

## MODULE 2     DRAMA

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### UNIT 1     YOUR SUBJECT

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#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Drama is primarily an imitation of human action in a mirror held up to nature and realized on stage. This means that you can base your play on incidents, concepts, persons and experiences. You will succeed more as a playwright if you have naturally acquired a sense of the dramatic and a good knowledge of the stage. In drama, just like in other forms of creative writing, you have the task of using language in a special way to convey your message in an entertaining manner.

#### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- list avenues that can generate ideas;
- list some of such ideas;
- choose an idea to develop in your play; and
- try to write a play based on that idea.

#### HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.

- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Theme/Idea**

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

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

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

##### **3.1.1 Imagination**

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

#### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Imagine a short story that you have not heard before

- (2) The story must reflect human experience
- (3) Review that story and detect the central idea in that story

### 3.1.2 Personal Experience

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Patsy: (laughing), serves you right. Why are you bothering yourself? Next time you would go to her, won’t you? As for*

*me sha, I have no time for anybody. I will just fulfill all righteousness and sit for my WASC examination to justify the school fees my parents paid for me. As soon as I drop my pen sha, I will go to a school of modeling abroad. Chukky has promised to sponsor me. You know that he travels abroad regularly. He will take me along as soon as I take my last paper.*

*Tessy: You're really moving into the world. Into the wor...*

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

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

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

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

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

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

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

### 3.1.3 Another Person's Experience

Another person's experience could inspire you. As we have seen in 3.1.2. above, you could elicit an idea for a possible play from an experience. One day, I was in the luxurious bus from Lagos to Awka. At Upper Iweka, Onitsha in Anambra State, the bus stopped for some passengers to alight and as usual, many young men rushed with their wheelbarrows to scramble for the passengers' luggage. I noticed one who was lying dejectedly in his wheelbarrow watching his colleagues. I wondered why he was not struggling with the rest and what could be going on in his mind. I decided to imaginatively follow him to his house, to his childhood, to the reasons why he ended up in a profession like this. I did but, unfortunately, the manuscript is not a complete project yet. Maybe one day, it would, the idea of childlessness in marriage explored in my play *Sons for My Son* was inspired by an experience of women. The first was a woman who said that her husband is not really the biological father of her children but her pastor. Another one is a woman who got married but was unable to have a baby after three years of marriage. As a matter of fact the line below by Enyidie, her mother-in-law in the play was what her mother-in-law in real life told her, though not the way it is presented here.

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

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

**SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

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

**3.1.4 An Individual**

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

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

**SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

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

**3.1.5 Environment**

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

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

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5**

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

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

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

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

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

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

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

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

Irobi, Esiaba *The Pope Lied*, an unpublished manuscript.

Ojaide, Tanure (2005). *Creative Writing Handbook for African Writers and Students*. Lagos. Malthouse.

Onyekuba, Onyeka (1994a). *Into the World*. Awka: Mercury Bright Press.

(1994b). *Son's For My Son*. Awka: Mercury Bright Press.

## UNIT 2 ADAPTATIONS

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

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- list some adapted play;
- compare one of them with the original story; and
- adapt and write a playlet based on a short story

### HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.



### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Adaptations

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

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

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

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

#### 3.2 Adapting a play

It is common for dramatists through the ages to use well-known materials for the subjects of their plays. A popular novel or poem could be turned into a play. The important factor is not “...what the writer ostensibly takes from his predecessors or contemporaries, but the particular use he makes of his borrowing” (Ludowyk, 1979:258). In adaptation, you are not copying but using your creative ability to mould the material the way you wish. The audience must be able to note important departures from the original in your reworking of it. In adapting a play from a play you derive the outline of your plot and the characters from the original play. You pay attention to salient events in the original play and within its limits, arrange your material to suit your own purpose.

Many of Shakespearean plays are adaptations of earlier plays. For instance, his *Romeo and Juliet* was adapted from *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* which was written first in Italian by Bandell and in English by Arthur Brooke. For instance, the plot of his *Twelfth Night* is popular and has featured in “various Italian, Spanish and French plays (that) developed the subject, derived ultimately from Plautus”, (Ludowyk, 1979:260). The plays present the story of twins separated by shipwreck; the female disguises herself as a boy, and takes up employment with a Lord with whom she falls in love. In his *Novelle*, Bandell tells

a story which he took from an Italian comedy *Gl'Ingannatic* (The Deceived). This was translated by Belleforest in his *Histoires Tragiques*, and retold by Barnabie Rich in his *Farewell to Military Profession*. Shakespeare adds the subplot of the practical joke played on Malvolio and the characters involved in it. Apart from this, the subject is the same except for few departures from the original text.

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

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

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

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

### 3.3 Adapting from a Novel

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

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

The play was premiered as part of the "Eagle on Iroko"; a symposium for Chinua Achebe's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka 12 – 18<sup>th</sup> February

1990. It presents Ezeulu, just like Chinua Achebe did, as an arrow in the hands of his god. In fighting for Ulu and seeking revenge against his people, little did he know that the arrow could re-bounce and turn the predator into the prey and the pursurer to the pursued (Eni Jones Umukoro, the Blurb).

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

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

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

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

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

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

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

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

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

### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

Achebe, Chinua (1974). *Arrow of God*. London: Heinemann.

Eghagha, Hope (1997). *Death Not A Redeemer*. Lagos: Border.

Etherton, Michaelm (2012). *The Development of African Drama*. Zaria: Tamaza Publishing Company.

Ludowyk, E. F. C. (1979). *Understanding Shakespeare* (CUP – VIKAS Students' Edition). New Delhi: VIKAS.

Nwabueze, Emeka (1991). *When the Arrow Rebounds*. Enugu: ABIC Onyekuba, Onyeka (1994). *Into The World*. Awka: Mercury Bright Onyekuba, Onyeka (1994). *Sons For My Son* Awka: Mercury Bright Soyinka, Wole (1982). *Death and The Kings Horseman*. London: Metheun *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2005). 7<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Sheldon, Sidney (1985). *If Tomorrow Comes*. New York: Warner Books.

## UNIT 3 PRACTICAL STEPS IN WRITING THE PLAY

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- 2.0 Objectives
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  - 3.2 Writing a play
- 4.0 Conclusion
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- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

### HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 What Makes a Play?

There are basic elements of playwriting which a playwright must be conversant with before writing a play. Some of these elements are peculiar to the dramatic genre because it is realized mainly in performance. However, some of them apply

to other genres of literature as well. You need to acquaint yourselves with them to ensure that you apply them appropriately as you write your play.

### 3.1.1 Type

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

### 3.1.2 Length

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

### 3.1.3 Dialogue

There should be a message in your play; the message should be deciphered through the words and actions of your characters as individuals in the play. Remember that your role is to entertain your audience and not to bore them with slogans and lectures. Your dialogue must therefore be true to life like everyday speech and sound convincing. Do not use your characters to preach a doctrine or advance propaganda.

Make your dialogue as lively as possible. Remember that in real life conversations, speakers interrupt one another with approval and disapproval comments. Sometimes, a person may not allow the speaker to end what he/she is saying before cutting in with counter-arguments. Strive as much as possible to reproduce the life-like disjointed conversation in your play especially at “moments of emotional crisis” (Maxwell Mahon, 2005:36).

### 3.1.4 Stage Directions

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

### 3.1.5 Production Effects

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

### 3.1.6 Conflict

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

## 3.2 Writing the play

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

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

OR

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

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

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

#### 1. Outline

- Man returns from a foreign country
  - He joins politics and decides to vie for a senatorial seat in an election
  - He is honest and desires to make a change
  - Pursues his objective
  - Refuses to give up despite attack on him/his family
  - Betrayed by his party members
  - Option A4
  - Slumps and has stroke
2. His opposition: Politics
- Another contestant from another party and who has been a minister before
  - Semi-literate dubious man
  - Has thugs, kills and maims at will
  - Shares money to people and threatens to destroy the town if he is not voted for.

- Voted in, out of fear by the people - Characters
- Man, his political associates his wife his opponent(s)

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

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

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

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

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have tried to refresh our memory on the basic steps in playwriting.

We have also presented an outline for the play we will write in the next unit.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

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

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

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

## UNIT 4 THE PLAYLET

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- 2.0 Main Content
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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

### HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 The Playlet

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

#### OPTION A4: A Playlet

##### Dramatis Personae

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

*Uchechi* – His wife

*Egobuike* – Another corrupt politician



*Ubanese*  
*Dike*  
*Agagwuncha* } - other politicians  
*Mezue*  
*Bogudu* } - The INEC officials

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

### Part I

(In a well-furnished sitting room.)

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

**Uchechi:** Why?

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

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

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

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

**Igwebuike:** Why are you so pessimistic?

**Uchechi:** I am not pessimistic but practical. Can't you see that I have stopped attending your meetings? Darling, please listen to me. These so called political associates of yours are here to milk you dry. Politics here is not for honest people. It is not yet late. Give up the struggle or you will be consumed by the level of disappointment you will get. These people are not interested in building the state but in plundering the state. They do not need you because they do not want a builder but a destroyer.

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

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

**Igwebuike:** Things have changed

- Uchechi:** Things will never change... at least not in our generation. It is only in this country that people applaud what ordinarily should be taken for granted. They pay tax, yet there are no roads, pipe- borne water is history. The rich have boreholes and the meagre resources of the poor are used to buy water from the rich. I say buy.. .buy water, meanwhile we have streams.. .good streams that could provide clean water for all. Look around you, whenever there is electricity (light) people jubilate.. .unbelievable. If one kilometre of road is tarred, people jubilate. The list is endless.
- Igwebuike:** Darling, this is why I have decided to make a change. All I need is your support and the support of every citizen of the state. I hope to.. .there is a knock, (Uchechi opens the door for Ubanese and leaves). You're welcome my friend. Sit down. (Uchechi returns with drinks, places them on the table and leaves).
- Ubanese:** Chief, we have finalized all the arrangements. We need about One hundred Million Naira for the final grassroots mobilization.
- Igwebuike:** One hundred million naira? (Uchechi re-enters)
- Uchechi:** I.. .I.. ., please pardon my intrusion, what did you say? Ten Million Naira for grassroots mobilization. Darling, you see .. .if you have One Hundred Million Naira, choose one hundred families in this state and give each one million and your job is done. Please leave these people.
- Ubanese:** Madam, politics is money and money is politics. You spend the money, win the election and recoup what you spent one million times. Politics is business. Politics is investment, real investment. Real investment madam.
- Uchechi:** We are here to change the lives of the people and not to...
- Ubanese:** Exactly. Change their lives. The money I am demanding is for the people. Give them sufficient money and you get sufficient votes.
- Uchechi:** You don't need to buy vote. Canvass for votes. Convince the people by presenting a credible, workable and people-oriented manifesto and programme. You will get their votes.
- Ubanese:** Not in this place. Chief Egobuike is having an upperhand. He has been distributing money, food, clothes and has given some people motorbikes. The hundred million I am asking for is just for us to start.
- Igwebuike:** No my friend, the truth is that I don't have that kind of money. And even if I have, I will prefer to initiate programmes that would empower the people. Anyway, we will discuss further in the evening. We scheduled to meet in the evening, didn't we? (exit Uchechi).

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

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

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

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

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

*Light fades.*

**Part Two**  
*(At the Party House)*

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

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

**Igwebuike:** Let me explain...

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

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

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

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

**Igwebuike:** Gentlemen, you talk as if I have not provided funds for the campaigns. No doubt, you need money...for logistics and not for

sharing. You will recall that I allocated sufficient funds for the youth wing, the women's wings and foot the bills for the campaigns transportation, and other expenditures you presented. I don't understand this money-sharing aspect. Do we call people together and start.

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

**Mezue:** Gbam.

**Agagwuncha:** Chief, you can see that we are not paupers. We are not begging for money to share among ourselves. *Gboo, Ibe anyi* (they nod their heads in support). We need this money to give to voters. To strategize, if others are carrying five ballot boxes we will carry twenty. If they are employing one hundred agents we employ one thousand. If others are... (an explosion is heard outside, some youths storm the centre. There is commotion outside the place).

*Light fades.*

### **Part Three** *(At home)*

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

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

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

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

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

**Uchechi:** Which people?

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

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

**Igwebuike:** And I will never share any money

**Uchechi:** And you hope to win an election

- Igwebuike:** Yes. My constituency have seen a little of what I would do. There is now a borehole in every village square in this town. I have provided transformers at strategic places to improve electricity. I have graded virtually all the roads and tarred some in my community. If as an individual I am able to impact on the lives of the people this way...
- Uchechi:** That is the problem. As long as, as individuals, they don't get money from you forget it. I move around with the women's wings. I feel their pulse. They are not happy with you.
- Igwebuike:** You are wrong. Don't you see the tumultuous crowd at our rallies?
- Uchechi:** The same crowd appears at other rallies. Listen to the voice of reason. Listen to your family. Listen to your mother. Remember your friend's advice (light moves to another part of the room where Igwebuike and his friend Eziokwu are discussing).
- Eziokwu:** You are very obstinate. A hen in a new environment stands on one leg but you are not just on your two legs but you are fluttering all over the place. Your values are different from the values of the people you are dealing with. What matters here is money. Money speaks, money determines, money controls.
- Igwebuike:** I am surprised...
- Eziokwu:** (cuts in) When you told me about your intention, I tried to dissuade you but you refused. I have followed the campaigns, the meetings and the so called strategies closely. My verdict is that you are dealing with insensitive and heartless rogues. They kill with the gods and organize funerals with humans. Be careful. They will ruin you. It is not yet late; you can step down or step aside before the system destroys you.
- Igwebuike:** My friend...please allow me to conclude you are not a politician, the way we know it here. You have a good profession, and business. Go back to the States if you want to or settle here. Establish here. Join politics if you want to but you have to study the environment and decide whether to plunge head long or participate from the periphery. These men you are dealing with are mean. They will squander your money and still vote for the highest bidder and not for the most qualified.
- Igwebuike:** What of party loyalty.
- Eziokwu:** (laughs) You exhibit your ignorance. Party loyalty does not manifest on empty pocket. Their hands must be full for them to be loyal. How many of them are funding the party...only you. Their interest is their gains and the higher the gains the greater their loyalty.
- Igwebuike:** Remember that the election will not be through secret ballot but the Option A4.

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

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

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

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

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

*Light fades.*

#### **Part Four**

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

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

**Man:** After standing behind what happens

**Bogudu:** Yes, I was coming to that

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

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

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

**Bogudu:** (calls out each party and their representatives): PPA – stand here. AAP – stand here. PAD – stand there DDP – stand there. Yes they are complete. Face the people and lift your posters. (Addresses the crowd) we will give you five minutes to identify the candidate or

party of your choice. (Some people move around. Others are in clusters discussing or chatting). Okay. Now, stand behind your candidate (the crowd obeys and at the end of the exercise, only Uchechi stands behind her husband. Igwebuike did not turn back but as the counting begins, Bogudu starts with him). One! Two! Record, PPA – two votes. He looks back and gazes for a while and slumps. (There is commotion. People run to carry him).

*Light fades.*

**Part Five**  
**(At home)**

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

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

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

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

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

**Uchechi:** God bless you.

*Black out.*

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

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

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

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

#### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Read the playlet carefully and answer the questions below.

- Who is the protagonist?
- Identify the conflict.
- What is Igwebuike's tragic flaw?
- Identify the flashback.
- Write your own playlet.

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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

## UNIT 5 REVISION

### CONTENTS

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

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- outline the plot of your play;
- list your characters;
- match language to your characters;
- identify your setting through dialogue, characters or landmarks; and
- discuss other dramatic devices which you have utilized.

### HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.



### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Theme**

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

#### **3.2. Plot**

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

#### **3.3. Characters**

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

#### **3.4 Language**

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

#### **3.5 Setting**

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

### 3.6 Length

In the earliest form of drama in Greece, “the time for performing a play corresponds to the time during which the events of the play would occur in real life” (Maxwell-Mahon, 2005:27). But in contemporary times, a one-act play lasts for about thirty minutes while a full length play is not expected to last for more than two to three hours. Did you bear this in mind while writing? How long do you think that it will take to present your play on stage? If it is too long, cut, if it is too short, expand.

### 3.7 Other Dramatic Devices

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

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

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

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

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

## 5.0 SUMMARY

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

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

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

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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

Etherton, Michael (2012). *The Development of African Drama*. Zaria: Tamaza Publishing Company Limited.