift". But she warns Elesin not to leave a cursed seed behind him, and she reminds him of her (the bride's) warning when she brings Olunde's body to Elesin's cell.

Simon Rilnings:

Simon is the district officer, charged with maintaining order in the one district of the British Colony of Nigeria. He has no interest in learning culture. He and his wife, Jane socialize only with other Europeans, who have tried to transplant as much of their own food, clothing and manners as they can maintain their own style of life in a foreign country. Simon is sure of himself and of his life and easily dismisses anything he does not understand. When he learns that Elesin intends to commit suicide on the night of the Prince's visit to the district, Simon uses his authority to stop Elesin not because he does not want any commotion to disrupt the Prince's visit.

Jane Rilnings:

Jane is the wife of Simon Rilnings, The British district officer. Although she shares most of Simon's superior attitudes, she is, in Olunde's word, "somewhat more understanding" than her husband. Unlike Simon, she can sense that Simon has offended Amusa and Joseph (the house servant), although she agrees with Simon that the native customs and beliefs are "horrible". She has no active role in the main events of the play, but serves as a sounding board for Simon as he thinks through.

Olohun-iyo: (The praise singer)

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the plot of the play.
2. Discuss the relevance of the 2 lifestyles displayed by Elesin in the play.

Tutor Marked Assignment

1. Death and the King's Horseman is more of a clash of cultures than the upholding of a traditional rite of a king's burial. Comment.
2. "The result at the end of the play is said to be catastrophic". Discuss.
3. Discuss why Iyaloja is termed "the voice of wisdom" in the play.

4. *Death and the King's Horseman* is more of proverbs and rituals than a cause and effect relationship. Provide a critical response.

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UNIT 4

Themes in Modern African Drama

A playwright draws his themes from already existing themes in his culture or the multicultural setting of his environment. It is from his environment that experiences to be intensified in his script will be drawn. The theme of a script is an abstract statement, phrase or at times, a word about the philosophy or fundamental observation of human nature on which a story is based. A theme is the central idea that controls a story or on which a story is based. It is an abstract in the sense that it is an observation, an encapsulation which states the point of view from which the story is developed. The theme of a play is usually drawn from personal experiences and from one's culture. A theme helps to provide unity and centrality in the writing or scripting of a play.

The themes in Modern African Drama include: Love, Politics, Religion, Education, Hunger, Ethnicity, Corruption, Alienation, Language, Tradition, Modernism, Poverty, Pride, Hatred, Ambition, Choice of Career, Class Struggle, Drug Abuse, Child Abuse, Human Rights, Squandermania, Community Action, Anti-Humanism, Popular Theatre, Socio-Political Change, Incomprehensibility of life, Colonialism, Independence, Neo-colonialism, Oppression, Jealousy, Stealing, Leisure, Dignity of Labour, Dishonesty, Infidelity, Greed, Revolution, Environment, Illiteracy, Unemployment, Discrimination, Quota System, Favoritism, Patriotism, Power, Friendship, Development, Prostitution, Man's inhumanity to man and Impersonation, Kidnapping, Armed robbery, Feminism, Sexual Equality, Girl Child Education.

OLA ROTIMI

In this unit, we will examine Ola Rotimi's 2 plays namely: *Man Talk* and *Woman Talk* and *Kurunmi*. Ola Rotimi is better known as a distinctive member of the first generation of writers in Nigeria. He distinguished himself at this era as a playwright with his adapted play: *The Gods are not to Blame*, from Sophocle's Oedipus Rex. He published many other plays such as: *Kurunmi*, *Hopes of the Living Dead*, *Our Husband has gone mad again*, *Holding Talks*, *If*, and *Man Talk*, *Woman Talk*. In most of his plays he has sought to explore and explain the inefficiency in the Nigerian socio-political system.

Plot/Theme:

Rotimi's play *Man Talk*, *Woman Talk* is one of his latest works published in 2006 by Oxford University Press. This play is a contemporary discourse drama focused on the feminist question which makes it relevant. This is a clear

departure from his early and pristine dramatic interests, centered on history, to explain leadership ineptitude in Nigeria.

The play is set in a courtroom. The actions in the play involve a man and woman, who are created as stereotypes, to represent the universal mankind. Even though the setting is a court, the play is a serious but comic, intellectual play devoid of the usual stringent routine of court rooms.

What this means is that instead of legal expressions and terminologies, there is humor amplified by the constant interjections between the Counselor and the Judge who pretend not to prove which gender is better or superior but show the complementary roles of men and women in the society. The play provokes an argument between a man and woman during a legal session and puts these characters on their toes in making effort to press a provocative content borne out of societal problems. They highlight pressing social issues such as: rape, marriage, sexual independence as well as bleaching as they affect both sides of the gender divide. The play spotlights the eternal struggle between man and woman over which sex understands the other better and what the relationship between the two should be. The drama aims not to prove which gender is better or superior but to show the complementary roles of man and woman in the society. Expectedly, the arguments and counter arguments spiral out of hand to generate luminous doses of sheer dramatic expressions.

Language in Man Talk Woman Talk:

Language has been defined as “the expression and communication of emotions, or ideas between human beings by means of speech and hearings, the sounds being spoken or heard being systemized and confirmed among a given people over a period of time” (Funk and Wagnall in Ihidero 2). Language is not only essential to the essence of communication in the theatre, but also is one area that reflects a major change in the relationship between the playwright and the audience. Ihidero indicates that “Rotimi’s theatre demonstrates varying deployment of language, both semiotic and semantic, to communicate deep meanings expressed in Nigerian pidgin” (Ihidero 2). In *Man Talk, Women Talk*, language is placed at both the semiotic and semantic levels. With this device, the playwright creates suspense in audience indiscretion. The essence of this dramatic device is to heighten suspense and the thematic implication and lessons of the play.

An example of such line is a Girl’s argument for the stimulation of female students’ interest in lecturers. She says:

Crazy, Not die! Those of us crazy enough to love them do so for two reasons. One intellectual, the other sentiments... *We feel like ... flying into their brains-wild locusts – and licking up all the yolk of the (brain) in their egg heads. (Man Talk Woman Talk) : 24*

Rotimi's works generally are materials for those who argue about the flexibility of language in drama. A quick study of *Man Talk, Woman Talk* gives one a deep insight into how he (Rotimi) institutes a relationship between a dramatic text and its audience and deals with language among other forms of communication through spoken word and sceneries. No wonder Ihidero further reveals that "the linguistic ladder from the Judge to the Orderly, tells us part of the story, not only in the usual theatrical sense in which visual items complement dramatic speech, but also in performance for that, which is heard, is challenged by that which is seen".

It is not an exaggeration to say that playwrights generally, especially African playwrights, employ language as an instrument to portray their characters social class, age and background. Ola Rotimi is one of those notable playwrights who uses the medium of different shades of English existing in a community such as Pidgin English, as a veritable tool for character identification. In *Our Husband has gone Mad Again*, for instance, the use of Pidgin English distinguishes between the literate and the illiterate characters while *Man Talk Woman Talk* is laced with an avalanche of language styles expressed in rich Nigerian English parlance, all portraying succinctly the true reflection or nature of the society.

Characterization

A character in a play represents human personality. Such characters in every work of art are created and can be seen as both imitations of human beings and as the functions of the dramatic mission. *Characterization* involves the process of creating characters through typifying actions, words and thoughts in a manner that reflects a particular environment in a play or work of art. Observably, Rotimi has recorded tremendous success in consistently instituting characterization that is primarily aimed at addressing societal challenges. In *Man Talk-Woman Talk*, characterization reflects the peculiarities of society and acts as the realistic representation of society and morals. Rotimi's plays are mostly built with such type of characterization.

The symbolic manner of naming his characters in *man Talk-Woman Talk* such as Boy, Girl, etc, instead of making use of specific names like other dramatists,

is socially developmental in the sense that it successfully breaks linguistic or cultural barriers which the direct naming of these characters would have caused. Every male audience would rather find himself in the person of Boy and the female audience, as well sympathizes and finds solace in the logic of Girl, rather than dealing with specific names as the case may be. Rotimi moves further to make his audience understand that his characters are not only socially driven but also biologically driven, thereby establishing the impression that man is possessed or governed by some particular quality or passion. This may be recognized as the central feature or character trait in Man Talk- Woman Talk. Rotimi's use of humor in these characters establishes the mode of behaviour which determines the character's major peculiarity.

Self-Assessment Exercise:

1. Provide three reasons why you would like to be a playwright.
2. What current themes in African drama would you like to write on and why?

Tutor-Marked Assignment:

1. In man Talk-Woman Talk, the psychological war and emotional understanding between Anthonia and Son is revealed at the heart of the play. Discuss in detail what you think Ola Rotimi tried to achieve with these characters in relation to one of the problems in the society.
2. What bearing does Man Talk – Woman Talk have on current Nigerian politics.
3. Identify the major themes highlighted in the play.

KURUMI

The second Rotimi's play examined here is Kurunmi.

Plot/Theme:

Kurunmi, which the playwright terms "an historical tragedy" is a play that deals with the Yoruba wars of the 19th Century. This is the story that x-rays human foibles and erring nature. Kurunmi, the protagonist in the play, and the man from whom the title of the play is derived is the ruler of the Ijaye people, part of the Yoruba kingdom. Kurunmi is the Are-Ona-Kankanfo, or Field Marshal of the Oyo Empire army. When in 1858 Alafin Atiba of Oyo Empire sensed his reign would soon end when he dies, called the Council Chiefs and sought to cause them to support the ascension of his son, Adelu, to the throne, even though this was against the Constitution of Oyo, which requires the Crown Prince to commit

suicide with the Alafin, Kurunmi refused to support this move positioning that it's against tradition. This action pitched Kurunmi and the supporters of tradition against the other forces in their quest for power and control. In reaction to the abuse of traditional values about the inheritance of the crown of the Oyo Empire, Kurunmi leads his people to an inter-communal war. This play reflects the state of affairs in our contemporary world, about the conduct of our leaders in their quest for power and the repercussions thereof.

Language Use:

Rotimi differs from his other contemporaries in his use of language in his plays. He uses language very flexibly to ensure that his several Nigerian audiences are at home with his dramatic vision.

He moves his audiences in his plays with vivid theatrical effect in the simplicity of his diction and cultural reorientation.

Rotimi's dramatic excellence stems from his development of a linguistic form that has his varied strata of audiences at heart. He ensures effective communication and broadens the base of the theatrical reach of the message embodied in his plays.

Ola Rotimi deploys several linguistic devices or forms to enable his audience and readers understand his plays. These are forms like idioms, literal transliteration and direct/stylistic translations and proverbs.

In Kurunmi, Rotimi uses proverbs to heighten dramatic conflict. In Act 2, Scene 1, Ibikunle and Ogunmola of Ibadan represent the divergent views for peace and war respectively with Kurunmi of Ijaiye.

Ibikunle reconciliatory stance is reflected this way: "... no matter how high a swallow flies it must at last come down to earth" (47)

On the other hand, Ogunmola's uncompromising attitude and rashness is expressed in his option for war thus: "... The baby who cries and stops its mother's sleep, will suffer the anguish of not sleeping" (40).

Literal transliteration is apt in Ola Rotimi's plays, to express kinship relationships. The playwright refuses to use English language equivalents, but consciously creates and uses the African version to show the cultural method of expressing kinship relations. For example "my father's brother walked up to us (The God are not to Blame 59)"

“... The son of my mother’s brother who married Ulotara, the sister of our wife’s mother, ... The Gods (56)”. Thus the relationship is clearer when expressed this way.

“... The agony of war against one’s own blood brother is most ... heart breaking. (Kurunmi, 50)”

Characterization:

Characterization is the art of creating human replicas / representatives in a literary work to stand for envisioned physical personages. It is the vehicle for the rendition of the story and actions, especially in drama.

In Ola Rotimi’s plays, one characteristic feature is the use of chorus. The chorus in his plays fill the gap and place of the community, since most of his plots and themes are based on actions that involve the destiny of the whole group of people. The chorus is designated as “towns people in *the Gods*. The crowds of TOWN PEOPLE constitute what is known as the Chorus – Character in modern literature.

In the plays Kurunmi and *Ovonramwen* the regiment of warriors constitute the essential part of crowd – (chorus) In the former play, this category of characters include the praise-singers, drummers and other hangers-on who help to accelerate dramatic tension and at times, the denouement.

Besides the chorus as character, there are other retinue in the cast as aristocrats, regents and other royal personages: Bashorun, Alafin, Are-Ona-Kankanfo, Balogun and so on.

Self-Assessment Exercise:

1. Ola Rotimi’s dramatic universe encapsulates the reality of a given people. Discuss this in relation to any of his plays that you have studied.
2. Why do you think Rotimi is a successful playwright?

Tutor-Marked Assessment:

1. From your study of Kurunmi, in what way does the text reflect the crises of leadership in our contemporary society?
2. What do you consider the role of the chorus in Ola Rotimi’s plays.
3. What in your opinion distinguishes Rotimi from other playwrights you have read?

UNIT 5:

ZULU SOFOLA

In this unit we will discuss Zulu Sofola's 2 plays namely: *Wedlock of the Gods* and *King Emene*.

Zulu Sofola was one of Africa's leading female playwrights. Her plays were essentially concerned with giving a voice to the voiceless, the female gender and empowering them especially at the grassroots. Some of her published plays include: *Wizard of Law*, *Old Wines are Tasty*, *King Emene*, *The Sweet Trap*, *The Disturbed Peace of Christmas*, *The Ivory Tower* and *Memories in the Moonlight*. Sofola makes us understand that drama is the most potent and immediate of all the literary arts because it offers, spontaneous response to observable imbalance in a dynamic society. Generally, her plays embody the conflict between the community and the individual in contemporary society. They often succinctly capture the traditional, colonial, neo-colonial and post-colonial Igbo life with conflicts and crises of change that characterize it. As a pioneer female Nigerian playwright, she followed events as they unfolded in the society, recreated and shaped them towards setting the basis for the future. As an accomplished pioneer in her own right, Sofola's theme embodied not only the rich Nigerian tradition, but that of the African in general. In *Wedlock of the Gods*, Sofola demonstrated her creativity through the culture of her people and remained a strong supporter of culture and customs till she died.

Theme/Plot:

Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* is a dramatic love story predicted on how true love defies all worldly constraints. The play is set in a rural community in Igbo land in Nigeria. "Full of drama, intensity and suspense, it is a story reminiscent of Shakespeare's classic Romeo and Juliet tale. It is a tragic drama built on the ritual of death and mourning?"

In the play, a young girl is given away in marriage to a man whom she neither knows nor loves. This is basically because her parents are in desperate need of the dowry / money to cure her own brother of a health challenge. However, when the man suddenly dies the young lady is required to mourn for successive three months and then be loyal to the custom that requires her to marry her dead husband's brother. In the action, the young woman puzzled by this old custom and tradition, rebels. Her resolution to cling on to the man she has always known and loved is a slap in the face of tradition and one that can only result in dire consequences. Sofola's passion was to set a battle against age old customs in the particular setting. "... She exploits themes of marriage, custom and tradition. She upholds the view that marriage is supreme. This, Ogwoma (the young woman) is unjustly treated by the male-folk by being forced to marry a man she does not love. Sofola sees this as male-chauvinism and Ogwoma vows to break free, not really out of the cultural inhibition to her marrying the man she loves, but of a world dominated by the male-folk" (Eni, 155). There are other questions raised by the playwright in the play. Such as why is Uloko unable to pay the sum of Four Hundred Pounds demanded as bride price for Ogwoma in spite of their bond? This is an economic problem. Sofola uses this to decry the high cost of marriage in the traditional Igbo society which is also determined by the male-folk without the consent of the female folk who are most affected by such actions. But I think her placement of women in the African traditional society contrasts with that of the Western already liberated women. African Women are supposed to play the role of second fiddle in the society. A woman has to play a secondary role, subordinate her ambitions to the larger ones of family and society. Sofola's female characters have strong-willed and unyielding attributes which African societies would not welcome.

Characterization:

In *Wedlock of the Gods*, Sofola makes characterization a powerful technique to haul over the goals of individualism and conformism. The characters in the play can be divided into two classes: the conformists, observably Omenani loyalists with other characters inclusive, except Ugwoma and her lover Uloko and those who challenge aspects of Omenani. Sofola through characterization, equipped Omenami loyalists with material and non-material values to achieve good life, while the deviants (Ugwoma and her lover Uloko) lack these values and are as a result, are doomed to eternal difficulty as they are seen as rebels against culture and tradition: "The two rebels are dogged, headstrong and unwavering in their conviction" (Nwamuo 93).

The characterization of Uloko and Ogwoma is better identified with modern educated youths. Their stubbornness is almost too strong for the Ibo communities that spurn them. Apparently, Sofola created these characters to enable her project a better fight for her cause and defend her female rights. She started achieving this by making Ugwoma's character flawed. From the beginning of the action, Ugwoma displays lack of reasoning and good sense. Sofola makes her appear naïve and projects her towards downplaying the gravity of her abominable act with Uloko. However, in order to justify her tragic end, Sofola deliberately makes Uloko foolish, naïve and senseless. "He (Uloko) is represented as a man whose action stems from emotionalism. For example, when Odibei, Ugwoma's mother in-law apprehends him romancing a mourning widow in her late husband's room and orders him to leave, Uloko's reply, 'I will not leave this house until Ugwoma goes home with me' shows Uloko has lost all sense of shame in complete defiance to social norm. While Ugwoma plans for elopement to evade the punishment due to their violating a taboo, Uloko encourages her to 'forget the world' (Osita, 8) but it is practically impossible for them to forget the inclusive, communal world of traditional Igbo society.

We see in the character of Ugwoma's family how Sofola tries to make us understand that there is a failed institution. Her presentation of Ugwoma as a problem child from a cursed family makes her message about the failure of the Nigerian Institution especially that of the Igbo, stronger.

However, Sofola deserves some applause in the area of expressing meanings through the names of the characters. The names are suitably localized in the Eastern and Mid-western parts of the country (Nigeria). The meaning of these character names are in tandem with the role each of them plays in the overall development of theme and plot of the play. Take for instance the name Ibekwe (which means *I have the agreement of my relatives*) proves why he does not rely on his family in the situations he finds himself. The name *Ogwoma means someone that is good or beautiful*. This name goes a long way in exploring the character's dependable beauty that Uloko beholds. To Uloko, Ogwoma's beauty overshadows the effects of the taboo she (Ogwoma) breaks. Other character names not listed here also have established meanings and expressions that have direct bearing on the development of the play's themes and plot.

Language

In *Wedlock of the Gods*, Zulu Sofola manipulated language in varied directions and in a manner that all the characters communicate meaningfully and remain understandable by her audience. In an effort to give her audience an idea about the internal turmoil and psychological problems the characters undergo in the

different situations they find themselves, the playwright employs monologue. Generally, she makes the dialogues short, sharp and direct. The characters instead of laboring the point, express specifically what they mean, though using abusive terms when they feel some levels of frustration in the situation they find themselves. These abuses and curses are expressed in strong terms and imagery through pictorial allusions. Examples: Odibei: “You and your daughter will not rot and with your eyes you will watch the vulture pluck your body into pieces”.

Odibei: ‘Cows have tails and the blind man has his stick, but with nothing you will walk into death swollen-stomach leaking through both ends’.

Nneka” ‘You will be buried alive from your shoulders down and with your mouth you will eat the flies that swarm on your head’ (*Wedlock*, 49).

The playwright also employed proverbs. This similar approach clearly demonstrates the African consciousness of the play. In the African world, proverbs are basic to meaningful dialogue and show the in-depth understanding one has about the situation under discussion. Its use is extensive in the play *Wedlock of the Gods* (Osita, 132). Sofola subjects almost all the elders to making use of proverbs in their dialogue.

Otubo: ‘A man who plays the flute also blows his nose’ (*Wedlock*, 6).

Ata: ‘Our people say that the man who ignores his family is the one who stands alone in the rain’ (*Wedlock*, 25). Ike; ‘No one knows why the snail sighs ...’ (*Wedlock*, 26) Ibekwe: ‘The tortoise says that his problems are his problems and therefore cannot be crushed by them’ (*Wedlock*, 28) Udo: ‘The head says that sleep is not possible without the arm besides it’ (*Wedlock*, 34).

Sofola who happens to be a female playwright, uses text to extend the fight and struggle for feminine freedom within the society. “Through female characters like Ogwoma, Odebei, Nneka, Anwasia and Ogoli, Sofola shows the audience that females have a great part to play in the development of their societies. While the women are so concerned about their situations and try to find solutions in their own ways, the men fail to find unity in discussing the issue” (Osita 314). Osita continues:

The expression and diction in *Wedlock of the Gods* are simply African in orientation and thought. They delineate the characters into two: the poetic and the prosaic. The two main ... characters speak in poetic language; in the expression of love for one another. Love, to them, can only be verbalized in poetry. Even in death, Uloko addressed his love poetically (*Wedlock* 10, 55 -56). The playwright submits that the mythic, the heroic, the royalty and the divine poetize. All the other characters speak and operate at the prosaic level. The

expressions of the general characters, though prosaic, are also beautiful to the ears as exemplified in Anwasia's statement to Uloko: "It is true that when the sweetness of a man touches the heart of a woman, nothing else matters" (*Wedlock*, 10). The beauty of the text's language is captured in the direct African expressions verbalized in English. African imagery, symbolisms and connotations, come into play. These localize the play as African with the beauty of African expression in words. Words are not abstract but concrete expressions seen and felt. (133-134).

Self-Assessment Exercise:

1. What in your opinion, are the uses of drama?
2. Explain why you would want or not want to write a play.
3. How often do you visit the theatre and watch play productions.

Tutor-Marked Assessment

1. Identify and explain the driving force of an arranged marriage as captured in the play.
2. Identify the two main characters in the play *Wedlock of the Gods* and clearly state how they defy their culture.
3. Why is drama considered a potent tool in literature?
4. How often do you visit the theatre and watch play productions.

KING EMENE:

The other play to be considered here is Zulu Sofola's *King Emene*. Writing during the era when indigenous culture and values were being undermined by Western-oriented experiences, attitudes and interests clearly favours a preservation of the old and indigenous, most of Sofola's plays strongly advocate a return to the past. All her characters are driven to a tragic end when they try to disobey or force their "own" opinions on the elders. In *King Emene*, the King is unceremoniously overthrown because he tried to force his personal will on the elders, against established traditional mores.

Plot:

The story of *King Emene* centers around Ogugua, the King of Oligbo. As tradition demands, before the king enters the peace week, the week when the king carries the problem of his people to their gods, he must cleanse the land, ensuring that all is well. Meanwhile all is not well in Oligbo land and the King

wants to enter the peace week without cleansing the land. The several warnings of the Olinzele council and the elders, that the king should purify the royal household before entering the “holly week” fell on deaf ears. The king’s mother, Nneobi, has secretly committed sacrilege by killing Chibueze, the son of Obiageli and the heir-apparent to the throne of Oligbo, to prevent him from ascending the throne so that her son Ogugua will be crowned king after his father’s death.

The young king commits more sacrilege through the exile and desecration of the sacred Omu and replacing her with Nwani – this has never happened before in Oligbo. The sacrilege by the king and his mother creates uproar and pandemonium in Oligbo, yet the king resolves to enter the Peace Week despite the disagreement between him and the elders. Says he “what I will do, I will do” (p. 25).

Nneobi foresees the aftermath of this actions and pours libation every morning, a duty usually performed by the King’s wife to seek the protection and guidance of her son from their ancestors:

Nneobi: Water of life, shower us with blessings;
Water of peace, give our hearts rest;
Goddess of grace, shine forth and bless my son;
Oh God of all, bless this palace, keep evil without ...
(King Emene, P.1)

The king enters the sacred shrine and runs out screaming that he has seen a very big snake. At this point, Nneobi confesses her crime and the king runs into the inner chamber of the palace and stabs himself.

Essentially, King Emene dramatizes the story of Emene, who, due to his youthful exuberance, pride, raw determination and perhaps destiny to do what he wants, leads himself to his untimely death. This unfortunate situation could have been avoided had King Emene listened to the several warnings and counsels. Besides, it can be said that it is his faith or destiny to be stubborn and proud and then die, for the gods have a hand in it, defining his destiny so that no amount of talking or pleading could change his fate as destined by the gods.

Language

In her plays, Sofola uses proverbs to strengthen the realistic nature of the character involved. For example:

“... if we don’t eat yam for the sake of palm oil, we eat the palm oil for the sake of the yam” (20).

“... it is the way a woman dances, that the music is made for her” (19).

“... it is the way a child opens his hand, that the piece of meat is given to him” (20).

Her characters speak convincingly with confidence and authority as they use these proverbs to strengthen their postulations. A good number of the characters in *King Emene* represents forces that move against established culture and tradition which gives cohesiveness to the community.

Sofola seems to believe that a way of bringing about change in her society is by criticizing the established status quo and by encouraging greater participation of the members of the community in socio-political system in the process. With the help of her imaginative and creative processes, Sofola influences the thoughts of the people, despite the threats of recrimination by those in authority.

In *King Emene*, we see the social political issues which include: the politics behind King Emene's reign which has stagnated good leadership in West African societies, the lack of consideration and respect for norms and culture, which was portrayed by Emene by refusing to carry out the purification of the land before going to the Peace Week as culture demands and the politics of disrespect for human dignity, as seen in the refusal of Emene to cleanse the household and palace, before hosting his great occasion. He boasted to the elders, saying: “What I will do, I will do” (P. 25) meaning that he has the final say, and this led to his death.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Who actually dictates the affairs of men, the gods or circumstances?
2. In what way is culture-conflict important in African drama?
3. Why is Zulu Sofola considered a custodian of her people's culture?

Tutor-Marked Assignment

Instruction: Answer any 3 questions

1. Identify 3 themes explored by Sofola in *King Emene* and briefly discuss them.
2. Provide evidence that Sofola is an advocate of the female gender question in the society.
3. How does the theme of gender equity advance the course of development in Nigerian society?
4. Briefly discuss 3 dominant socio-political issues in *King Emene*.

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UNIT 6

In this unit, we will discuss Tess Onwueme's 2 plays: *The Broken Calabash* and *The Desert Encroaches*.

TESS ONWUEME

Tess Onwueme is one of the most outstanding playwrights of note after Zulu Sofola. She has to her credit several plays which include: *The Broken Calabash*, *A Hen Too Soon*, *Barn Empty Barn*, *The Desert Encroaches*, *Legacies*, *A Scent of Onions*, *Shakara*, *De Governor*, *Our Son Tom*, *Faces of a Coin*, *The Reign of Wazobia* and, *Then She Said it*. It was the broken Calabash, whose film version aired by the Nigerian Television Authority as part of Nigeria's Silver Jubilee Celebration that won her commendation. The Desert encroaches won the Association of Nigerian Authors prize for drama in 1985 and helped to shoot her to limelight. She has proven to be a flag-bearer of women-centered ideology which addresses the female issue. She depicts streaks of revolution in most of her plays.

She amongst others came on scene when writing was almost the exclusive preserve of the main-folk. She commenced writing at a relatively youthful age of about 32 in the midst of established female writers like Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Zulu Sofola and Zaynab Alkali. After Zulu Sofola, Onwueme is probably the most important dramatist on the Nigerian dramatic scene.

Onwueme's incipient career blossomed in her ability to write, direct and produce her own plays and a characteristic rebelliousness in her themes. These qualities marked her out from amongst her compeers. Coupled with the above is most significantly the thematic renditions of her plays. Besides her concern with the female gender, she presents this in a form and means that cuts the hearts of the patriarchal henchmen. She posits unequivocally that the female can also "bear the elephant tusk over her shoulder" like her male counterpart.

Plot:

The plot of *The Broken Calabash* tells the story of the heroine, Ona, a university undergraduate, who fell in love with her heart-throb, Diaku, a man of her choice and desire. But as the only child of her parents, she is an "Idegbe", which implies that she must marry into her family, and procreate within the family to maintain the sanctity of the family's blood-line. This is the dictate of tradition and custom. To further complicate her case, Diaku, her loved one, is an "Osu", a member of the outcast, who are traditionally excluded from other members of the community. Ona's university education had influenced her reasoning with a western flair, against this traditional habits.

Ona's opinion is at variance with her father's Courtuma, who insists that tradition must be upheld. But Ona prefers to have her way in line with contemporary tunes. Courtuma is over-possessive of his daughter, and obstructs the growth of the romance with Diaku. As a result, Diaku loses interest and is vindictive. She becomes flirtations and gets impregnated by another lover. She blames this on her father, who feels guilty and commits suicide.

At the thematic realm, the play presents the **hack-neyed** themes of clash or conflict of two opposing cultures and values-the Old (African) and the emerging modern (Western) practices. Another plausible theme can be the theme of feminism begun in her other play, *A Hen Too Soon*.

The clash between Ona and Courtuma, her father is beyond the domestic and the filial. The playwright intends to present a modern view point against the ancient and obnoxious traditions; "the moon is full, the old season dies. A new crop is sown" (27).

Language:

The language of the play is terse and poetic. It is riddled with proverbs, wise sayings and idiomatic expressions which portray the wisdom of the elders. In this play Onwueme shows complete mastery and control of the English language in a unique and impressive manner.

Dramatic Techniques:

Within the context of dramatic craftsmanship, Onwueme is quickly passed for a good symbolist dramatist. In this play, she exploits the immense powers of symbolism, to create the particular from the premise of the general. *The Broken Calabash* is representative of thematic contention which is embodied in Diaku's parents coming to ask for Ona's hand in marriage and the calabash of palm wine brought by Diaku's parents breaks in a mysterious way. The physical breaking of the calabash symbolizes both Ona's shattered emotional dreams as well as the tradition which her father, Courtuma strives to protect.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. *The Broken Calash* is a rehash of the clash of culture in African literature. Briefly explain.
2. Tess Onwueme is a socially committed playwright. Discuss.

Tutor Marked Assignment

1. The African Woman is the butt of patriarchal culture and politics. Discuss with reference to *The Broken Calabash*.
2. Tess Onwueme uses symbols to decry the cultural devastation on the society. Discuss.
3. “The physical breaking of the calabash symbolizes both Ona’s shattered emotional dreams and stability as well as the tradition which her father strives to achieve”. Expatiate.

The Desert Encroaches

Plot:

Desert Encroaches addresses the socio-political issues in Nigeria and shows the restless wielding of power by leaders. It portrays typical class society with hyenas, lions and other bigger animals in the play at the highest level while sheep, dog, donkey and other smaller animals are at the base of the society. It highlights the gap between advanced countries and third-world countries. In spite of the widening gap, the super-powers’ usual presence is unmasked at the end of the play. It is a call to all poor nations to rise up together to fight oppression and subjugation. It uses animal characters to sensitize the people on the need to mobilize for change.

The resource control arguments in Nigeria is an example of what Onwueme dramatizes in *Desert Encroaches*. At the levels of government there is insincerity and intimidation even among the leaders who symbolize foreign governance. Nigeria’s dependence on foreign investors for survival is satirized in this play. There is intimidation and exploitation everywhere, a symbol of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The play ends on an optimistic note where all animals come together to hold a peace-talk on disarmament. In the process, a group of youth storm the scene and over power the big animals.

Language:

Onwueme effectively deploys language as a tool to deceive. She mimics a government that publically talks of cooperation and understanding in the signing of agreements and providing welfare for the people and the governed but reneges and deceives the people. Onwueme uses the language of satire to instigate revolt among the masses as it is obvious that they cannot be fooled all the time. Language in this play is highly hypocritical.

Dramatic Technique:

The play uses the strategy of an allegory to harp on the dangers in the world arising from the contention for power and control, the growing arms race amongst the super power nations. This fierce struggle has divided the world into different geo-political and ideological formations, all standing strong and unyielding to the other Eastern vs West, North vs South. Each geo-political zones is trying to prove its own right of place within the pretence of summoning meetings and conferences while the world is being gradually destroyed.

What this play presents to us in stark reality is the apparent destruction of humanity, the moral fibres of our lives and sensitivity.

Olu Obafemi affirms that Onwueme utilizes "... this symbolist strategy to satirize world power formation and their repressive power mania which manifests in global arm-pillage for mutual self-destruction" (262).

Different types of animals that belong to different geographical zones are used as strong characters. Animals of the North and West are the powerful ones that are predatory and carnivorous – Lion, hyena, Wolf, while small harmless animals like ant, cow, dog, sheep, tortoise, old donkey are animals of the South. Animals of Eastern bloc are the Bear, and Fox, Parrot, Dove and Forest Cries of no fixed address.

The strong and powerful animals of the North and West represent the United State of America, while those of the East stand for Russia. The Southern animals are the docile Third World and African countries. A most important point to note is that the relationship between the animals is based on personal strength and power and size, which implies the ability to dominate, control and over power others.

In terms of dramatic skill and techniques, Onwuene has shown a high-degree of ingenuity and creativity from the common-place ritual forms to the high-pitched elements of non-definite category.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. "The play is about the destruction of humanity, the moral fibers of our lives and our sensibility". Discuss.
2. "Desert Encroaches is a play which calls people together to analyze their situation and act in the interest of all". Examine the veracity or otherwise of this statement.

Tutor Marked Assignment

1. Desert Encroaches is a highly political play which deals with the theme of politics and development. Examine the truth or otherwise of this statement.
2. “To ensure the rise of a new dawn and the ray of a new hope, the youth must rise up to action”. In what way is this a protest play?
3. Desert encroaches is a satire which advocates collectivism and peoples’ power. Expatiate with copious references to the play text.

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UNIT 7

AMA ATA AIDOO.

In this unit we shall discuss *Anowa* by a Ghanaian female playwright, Ama Ata Aidoo and *The Dilemma of a Ghost*.

Ama Ata Aidoo is a Ghanaian from the Akan matrilineal Clan of Ghana where power held by men is channeled through female descent, thereby demonstrating the relevance of women's agency of maternity and matrilineality in the society. This gives Aidoo the self-confidence to be revolutionary in her literary works. She is a notable playwright amongst other female playwrights such as Efua Sutherland. She is probably the best known African women writer, a recognition she deserved as her art has attained a maturity worthy of her talent and dedication. She is a feminist who believes in the power of the female folks. Consequently, she creates strong, intelligent, resourceful and resilient central female characters in her works like *Anowa*, *Our Sister Kill Joy*, *Changes*, etc.

Each of her female central characters represents the heroine on the feminist stage who is depicted as fashioning out her own method of revolt or breaking bounds to gain what she wants and not merely as a tool for stratifying man's ego.

ANOWA

In her play *Anowa*, she most explicitly explores the relationship between a man and woman in the African context, her most feminist ideals and her views on slavery.

Plot:

Basically, the structure of the play shows the lives of 2 protagonists whose perceptions of life and reality differed. Their relationship was totally fulfilling, their farm business was expanding, but things took a different turn when Koffi decided to buy slaves so they can help in the business and further expand it. Anowa however, opposes bitterly and took an absolute stand against slavery. Kofi finds her objections odd and ignored them. Fame and fortune came to them but their lives became meaningless and their relationship began to deteriorate. Anowa subjected herself to self-imposed poverty and refused to share in Kofi's ever accumulating wealth earned through slavery. Husband and wife no longer understood each other or resolve their differences. Kofi eventually resolve to divorce her and send her back to her parent. She refuses to leave and tries to find out the reason behind the divorce. She sends the twin slaves to invite neighbours to intervene. During the intervention, Kofi complains of their childlessness and puts the blame on the wife. Anowa through an out-burst of

anger discloses to the public that her husband is impotent. Out of embarrassment, and with the arrogant of his masculinity being deflected Kofi commits suicide by shooting himself. Anowa's marriage became short-lived due to the catastrophic end of the life of her husband. She drowns herself.

Language:

In this play Aidoo shows how dexterously language can be manipulated to serve dramatic ends. She uses sparse economic language of sadness and despair and for the gaiety, rollicking, boisterousness, an acid wit of comedy, satire, lamentation, irony and parody.

Here is the iconic lamentation of Badua (Anowa's mother) using indirect statement for a direct situation.

...Anowa?

Why? This good for nothing cassava man. This watery male of all watery males?

Aidoo through her good literary technique caused Badua to indirectly refer to Kofi's life as a whole (cassava man) indicating his occupation as a farmer. The reference as good for nothing is indicative of his poor economic status and his impotence through the utterance – this watery male of all watery males.

Aidoo also uses Anowa to exert her assertive view of slavery thus: “no man made a slave of his friend and came to much himself. It is evil.” Through this words, she was able to portray or show the audience the unnaturalness of slavery and the extent to which she despises it. She philosophized about the evil of slavery. Through Anowa Aidoo advocated equity and fairness to all.

Also and acid wit of comedy can be seen in the insinuation by Badua Anowa's mother toward Kofi Ako who she referred to as “this-i-am-the-handsome-one-with-a-stick-between-my-teeth-in-the-market-place”.

Ama Ata Aidoo's words are clear and each character is recognized and accepted as a true character through their level of language.

Characterization:

The characters in the play contributed a lot in the overall effect of the play.

Anowa: an headstrong lady who repudiates or strongly rejects the subjugation of women, because she is a revolutionary and would want to change the current attitude of the society towards women, she challenges the status quo by revolting against aspects of retrogressive traditional culture and social norms like child-bride and compulsory marriage to a parent picked husband. She also was deeply

opposed to slavery practice. She demonstrated positive qualities worthy of emulation my other women.

Badua-Anowa's mother: She is one of the women who contributes in championing the male cause and the sustaining the arrogance of male superiority. This is because she is a socio-cultural construct of a patriarchal male-oriented society. She represents the traditional stereotype image of women who are fretful, easily agitated and complacent with the status-quo of their subordinate position as women owing to their native of negative or patriarchal socialization.

Kofi Ako: It is ironical that most men claim to be strong enough to protect a woman but are not most times as physically and morally resilient as women. Koffi is not as physically and resilient as Anowa. This can be seen when she encourages her husband during trek to the coast thus "but think of it, if we are not too tired to go a little we shall be there tomorrow" which cause Kofi to express a wish "you ought to have been born a man" showing that he is not as resilient and courageous as his wife. Kofi is a lazy man who got pushed by his wife to greatness. Anowa is truly the brain behind their trade as confess by him a number of time. Badua refers to him as "this good for nothing cassava man". This euphemism suggest that he is useless and inferior to average man. Kofi is proud and egoistic even when he professes his love to Anowa is always ruined by egoism. As created by Aidoo he is pompous, avaricious and inhuman because he chooses to enslave others on order to amass wealth for his personal comfort.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the view that Anowa dramatizes the story of a failed sexual rebellion in the society.
2. Anowa's rebellion is considered a slap on the face of Ghanaian culture at the time. Discuss.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. What in your opinion defines womanhood in the African setting?
2. Drama reflects and participates in the life of a time. How true is this statement in relation to Anowa and the Ghanaian society at the time
3. Identify 3 levels of challenge which helped to advance the story of the play.

THE DILEMMA OF GHOST

This play examines the plight of Ato and Eulalie caught in the web of culture clash, the clash of two opposing cultures (tradition and modern).

It is centered on Ato Yawson, a Westernized African who went to America and came back with a wife, Eulalie a modern educated American girl born into the culture of birth control, gin, soda and cigarette smoking, which seriously challenges and alters the African value of child-bearing as an important factor in the marriage system. By his marriage, Ato's life and that of his people become diametrically opposed to Western culture.

Eulalie's care free attitude is clearly at variance with the society in which she finds herself as she stoutly rejects the society's concern for her barrenness and the suggestion to pump her stomach and become reproductive.

She sees Ato's community and their values as primitive and so is not ready to adapt. At any argument with Ato (her husband) she flares up and brings out all her venom and pent-up hatred for the future and for the people.

Her behaviours are not in line with those cherished by the community. Her freedom to say anything she likes does not go down well with the people.

The values of communal living which are peculiar to Africans are thus sacrificed, as exemplified by Ato and his wife. Ato is looked upon then as a "ghost" by his village folk. They contend that part of his life is dead because he is compelled by his wife to do things that conflict with the culture.

So he (Ato) is faced with the dilemma of his beloved culture and managing his beloved wife and her culture, hence his dilemma

The text derives its title from here "the dilemma of a ghost" with Ato being referred to as the ghost.

Ama Ata Aidoo keeps Ato Yawson, the protagonist at a cultural cross road as he is at the centre of all the conflicts. The play conveys a message from the playwright, a critique on the society's foibles and the emerging social values which are out of tune with the Ghanaian lifestyle and the African cultural system at large. She uses this play to show the way education has distorted traditional values.

Language:

The playwright puts in venomous and pent-up hate speeches in Eulalie's mouth. She uses the character to portray the relationship between the whites and the

blacks. While they pretend to love the blacks, they have inbuilt hatred towards them, which can be clearly seen in this play.

Eulalie supposedly married her husband Ato, because of love, but what is love, if she can't or doesn't love fully? She loves him but has no respect or love for his culture or his tradition and beliefs. The whites loves the blacks because of their natural resources, but they truly do not love them or respect their culture as exemplified by Eulalie and her words during an argument with her husband.

... Do you compare these bastards, these shipped, narrow minded savages with us, Do you dare ...?

Eulalie, Ato's American wife is very much symbolic of the Westernization of Ato. She made him think of many aspects of their primitive culture as mundane and barbaric. Thus she says "... have they appreciation for anything, but their non-prehistoric existence? More savage than dinosaurs ..." (15).

She criticized every aspect of Ato's peoples' culture and would not eat their food and would rather live in the city.

Characterization:

Ato Yawson, is a Westernized African, married to a modern educated, American girl. He is at the centre stage of the conflict in this play, because as a native boy who has acquired western education and a lot of new attitudes that his wife shares, he is now faced with the dilemma of reconciling the Western ways he acquired with the culture of his native home, which leads to a conflict.

He is a man who isn't capable of getting his wife adapt to her foreign society yet his wife westernizes him at the snap of her fingers. She controls and directs him, even as she disregards his culture and his people. He lacks the tact to handle the challenge he is faced with, which shows how unequal he is to the wife. He even let's his wife stir conflict between him and his people by introducing child spacing concept into his head.

Eulalie:

A modern educated American girl, born into the culture of birth control, gin, soda and cigarette smoking and is married to an African man or a native boy as she fondly calls him, who is also westernized like herself, but is from a primitive society, which she feels doesn't match up with her standards. Due to her husband's education, he has acquired a lot of new attitudes, which go on well with her. The people of Fanti (her husband's people) accuse her of controlling and directing her husband the way she wants, but that doesn't seem so to her. She sees her husband as up to her level, and not as primitive as his people. She

sees him as someone whom she can reason and relate with, thus she introduces the idea of child spacing to him, which he agrees with, and it led to the conflict between himself and his people.

Eulalie rejects every aspect of Ato's peoples' culture. She would not eat their food and prefers living in the city. She describes them as crawling things as evidenced by her questioning Ato:

... my dear, did you see a single snail crawling on the streets of New York, all the time you were in the States?

Esi:

Ato Yawson's mother, a true African woman, who is proud of her African culture and upholds it with pride and great value.

She's disappointed in her son Ato, who allows a woman control and direct him, and who introduces him to a new way of life, thus making him a ghost to his ideal culture. The values of communal living which is peculiar amongst Africans were being jeopardized by his wife's influence on him. On one occasion when she (Esi) entered their room (Ato and Eulalie) and her son's wife (Eulalie) got angry and asked what she wanted in their room. She was angry with her son for not upholding his people's culture with pride and for not teaching his wife the way of life of his people. For his inability to tell his wife to dip her finger into the culture of Fanti, but rather stood alienated from his own society, and became a ghost to his native personality, she says;

Thus ... my son, you have not dealt with us well, and you have not dealt with your wife well in this ... (p. 43).

This text is indeed a loud cry from Ama Ata Aidoo, warning about the embrace of the Western culture and at the neglect of African culture.

Self-Assessment Exercise:

1. Identify and discuss three African values which have been bruised by Western values in this play.
2. What should be the relationship between African and Western values?

Tutor Marked Assignment:

Instruction: Answer any 3 questions.

1. Discuss in detail any conflict from the clash of the two opposing cultures in the play.

2. Discuss briefly how education may have distorted Africa traditional values as seen in the play.
3. How is the setting of the play typical of the relationship between blacks and whites even in the contemporary times?
4. What major themes are highlighted in this play? Examine them critically.

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UNIT 8

ATHOL FUGARD

In this unit we will discuss 2 plays of Athol Fugard namely; *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *Boesman Lena*.

Athol Fugard is a notable South African playwright who has gained international recognition through his plays which were critical of the apartheid regime in South Africa. He is one of the most brilliant, powerful and theatrically astute of South African playwrights. He used his plays to advocate for change in the belief that what happens on stage is possible in the society. He is one of the greatest playwrights of South Africa. Some of his best plays are: *The Blood Knot*, *Hello and Goodbye*, *The Island*, *Boesman and Lena*, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, *My Children My Africa*, *The Trained Driver* and *A Lesson From Aloes*. His film *Tsotsi*, won the 2005 Oscar Award. He is an Actor, Director and Playwright.

SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD

Plot:

The play opens in a photographer's Studio with Styles, the photographer reading the headlines of a newspaper. Styles was a layman worker at Ford Motors Factory. He left the Ford Motors after 6 years, because he felt he would not come to his realistic dreams in life at the end of his service period. He believed that after 25 years of service he will only be rewarded with a wrist watch. He chooses to return to his earlier vocation of photography. Luckily, Styles gets a shop next to a funeral parlour shop. He cleans the place and assumes normal services to achieve his desired dreams. In the course of time, he meets a prospective customer called Sizwe.

Sizwe has left his home town, King William's Town, to Port Elizabeth in search of a job. Unfortunately for him, the South African segregationist policy deprived him of the privilege of getting a job as a black man. He is ordered to return home in 3 days. Confronted with a bleak future even in his King William hometown, Sizwe decided to courageously brace up with the obnoxious apartheid policy. He was lucky to meet Buntu in the course of his wandering around town. Buntu, like Sizwe had been battered by the agonies of unemployment and has resigned his faith to the fact that a black man will find peace in South Africa only when he is dead. In the course of their wandering, Buntu and Swize chanced upon a dead man on the street. At the instant a smart idea occurred to Buntu: to take the dead's man passbook and transpose his vital information which included work-seekers permit for Sizwe. He smartly transfixes Sizwe's passport photo onto Robert Zwelinzimas's passport. Sizwe

Banzi therefore became the dead man while Robert Zwelinzimas lives. The play derives its title from this clever act. The Past Law is manipulated in favour of Sizwe Banzi. So Sizwe has an opportunity to gain lawful and gainful employment to take care of himself and his family. Zwelinzimas Banzi “dies” so that he could live a happy and full filled life in South Africa.

Theme:

The play makes a strong statement about the polar end of life – death. Death is inextricably linked with life. The experiences of the 3 characters in the play-Styles, Buntu and Sizwe within the evil political system in South Africa are so bitter that they are resigned to death to find peace and hope, though the dead man Robert Zwelinzimas and Sizwe find life.

The inhuman apartheid system in South Africa gave rise to a genre of literature that signifies protest because the government is regressive. The people are conscientized to develop, despite attitudes or means to survive. The struggle is for freedom, equal rights, franchise and to repeal all obnoxious laws against segregation against the black majority population.

Dramatic Technique:

The first and obvious technique the playwright deployed here is the skill that of juxtaposition. The play opens in a photographer studio, but next to the studio is a funeral parlour. Photographs recreate and renew the span of life of people. Styles photos relics of forgotten relations. It also puts a new life into a decrepit and hopeless life as it did for Sizwe when he replaced his passport photo into Robert’s passbook or worker’s permit in order to earn and income and live a full life. In the juxtapositioning of the photo studio and the funeral parlour, the playwright seeks to show that life and death are side by side, that they are inextricably linked. The characters in the play-Style, Sizwe and Buntu are the pivot on which the prime action of the play revolves. They are stereotypes and round character types whose actions are defined and predictable.

Self-Assessment Exercise

2. From your analysis of the play-text, explain the relationship between Blacks and Whites under the Apartheid regime in South Africa.
3. Discuss the politics behind the racist policy in South Africa at the time.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. “The apartheid regime was a replica of human slavery” Briefly discuss with close reference to the text.

2. Demonstrate familiarity with the apartheid regime as enacted in the play *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*.
3. Discuss the plot or the logical arrangement of incidents in *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*.

The second play to be discussed in this unit, is ***Boesman and Lena***.

Plot:

Boesman and Lena are black man and woman, in South Africa persecuted, harried, bullied and driven out of the “pundok” by the “bulldozers of progress” in a bid to rid the country side of unproductive Africans. They arrive at a mudflat by the River Swartkops, loaded with their total possessions: the materials to build a shack and a collection of pots and pans but nothing to cook in them. The two quarrel, taking out on each other the rage and frustration they cannot express against the racist regime in South Africa. An old man Outa stumbles on the two Hottentots and became the physical catalyst in their relationship, precipitating a crisis but a happy resolution. The play is a beautiful piece of work perceived not only from the artistic view point but from a cultural, social, political and a dramatic perception. Its peculiar structure with a beginning that is only discovered in the end is intriguing for it borders on suspense and themecally ties the two acts together strongly. Its circular structure is reminiscent of Absurdist drama especially as it deals with the hopelessness of life. *Boesman and Lena* is the third part of a trilogy and therefore a fulfilment of what Athol Fugard had begun in the *Blood Knot* and *Hello & Goodbye*.

Language:

The apartheid regime in South Africa was one of inhumanity to man, dehumanization, intimidation and fear. The play uses the dialogue of pain, suffering and hopelessness, to communicate. The play is said to be a story of a groan for which the possibility of a respite is a dream; an ache without a possible cure for Boesman and Lena are powerless to make a change in their lives. *Boesman and Lena* is full of ideas and images, which indirectly refer to the hatred of the enemy (the whites). These ideas and images must not be given too much flesh because of the playwright’s security. It is obvious that in a repressive regime where suspicion and hostility were awash, the playwright needed to be tactful with words. The language of the play reflects these, in a vast hospital in whose casualty section the wounded are left untreated.

Characterization:

The three characters in the play Boesman (the husband) Lena (the wife) and Outa, (the old man) represent the main structure of the play as all the action

revolve around them. Lena as a woman owed her husband food while Boesman owed Lena shelter. So out of nothingness in the wilderness of the river bank, Boesman created a house and Lena made fire and cooked their meal. Outa provided a shoulder on which Lena could cry on if the need arose. So characterization was simple and well directed.

Self-Assessment Exercise

2. In what way is Boesman and Lena a demonstration of man's inhumanity to man.
3. Explain how the theme of hopelessness is manifested in Boesman and Lena.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Using any play of Fugard that you studied, discuss the theme of discrimination in South Africa.
2. Demonstrate familiarity with the politics of segregation in South Africa at the time.
3. Compare and contrast the thematic considerations between South African and West African playwrights.
4. Using any two plays of your choice from South and West Africa, discuss the major consideration of playwrights from the two regions of Africa.

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UNIT 9

In this unit we shall discuss Ngugi Wa Thiongo's two plays namely; *I Will Marry When I want* and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*.

NGUGI WA THIONGO

Introduction:

James Ngugi was born in 1938 in Limuri Kenya, into a large extended Christian family made up of a father, 4 wives and 28 children. As the name James suggests he was a Christian by faith, but later changed when he discovered for himself that the churches in Kenya were being used as a powerful weapon by the oppressors against the oppressed. So at this event, he left the church and also changed his identity (name) from James Ngugi to Ngugi Wa Thiongo. He grew up in Kenya during the most turbulent days of the country's colonial history. He lived through the Kenya of white domination, complete deprivation of the natives' properties, especially lands and he grew up in the shadows of Mau Mau uprising.

He attended Alliance High School Kikuyu, Makerere University College and the University of Leeds. His educational background had the greatest influence both on his life and his works.

He is a Kenyan novelist and playwright of all time in Kenya. He regards the concept of "art for art's sake" as "deodorized dog shit". Here are examples of his plays/works: *The Rebel*, *This Time Tomorrow*, *A Wound in The Heart*, *The Trial of Didan Kimathi*, (Coauthored with Micrere Mugo), *Black Hermit*, *I will Marry When I Want* (Coauthored with Ngugi Wa Mirri) and *Mother Cry For Me*. He is one of the few who refuses to keep silent in the face of what he considers the oppression of his people. He is a critical realist, who documents in his plays reliable social issues in Kenya with the aim of effecting change.

He is also a revolutionary writer, who is obsessed by the situation of the Kenyan masses. He was arrested and detained for a year without trial after the production of *I will Marry When I Want*, while his *Mother Cry For Me* was banned after few nights of production.

The issues and reflect of his mind is this great question: what is the relevance of life?

I WILL MARRY WHEN I WANT

Plot:

Ngaahika Ndeenda (a play he coauthored with Ngugi Wa Miiri) later translated as *I will Marry When I Want* is focused on the Kenyan history of struggle, against imperialism with pride, delineating traitorous role of those who sold out, and the heroic role of those that held out; a play which correctly reflects the social conditions in Kenya today. The central motif in the play is that of human dignity and freedom. The play was written in post-independent Kenya as a protest against dehumanization of the masses by the new leadership.

This story centers on a peasant farmer Kiguunda and his wife, Wangeehis and their daughter Gathoni. Kiguunda's most highly-prized possession in a one-and-a-half acres piece of land whose title deeds, he keeps carefully and often fingers gingerly and tenderly. The family is expecting a rare visit from a wealthy farmer and businessman, Ahab Kioi Wa Kanori and his wife Jezebel whom Kiguunda works for on one of their farms. The aim of this visit is unprecedented as is considered a puzzle since the two families belong to different social classes.

But on recalling that Kioi's son, John Muhuuni has been showing some amorous tendencies towards their daughter, they assumed the purpose of the visit could be either to warn that the two don't meet again, or to ask for Gathoni's hand in marriage.

While waiting patiently, Kiguunda tries to mend the chair on which his guests will sit. Eventually Kioi arrives, but their mission is to convince Kiguunda and Wangeehis to stop living in sin, as they put it, by getting married in the church, Kiguunda is puzzled because his marriage relationship is described as sin. He married his wife in a full traditional way. He reaches for his sword and angrily drives them away.

Just then their daughter Gathoni enters looking particularly sizzling in her new dress and hair. Her new look is due to the generous purse of John, the son of Kioi. Her parents object and order she returns them to his beau and be content with her lot.

"And I go back to my roots" She shouts back at her father counsels. "A man brags about his penis however small. A poor house, but mine"! He warns her not to overstep boundaries. But she disregards the warning and accompanies her boyfriend John to Mombasa for a week against her parents wish to have a Church wedding, but realizes the heavy financial burden entailed by their decision, so they decided to turn to their newly found family in-Christ, the Kiois, for financial assistance. In order to give the assistance, Kioi advices Kiguunda to put up his little deed of the one-and-a-half acres piece of land, which he did and got a loan. The turnaround in their lives began, Kiguunda and Wangeehis

refurbish their home and acquire a few modern items. Just as the couple are reveling over their impending wedding, matters turn sore and sore. Gathoni (the prodigal daughter) returns home in tears and with a tattered soul. John has jilted her, and has impregnated and denied the pregnancy.

Kiguunda and Wangeehis storm the Kiois's and present the problem. The Kiois defend their son and tagged Gathoni a whore. An altercation ensues and Kiguuna is shot and wounded. Kioi sacks Kiguunda and the demand for the repay of loan comes up. He reneges in his agreement and loses his land to Kioi and wallows in poverty and drunkenness. He had been tricked. This play epitomizes the impoverishing and dehumanizing of the poor by the rich.

Kiguunda did not see Kioi and what he represents as his enemy because he felt he would not be deceived by a brother. At the end of the play he (Kiguunda) resorted to violence to wipe out his exploiters and oppressors because they have used him and his family.

Characterization:

Kiguunda: A farm labourer, whose little one-and-a-half acres of land was the centre of interest for Kioi and several of his investment partners.

Wangeci: Kiguunda's wife, a good wife and mother.

Gathoni: their daughter who brings shame upon the family.

Kioi: A wealthy farmer and businessman. Also the factory owner who uses his connections to defraud the peasant farmer and his wife of their land.

Jezebel: His arrogant wife.

John: Their deceitful son, who is also part of the fraudulent plan.

Language:

The Language used in the play is dialectical. It flowers into proverbs and imagery. Kiguunda says: A man brags about his penis however small, a poor house but mine ... (22).

Musical elements like songs dominate the play both in terms of dramaturgy and communication. The playwright's strong political comments are communicated through music.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What themes are discussed in the play? Examine their relevance to the lives of the people at the time.
2. Drama recreates and reflects the lives of the people. Comment.

Tutor Marked Assignment

1. Discuss the dehumanization of the poor by the rich in the play.
2. “The play is a true reflection of Kenyan’s history of struggle against imperialism”. Discuss.
3. How relevant is literature to life.

The second Ngugi's play discussed here is *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*.

THE TRIAL OF DEDAN KIMATHI

Introduction:

One of the propelling forces behind Ngugi's writings is to give the correct version of Kenyan history and this mission can be seen especially in this play.

This play is Ngugi's response to the Colonialist writing about the Mau-Mau movement, which traditionally depicted the movement and its leader, Dedan Kimathi as mentally unbalanced and vicious. Ngugi and his collaborator (Micere Guthae-Mugo) countered this image with a portrait of Kimathi, as a man of great courage and commitment, as this was how he was seen by many of the peasants and labourers of Kenya.

The play is a dramatization of the process of historical re-construction and rehabilitation. It is set in colonial Kenya with the Whites still dominating the political, social and economic affairs of the country. It is a political drama whose point of focus is the heroic statue of Dedan Kimathi, the leader of the Mau-Mau struggle (who stood up against the British and their dominative act and suppression of the masses).

Plot:

The play opens in a courtroom where Kimathi was captured and put on a trial in 1956. The capture, execution and courtroom trial of Kimathi only frames the real trials of the play, which are the four temptations Kimathi sequestered in his cell before his trial to Martyrdom.

Kimathi is on trial for possessing a fire arm in the courtroom. While that is ongoing Wallina, a white police officer, and his soldiers terrorize the natives, searching them and demanding their pass books, and arresting innocent villagers in case they supported the Mau-Mau terrorists. The soldiers and the British Colonial masters hoped that when Kimathi is hung to death, the fight for freedom and independence will stop. Kimathi challenges the validity of a court set up by Colonialist oppressors to administer their own laws. When the judge adjourned the trials, an armed white settler rages at the blacks in the courtroom out of frustration.

The judge visits Kimathi in his cell (he is Shaw Henderson) as charged by the British to negotiate with Kimathi. He offers to spare Kimathi's life if Kimathi pleads guilty and helps them root out the terrorists. Kimathi refuses. He is then visited by bankers, who promise prosperity for Kenya if he will end the armed struggle, and is further tempted by a black business executive, a politician and a

priest. When these appeals fail, Henderson strikes Kimathi and orders him to be whipped. Kimathi is sentenced to death, because they thought he was the straw that would break the camel's back. Yes he was the straw, but not the way they thought. They thought that if Kimathi was dead, the other Kenyans will become voiceless, but that wasn't the case. His death led to the provocation of the Mau-Mau force and the oppressed masses. Two young Kenyans a boy and girl produced a gunshot as directed by the old woman which indicated the continuity of the war. While shooting the gun they said "Kimathi Not dead".

Characterization:

Kimathi:

A key figure, the hero and leader of Mau-Mau struggle, who led them, against the British. He was symbolically held by the voices of the oppressed masses which led to his revolutionary action. He is said to be a hero because he exhibited most of the qualities that could be termed heroic, till his death. He kept his faith, not wavering in character and stance, nor was he greedy, even when he had enticing offers, he stood his ground. He is bold and boldly he said thus ... "listen and listen well, I will fight to the bitter end. Protect our soil. Protect our people. This is what I, Kimathi Wa Wachiuri swore at initiation. This could be said to be his pledge to his people". He is strong and he said thus to Henderson ... if you are a fighter, unfetter me now. Let us face each other. Man to man. Let us see which wrestler fells the other, you coward...

Kimathi never betrayed the cause of the people even when he knows that it could cost him his life. He will hang on to the oaths of the Mau-Mau. Even when in the torture chamber, when he was given a piece of paper to sign, ordering the surrender of the other fighters, he refuses and says;

"For four hundred years we have risen and fought against oppression, against humiliation, against enslavement of body, mind and soul (tearing the piece of paper) our people will never surrender". And lot more instances that declared Kimathi a hero even though he was referred to as rebel by the British imperialist government. He fought for a worthy cause.

Henderson:

This is Kimathi's childhood friend who has been blinded by the tiny crumps thrown at him by the British Colonialists. He is a fledge whom the British thought they could use in getting Kimathi.

The scene opens where Kimathi sits in a corner, a long chain from his leg is dragging behind him. He (Shaw Henderson) enters and identifies himself as "I

am a friend” and tells Kimathi that the people have “sent me to talk sense into your obstinate head”. He says further, that he had come to “make a deal”, you must plead in court tomorrow and you must plead guilty. I promise to spare your life, citing the examples of China, Gati, Hungu, Gaceru whose lives they had spared after they became our collaborators. Henderson recalls how as children they – Kimathi and him – used to play the horse so that he could ride him. Henderson asks Kimathi to stop the blood-bath, observing that “your people are the losers, Dedan” but Kimathi refuses.

He (Shaw Henderson) visited the jail again, and asked him to stop dreaming and wake up to the reality, but Kimathi replies furiously which made Henderson react wildly by striking, kicking him with, hands, legs and gun. He promises to destroy Kimathi and finally he orders an intensive treatment in the torture chambers.

Colonial Masters:

The Judas as they were being called by Kimathi, are looking for ways to buy Kenya, and they go about throwing cheap coins on the greedy blacks who care for it, causing them to fight against each other, kill each other and also serve as slaves to them, protect the oppressor, license the murderers of the people (black), whip the blacks when they did not pick up their tea leaves.

They are the ones Tagging Kimathi a rebel and accusing the Mau-Mau, a force of terrorism. They try to buy Kimathi over like they did to others but they can't and get frustrated. So they thought eliminating him would be the best idea. Little did they know that eliminating him will be the start of the real battle.

Language:

There are various rhetorical strategies used by the playwright in this play. He (the playwright) used devices such as pronouns, character contrast, metaphor, personification, pun, allusion, sups, paralinguistic features, voice etc. to vividly express the thematic process.

The devices used and their thematic foci are identified and presented in the table below.

For the content analysis, we shall examine same linguistic tools used by the playwright.

Rhetorical Device	Linguistic Item	Thematic Pre-Occupation
Pronouns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'll repeat the charge • I could order that you be sent. • I will break you. 	
Symbols	Bread, Kimathi, Women, Boy, Girl, Gun	
Contrast	... but let me tell you. After the trial, after Kimathi is hanged there, this will be the end of this bloody struggle	
Metaphor	... Their universities where they give our children education to feeble minds, make them slaves.	
Paralinguistic	Through the silence, the chilling scream of a person, followed by groans and more screams.	
Registers	Oppression, exploitation, comrade, peasants, settlers, liberation etc.	
Rhetorical Device	Linguistic item	Racial Discrimination
Poetic language	You see, I am not a poet and a dreamer	
Pun	Trial, justice	

Source: "Oxford University Literary Page"

Pronoun:

Suggestive of unequal power relations between the blacks and whites in Kenya. (The domination of the blacks by the whites).

Symbols:

Here some words are carefully used for significant purposes, like "the bread". It is used to connote life, a substance of liberation for the Kenyans. The gun packaged in a bread by the women represents the fight for freedom.

“The woman”: portrays the place of women in the course of revamping socio-economic and political malaise.

“Boy” and “Girl”: symbolizes an average Kenyan child who suffers untold hardship of colonization, but has decided to follow the path of liberation.

Character contrast: Is being used as a device in the play, to propel the plot of the story line.

Metaphors: are used in the text to paint imagery of oppression, starvation, prejudice and exploitation of the blacks.

Registers of Marxism, such as oppression, exploitation, comrade, peasants, liberation etc. are constantly repeated in this play to remind the reader about the harrowing experience of the blacks.

Poetic expression: This is another device used by the playwright. Kimathi appears to be a character who can handle words even before the lords. This explains why Henderson refers to him as a poet.

Pun: The playwright uses pun to achieve certain effects in the play. Kimathi continuously play on words like justice, trail etc. which is shown by Ngugi to mean different things to different classes in the society.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* is a reenactment of Kenyan history. Discuss “Colonialism in Kenya was a blessing in disguise”. Expatiate.

Tutor Marked Questions

1. Examine the leadership qualities exhibited by Kimathi in the play.
2. Elucidate on the historical and socio-cultural issues found in the play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*.
3. The Trial of Dedan Kimathi is a lesson in leadership for African leaders. Comment.
4. Discuss the master-servant relationship as espoused in the play.

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

Department of Literature

Course Guide for ENG 816: Studies in Written African Literature

A. Course Description:

This is a second semester course for graduate student of African Literature. The course is designed to acquaint students with the works of some notable playwrights in contemporary written African Literature, as it relates to relevant issues and concerns of the people. It will select some dramatists, examine their works and initiate a discussion on the given circumstances in their works such as plot, language and characterization. The course will sharpen the insight and intelligence with which students read dramatic texts at the time they were written. The course has been broken into 9 units comprising 16 play texts. The playwrights to be studied here include: Femi Osofisan, Wole Soyinka, Tess Onwueme, Zulu Sofola from Nigeria and Ama Ata Aidoo of Ghana representing West Africa. The South African region is represented by Athol Fugard while East Africa is represented by Ngugi Wa Thiongo. Two plays from each playwright were studied yielding a total of 16. The student is expected to read a minimum of 10 texts in order to be adequately prepared for the exams.

B. Course Aims and Objectives:

The course is broken into 9 units with the understanding that the serious student should be able to read plays from the 3 regions of Africa which has produced prolific literary output.

Course Aims:

The general aims of the course include:

- a. To expose students to the enjoyment of drama as a reflection of a peoples' life and culture.
- b. To enable students appreciate the fact that every written African drama piece is guided by a theme, a moral, upon which the whole story is woven.
- c. To acquaint students with the general outlook of written African drama from West Africa, East Africa and South Africa.
- d. To enable students understand that drama represents and reflects the given circumstances of the period during which it was written and thus reflects the people lives and cultures.

C. Course Objectives:

In specific terms, it is expected that by the end of the course, students should be able to:

- a. Read with understanding a minimum of 10 drama texts out of the 16 studied. The 10 plays must be chosen from at least 2 regions of Africa, namely, the West, East and South Africa.
- b. Identify the themes in modern African drama and their relevance in the chosen texts.
- c. Explain the convincing nature of the plot or storyline of each text.
- d. State the peculiarity of any language or linguistic device employed in the play and in creating convincing characters.
- e. Examine the level of success with which each playwright handled the theme of his chosen play.
- f. Explain how realistic the characters in the text represent characters in real life.
- g. Narrate how drama reflects the lives and culture of the people at a given time.
- h. Discuss which of the plays you would be able to stage and for what purpose.
- i. Explain in what way any of the plays studied has appealed to you most. (As an educational piece, as an entertainment piece, as passing on relevant information, as a persuasive piece of argument or as a motivation for action).
- j. Write and submit a one-act drama piece with a current theme, plot and believable characters.

D. Other Course Requirements

- a. It is expected that a student who intends to do well in the course should submit a minimum of 10 assignments from the tutor marked assignments in the course.
- b. There will be a final examination which is compulsory for all students.
- c. Students are expected to do a general reading around the chosen texts and the playwrights, to be able to understand the given circumstances surrounding the writing of the texts.

Course Materials

The working materials for this course include:

- a. The course guide.
- b. The course syllables or course outline.

- c. Recommended play texts.
- d. A good dictionary.
- e. An assessment file.
- f. A presentation schedule or work sequence.

Study Units

The 9 study units are broken down as follows:

Module 1

Unit 1: Background to the beginnings of African drama.

- a. Characteristics of written African drama from South African, West African and East Africa.
- b. Self-Assessment exercise.

Module 2

Unit 2: A study of 2 plays of Femi Osofisan namely: *The Chattering and the Song* and *Morontudun*.

Brief Profile of Femi Osofisan

A. The Chattering and the Song

- a. Plot
- b. Language
- c. Characterization
- d. Self-assessment exercise
- e. Tutor-marked assignment.

B. Morontudun

- a. Plot
- b. Language
- c. Characterization
- d. Self-assessment exercise
- e. Tutor-marked assignment
- f. References

Module 3

Unit 3: A study of 2 Wole Soyinka's plays namely: *The Strong Breed* and *Death and the King's Horseman*.

Brief Profile of Wole Soyinka

- A. *The Strong Breed*
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Plot
 - c. Characterization
 - d. Language
 - e. Self-assessment exercise
 - f. Tutor-marked assignment
- B. *Death and the King's Horseman*
 - a. Plot
 - b. Language
 - c. Characterization
 - d. Self-assessment exercise
 - e. Tutor marked assignment
 - f. References

Module 4 – Themes in Modern African Drama

Unit 4: A study of 2 plays of Ola Rotimi namely: *Man Talk*, *Woman Talk* and *Kurunmi*.

Brief Profile of Ola Rotimi

- A. *Man Talk, Woman Talk*
 - a. Plot
 - b. Language
 - c. Characterization
 - d. Self-assessment exercise
 - e. Tutor marked assignment
- B. *Kurunmi*
 - a. Plot
 - b. Language
 - c. Characterization
 - d. Self-assessment exercise
 - e. Tutor marked assignment
 - f. References

Module 5

Unit 5: A study of 2 plays Zulu Sofola namely: *Wedlock of the Gods* and *King Emene*.

Brief profile of Zulu Sofola

- A. *Wedlock of the Gods*.
 - a. Plot
 - b. Language
 - c. Characterization
 - d. Self-assessment exercise
 - e. Tutor marked assignment
- B. *King Emene*
 - a. Plot
 - b. Language
 - c. Self-assessment exercise
 - d. Tutor marked assignment
 - e. References

Module 6

Unit 6: A study of 2 plays of Tess Onwueme namely; *The Broken Calabash* and *The Desert Encroaches*.

Brief Profile of Tess Onwueme.

- A. *The Broken Calabash*
 - a. Plot
 - b. Language
 - c. Dramatic technique
 - d. Self-assessment exercise
 - e. Tutor marked assignment
- B. *The Desert Encroaches*
 - a. Plot
 - b. Language
 - c. Dramatic technique
 - d. Self-assessment exercise
 - e. Tutor marked assignment
 - f. References

Module 7

Unit 7: A study of 2 plays of Ama Ata Aidoo namely: *Anowa* and *The Dilemma of a Ghost*.

Brief Profile of Ama Ata Aidoo

- A. *Anowa*
 - a. Plot
 - b. Language
 - c. Characterization
 - d. Self-assessment Exercise
 - e. Tutor-marked assignment
- B. *The Dilemma of a Ghost*
 - a. Plot
 - b. Language
 - c. Characterization
 - d. Self-assessment Exercise
 - e. Tutor-marked assignment
 - f. References

Module 8

Unit 8: A study of the 2 plays of Athol Fugard namely; *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *Boesman and Lena*.

Brief profile of Athol Fugard

- A. *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*
 - a. Plot
 - b. Theme
 - c. Dramatic technique
 - d. Self-assessment Exercise
 - e. Tutor-marked assignment
- B. *Boesman and Lena*
 - a. Plot
 - b. Language
 - c. Characterization
 - d. Self-assessment Exercise
 - e. Tutor-marked assignment
 - f. References

Module 9

Unit 9: A study of 2 plays of Ngugi Wa Thiongo namely: *I will Marry When I Want* and *The Trail of Didan Kimathi*.

Brief Profile of Ngugi Wa Thiongo.

- A. *I Will Marry When I Want*
- a. Plot
 - b. Characterization
 - c. Language
 - d. Self-assessment
 - e. Tutor-marked assignment
- B. *The Trial of Didan Kimathi*
- a. Plot
 - b. Characterization
 - c. Language
 - d. Self-assessment Exercise
 - e. Tutor marked assignment

Evaluation

- a. The evaluation of the course will be based on the level of performance in the specific course objectives numbered (a) - (j) including the student's performance on the 10 tutor marked assignments.
- b. Mark distribution:

The marks will be distributed as follows:

1. Tutor marked assignments	-	30 marks
2. Final examinations	-	70 marks
Total	-	<u>100 Marks</u>

WORK EFFORT SEQUENCE – PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

The table below shows how the course objectives can be achieved in a 10-week work sequence:

Week	Units	Title of Work	Assessment
Week 1	Unit 1 1. Overview of the course. 2. The beginnings of written African Literature. 3. Characteristics of regional African literature.	Introduction and Overview of the course.	3 Self-assessment Questions
Week 2	Unit 1	A study of Osofisan's The Chattering and the Song.	1 Tutor marked assignment
Week 3	Unit 2	A study of Morontudun	1 Tutor marked assignment
Week 4	Unit 3	A study of Wole Soyinka's 2 plays	2 Tutor marked assignments
Week 5	Unit 4	1. Themes in Modern African Drama. 2. The study of Ola Rotimi's 2 plays	2 Tutor marked assignments
Week 6	Unit 5	A Study of Zulu Sofola's 2 plays	2 Tutor marked assignments
Week 7	Unit 6	A Study of Tess Onwueme's 2 plays	2 Tutor marked assignments
Week 8	Unit 7	A study of Ama Ata Aidoo's 2 plays	2 Tutor marked assignments
Week 9	Unit 8	A Study of Athol Fugard's 2 plays	2 Tutor marked assignments
Week 10	Unit 9	A Study of Ngugi Wa Thiongo's 2 plays	2 Tutor marked assignments
Week 11	General Revision	Revision	Revision
Week 12	Examination	Examination	Examination

GENERAL ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

UNIT 1

1. Examine the major aims and objectives of the course on written African literature.
2. Explain the traditional sources of written African drama.
3. “The content of Post-Colonial African drama was a reaction to the poor relationship existing between Africans and their colonizers at the time”. Discuss.

UNIT 2

The Chattering and the Song

Self-assessment Exercise

3. Examine the role of the play within a play.
4. What role did the technique play in advancing the plot of the play?

Tutor Marked Assignment

5. From your study of this play, how can good leadership be achieved?
6. Write briefly on the dramatic techniques employed in the play.
7. Discuss briefly the significance of the weaver birds in the play.
8. Identify the major themes in the play and discuss any 3 of name.

Morontudun

Self-Assessment Exercise:

1. What is the major concern of the playwright in this play?
2. What leadership traits of Queen Moremi have been ascribed to Morontudun?

Tutor-Marked Assignment:

1. Examine the implication of making Titubi play the lead role of redemption of the people in a male dominated society in the play.
2. Discuss characterization in the play Moremi.
3. Write briefly on the significance of Titubi’s transformation in the play.

UNIT 3

The Strong Breed

Self-Assessment Exercise

3. Discuss the view that the tradition of Egungun sacrifice really cleanses the land.
4. Examine the relevance of Eman’s selfless sacrifice.

Tutor-Marked Assignment:

4. Identify the major theme examined in this play and discuss any 2 of them exhaustively.
5. How significant is Ifada in the play?

In what ways do worship, belief, the family and tradition control human behaviour as discussed in this play?

Death and the King's Horseman

Self-Assessment Exercise

3. Discuss the plot of the play.
4. Discuss the relevance of the 2 lifestyle displayed by Elesin in the play.

Tutor Marked Assignment

5. *Death and the King's Horseman* is more of a clash of culture than the upholding of a traditional rite of a king's burial. Comment.
6. "The result at the end of the play is said to be catastrophic". Discuss.
7. Discuss why Iyaloja is termed "the voice of wisdom" in the play.

Death and the King's Horseman is more of proverbs and rituals than a cause and effect relationship. Provide a critical response.

UNIT 4

Man Talk, Woman Talk

Self-Assessment Exercise:

3. Provide three reasons why you would like to be a playwright.
4. What current themes in African drama would you like to write on and why?

Tutor-Marked Assignment:

4. In *Man Talk, Woman Talk*, the psychological war and emotional understanding between Anthonia and Son is revealed at the heart of the play. Discuss in detail what you think Ola Rotimi tried to achieve with these characters in relation to one of the problems in the society.
5. What bearing does *Man Talk – Woman Talk* have on current Nigerian politics.
6. Identify the major themes highlighted in the play.

Kurunmi

Self-Assessment Exercise:

3. Ola Rotimi's dramatic universe encapsulates the reality of a given people. Discuss this in relation to any of his plays that you have studied.
4. Why do you think Rotimi is a successful playwright?

Tutor-Marked Assessment:

4. From your study of Kurunmi, in what way does the text reflect the crises of leadership in our contemporary society?
5. What do you consider the role of the chorus in Ola Rotimi's plays.
6. What in your opinion distinguishes Rotimi from other playwrights you have read?

UNIT 5

Wedlock of the God's

Self-Assessment Exercise:

4. What in your opinion, are the uses of drama?
5. Explain why you would want or not want to write a play.
6. How often do you visit the theatre and watch play productions.

Tutor-Marked Assessment

5. Identify and explain the driving force of an arranged marriage as captured in the play.
6. Identify the two main characters in the play *Wedlock of the Gods* and clearly state how they defy their culture.
7. Why is drama considered a potent tool in literature?
8. How often do you visit the theatre and watch play productions.

King Emene

Self-Assessment Exercise

4. Who actually dictates the affairs of men, the gods or circumstances?
5. In what way is culture-conflict important in African drama?
6. Why is Zulu Sofola considered a custodian of her people's culture?

Tutor-Marked Assignment

Instruction: Answer any 3 questions

5. Identify 3 themes explored by Sofola in *King Emene* and briefly discuss them.

6. Provide evidence that Sofola is an advocate of the female gender question in the society.
7. How does the theme of gender equity advance the course of development in Nigerian society?
8. Briefly discuss 3 dominant socio-political issues in *King Emene*.

UNIT 6

The Broken Calabash

Self-Assessment Exercise

3. *The Broken Calash* is a rehash of the clash of culture in African literature. Briefly explain.
4. Tess Onwueme is a socially committed playwright. Discuss.

Tutor Marked Assignment

4. The African Woman is the butt of patriarchal culture and politics. Discuss with reference to *The Broken Calabash*.
5. Tess Onwueme uses symbols to decry the cultural devastation on the society. Discuss.

“The physical breaking of the calabash symbolizes both Ona’s shattered emotional dreams and stability as well as the tradition which her father strives to achieve”. Expatiate.

The Desert Encroaches

Self-Assessment Exercise

3. “The play is about the destruction of humanity, the moral fibers of our lives and our sensibility”. Discuss.
4. “Desert Encroaches is a play which call people together to analyze their situation and act in the interest of all”. Examine the veracity or otherwise of this statement.

Tutor Marked Assignment

4. Desert Encroaches is a highly political play which deals with the theme of politics and development. Examine the truth or otherwise of this statement.
5. “To ensure the rise of a new dawn and the ray of a new hope, the youth must rise up to action”. In what way is this a protest play?
6. Desert encroaches is a satire which advocates collectivism and peoples’ power. Expatiate with copious references to the play text.

UNIT 7

Anowa

Self-Assessment Exercise

3. Discuss the view that Anowa dramatizes the story of a failed sexual rebellion in the society.
4. Anowa's rebellion is considered a slap on the face of Ghanaian culture at the time. Discuss.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

4. What in your opinion defines womanhood in the African setting?
5. Drama reflects and participate in the life of a time. How true is this statement in relation to Anowa and the Ghanaian society at the time
6. Identify 3 levels of challenge which helped progress the story of the play.

The Dilemma of a Ghost

Self-Assessment Exercise:

3. Identify and discuss three African values which have been bruised by Western values in this play.
4. What should be the relationship between African and Western values?

Tutor Marked Assignment:

Instruction: Answer any 3 questions.

5. Discuss in detail any conflict from the clash of the two opposing cultures in the play.
6. Discuss briefly how education may have distorted Africa traditional values as seen in the play.
7. How is the setting of the play typical of the relationship between blacks and whites even in the contemporary times?
8. What major themes are highlighted in this play? Examine them critically.

UNIT 8

Sizwe Banzi is Dead

Self-Assessment Exercise

- 1 From your analysis of the play-text, explain the relationship between Blacks and Whites under the Apartheid regime in South Africa.
- 2 Discuss the politics behind the racist policy in South Africa at the time.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

4. “The apartheid regime was a replica of human slavery” Briefly discuss with close reference to the text.
5. Demonstrate familiarity with the apartheid regime as enacted in the play *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*.
6. Discuss the plot or the story logical arrangement of incidents in *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*.

Boesman and Lena

Self-Assessment Exercise

4. In what way is *Boesman and Lena* a demonstration of man’s inhumanity to man.
5. Explain how the theme of hopelessness is manifested in *Boesman and Lena*.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

5. Using any play of Fugard that you studied, discuss the theme of discrimination in South Africa.
6. Demonstrate familiarity with the politics of segregation in South Africa at the time.
7. Compare and contrast the thematic considerations between South African and West African playwrights.
8. Using any two plays of your choice from South and West Africa, discuss the major consideration of playwrights from the two regions of Africa.

UNIT 9

I will Mary When I want

Self-Assessment Exercise

3. What themes are discussed in the play? Examine their relevance to the lives of the people at the time.
4. Drama recreates and reflects the lives of the people. Comment.

Tutor Marked Assignment

4. Discuss the dehumanization of the poor by the rich in the play.

5. “The play is a true reflection of Kenyan’s history of struggle against imperialism”. Discuss.
6. How relevant is literature to life.

Trial of Dedan Kimathi.

Self-Assessment Exercise

2. *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* is a reenactment of Kenyan history. Discuss “Colonialism in Kenya was a blessing in disguise”. Expatiate.

Tutor Marked Questions

5. Examine the leadership qualities exhibited by Kimathi in the play.
6. Elucidate on the historical and socio-cultural issues found in the play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*.
7. The Trial of Dedan Kimathi is a lesson in leadership for African leaders. Comment.
8. Discuss the master-servant relationship as espoused in the play.