

MODULE 3

Unit 1	The Descriptive and Narrative Essay
Unit 2	The Expository and Argumentative Essay
Unit 3	Prose Writing
Unit 4	Poetry Writing
Unit 5	Play Writing

UNIT 1 THE DESCRIPTIVE AND NARRATIVE ESSAY**CONTENTS**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Introduction to Essay Writing
3.1.1	Types of Essay
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignments
7.0	References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Unit is designed to help you present good descriptive and narrative essays when you decide to write one. The art of writing demands some familiar skills; some of which we have always engaged in our everyday practices.

In this Unit, you will be going through the descriptive and narrative kinds of creative writing. Going through this type of writing again will help you not to forget some of the tips you were taught in some of the English courses you undertook before your 400 level.

One of the best ways for you to build up your confidence as a writer is to continue to write. You should learn to write all the time so that you will not find creative writing too difficult in the future. You may have thought of writing as a difficult thing to do. Writing is not a difficult practice; it only needs determination, commitment and fortitude on the part of the learner.

Through creative writing, you will also be able to write for specific situations. It will teach you how to do it and the purpose for which you must have your pen and paper by you always. This is because; writing is usually exciting, depending on how you see it.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- plan for a good essay writing;
- determine the materials for your essay;
- outline your essay structure; and
- write different types of essay.

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 Introduction to Essay Writing

Before you decide to write an essay, you should first make up your mind on the type of essay you want to write. This will help you to have an idea on how to go about the writing of such an essay.

The topic/type of an essay will determine the type of steps that you will take. The outlines below are some of the steps you can take before you write an essay.

- Have an outline for your essay.
- Your outline should be in a form that will enable you to develop your points.
- The first sentence of your essay should be the thesis statement, your opinion on the subject you are writing on.
- Let your thesis form the contents of your paragraph of an extended length.
- Begin your essay in an interesting manner (i.e. use quotations, questions, a normal definition, idiom, and so on).
- The main body of your essay should contain the texts of your discussion.
- You should conclude your essay using a beautiful paragraph
- Punctuate your essays correctly.
- Use transitional devices such as ‘furthermore’, ‘however’, ‘again’, and so on in your essays.

An Essay Outline

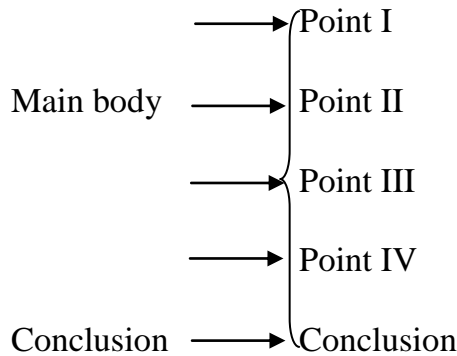
When you complete the outline of your essay, it should be in this format.

Topic of the essay (i.e. My first experience as a distance learning student)

Essay → Outline

Introduction of your essay

Use thesis statement or topic sentence



3.1.1 Types of Essay

The two types of essays that will be discussed in this Unit are:

- (a) Descriptive and
- (b) Narrative

(a) Descriptive Essay

You should be able to explain what something looks like. You can also use descriptive style to discuss how a person looks like or, tell a story. Your choice of words will help to effectively describe your subject.

How to Describe your Subject

- You must be detailed in your description.
- You must describe in picturesque detail (i.e. your description should be able to trigger the imagination of your readers).
- Use suitable adjectives to describe your subject.
- Let your details be in a logical and orderly manner (i.e. if you want to describe how to ride a bicycle, we expect you to start from how you would mount a bicycle, place your left leg on its left pedal, leaving your right leg to have a grip of the ground for stability, as you hold on firmly to its handles, look straight forward ahead of you and so on).
- Let the characters in your narration be life-like (i.e. let them represent human/animal values).

- Make use of surprise/suspense in your narration to arouse curiosity of your reader.
- Let your narration have a time frame (i.e. the duration of event(s) narrated).
- Your narration should have a particular location of where it happened.
- Your narration should have a plot (i.e. linking story line different in the whole story).
- Let your story have a central idea.

(b) **Narrative Essay**

You may be asked to tell a story of what has happened in your life. When you do this you are telling us about your true life experience. Your own narrative essay must be very descriptive. It should reveal how something has happened and in the order in which it happened. For example, you can use the narrative when you write reports, a short story, novel, biographies. Your narration may be real (factual) or fictional. What matters to you is to make your story believable and interesting.

Things to do when writing a narrative essay are:

- Your essay must grip the attention of your reader through an interesting introductory paragraph.
- Create your story around a real life occurrence.
- Let your description evoke true life picture of your setting.
- You should follow a logical/sequence of how the event occur.
- You should avoid unnecessary/impossible exaggerations in your essays.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Describe the structure of a narrative or descriptive essay.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this Unit, we have discussed some important steps that will make your essays interesting. We have also talked about making an outline and some things you must avoid when you write.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- there are some steps you are expected to take before you write an essay;
- it is good to make an outline;
- outline some things you must do before you write a descriptive essay;
- how you can describe your subjects in narrative and descriptive essays; and
- your essays must have setting, plot, themes, characters and time frame.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Outline the steps you should take before you set out to write any kind of essay.
2. Write an *introduction* and *one paragraph* and *conclusion* to all the essay topics below.
 - (i) My encounter with the Nigerian policemen at a road block.
 - (ii) The first wedding ceremony I witnessed.
 - (iii) The day I took uniformed armed robbers for policemen.
3. Write a short note on narrative essay?
4.
 - (a) Write a one-page essay on 'How to ride a bicycle'.
 - (b) What are the steps you should take in describing your subjects in a descriptive essay?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Akere, F. (Ed.) (1990). *English across Disciplines – A Use of English Course Text*. Ibadan: Pumark Nigeria Limited.

Adetugbo, A. (1979). *Communicative English and Study Skills*. Lagos: University of Lagos Press.

Ogbulogo, O. (2006). *Issues in Language and Communication in Nigeria. Essays in Honour of Emmanuel Kwofie*. Lagos: Sam Orient.

University of Abuja (1992). *Use of English. General Studies Pack*. Abuja: University of Abuja.

UNIT 2 THE EXPOSITORY AND ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Expository Essay
 - 3.2 Argumentative Essay
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Unit is a continuation of Unit I. It is designed to prepare to become effective writers of the different types of essays. It takes through the skills that will enable you to write the correct essays. You need to master the skills that will make your essays a readable, suitable and organised. The techniques that are required for writing the essays are different. That is why you should take note of every detail that is required for a successful writing of these essays. You are encouraged to read through the subheadings under this Unit and you will be glad you did.

One of the best methods by which you can write effectively is to identify the characteristics of one particular essay from the other. It is for this reason that this Unit treats the different types of essay as a follow up to the first Unit of Module 3 which you have just read. We do not expect you to write descriptive essay the way you will write a narrative expository or argumentative types. Understanding the different styles and modes of creative composition will help you out of the possible embarrassment of writing any of the essays the wrong way. To enable you achieve this you should be able to express yourself with clarity, using the appropriate requirements. The purpose is to be able to satisfy your audience, or convince your teacher.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this study, you should be able to:

- list steps/qualities necessary for writing convincing, expository and argumentative essays;
- outline your essay topics;
- discuss the methods of writing an expository essay; and
- write effective argumentative essays.

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 Expository Essay

This type of essay informs a process or the how of a process or series of processes. It explains different things in the world. Examples of this type of essay are encyclopedias, students' handbooks, academic articles. The expository type of writing is often more reliable.

Methods of Expository Writing

Expository writing can be done through the following methods.

Enumeration Method

Here, you present details sequentially (i.e. expository method) explain possibly by comparison or show the difference between one or more things, or parts of a thing. You could do this by *classification* and *partitioning*.

Fig. 1 Comparison by Classification

You can use classification to group items according to their related parts. This outline will help you.

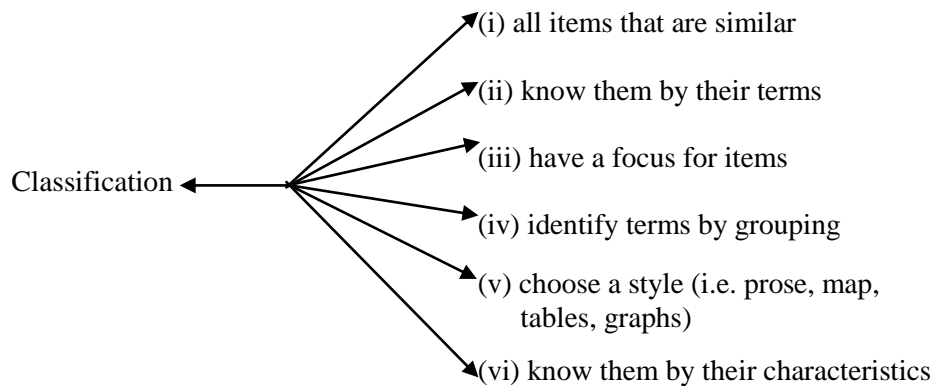
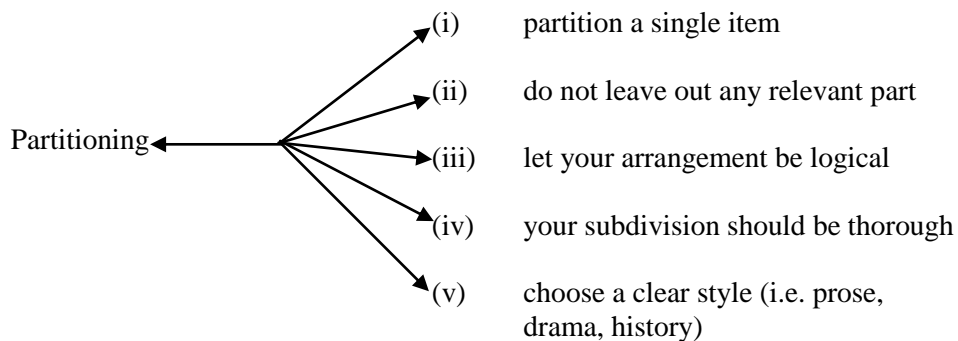


Fig. 2 Comparison by Partitioning

Partitioning

You partition when you divide a thing into its parts so that it can make sense in relation to the whole. This outline will help you.



Definition Method

Give a clear and precise definition of the issue you are explaining. Your definition should be rich and a little flowery for it to appear attractive to your readers.

Cause and Effect Method of Exposition

This type of writing is also achieved by developing and explaining the causes and effects of certain issues. This should include immediate and remote causes. There is cause and effect relationship between the subjects that are being discussed.

Illustration as a style of exposition

- It explains a general statement and gives specific examples.
- Writing should be clear.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are the methods of writing expository essay?

3.2 Argumentative Essay

In this type of writing, you attempt to prove a point with convincing reasons and good conclusions. You should, as a writer, be objective and candid in your presentation and view. When you put forward a very strong argument, you will be able to make a change. Your argument cannot be effective unless you are logical and objective.

How to Achieve Effective Argument

You should bear the following points in mind when you write an argumentative essay.

- take a position right from the introduction
- outline the points coherently
- present each point as a Unit of expression
- use linkages to connect your paragraphs (i.e. moreover, however, therefore and so on)
- pick some of the points raised by your opponent and prove them to be wrong
- give a summary of your points and disprove some of them by using stronger facts.

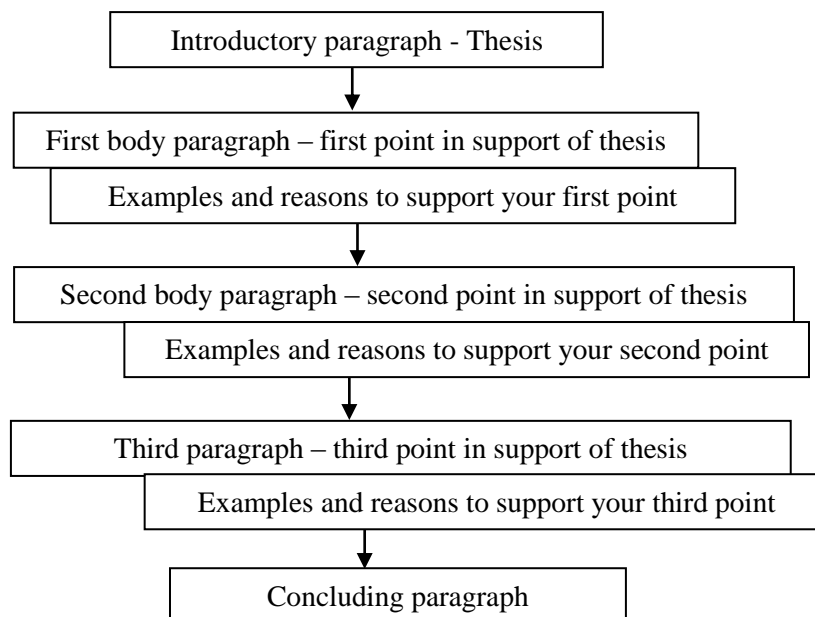
Organiser

The organiser is made up of the following:

- introduction
- the body of your essay
- concluding part of the essay

These have been treated in Unit 1 of the Module. You should use the organiser below as your guide to writing any of the essays.

Fig. 3 paragraphing organiser



SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

In which way is Expository essay different from Argumentative?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this Unit, we have discussed some of the things you could do before you can successfully write an expository essay. The various methods of detailed presentation of exposition have been presented. It also includes how you can present an effective argument in writing.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you have learnt that:

- you can plan, collect information on the object, process/processes to be explained, reported informed about expository essay
- you could present your expository essay by classification and partitioning
- use the cause and effect method of exposition
- in argumentative essay, you can take a position and disprove the points raised by your opponent.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. List and explain the various methods you can use in expository writing.
2. How is the expository different from the argumentative essay? Illustrate with any topic(s) of your choice using introductory paragraph, a paragraph for its body and conclusion.
3. What is an argumentative essay?
4. Write for or against the topic:

The distance learning programme is preferable to face to face conventional learning mode/method.

You should give your answer in a full essay with good paragraphs, introduction, a well developed body, good grammar and concluding paragraph.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Ike, Chukwuemeka (2001). *Essays*. Enugu: Holeland.

Benson, Ifeoma (2000). *Essay Writing*. Abuja: Resort Prints.

UNIT 3 PROSE WRITING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Setting
 - 3.1.1 Plot Structure
 - 3.1.2 Characters
 - 3.1.3 Principles of Characterisation
 - 3.1.4 Types of Characters
 - 3.2 Types of Novel
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Unit is designed to take you through how to become a good prose writer. You need to have a clear knowledge of the principles underlining the writing of prose.

You may have read some novels, and the knowledge of some of the things which your lecturer has taught you will be useful for you when you want to try your hands on creating a prose fiction.

One of the best ways to be a good prose fiction writer is to make sure you read some very interesting novels.

As you enjoy the pleasure of reading the writer's work, you will also become familiar with how the writer's fictional world interacts with reality. It is not enough for you to be charmed by how your lecturer has been able to present/explain a novel, say Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* or George Orwell's *1984*, Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, George Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin*, Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy*, Yetunde Akorede's *Fighting the gods* or Stanley Oriola's *Songs of the Season*. What is also important to you as a (budding) learner creative writer is to learn to teach others through your creative works. You have to take a trip around the writer's styles of presentation of characters. You must think, look and learn beyond the fascinating and emotionally satisfying world of the writer.

Novels writings are meant to make you skillful in the art of writing. You have to read the writer beyond his novel so that you can have knowledge of how he creates his characters, sets his plots, uses his language, weaves his themes around each of his characters, what the writer has

done to help his character develop. When the need for you to write a novel arises, we expect you to be able to demonstrate what you have learnt.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- write a short story;
- create a fictional world that will be life like;
- write a prose fiction in a language that will be suitable to each of the characters that populate your imaginative world;
- trace the plot of your story from the beginning to end of the novel; and
- write a readable prose fiction.

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.

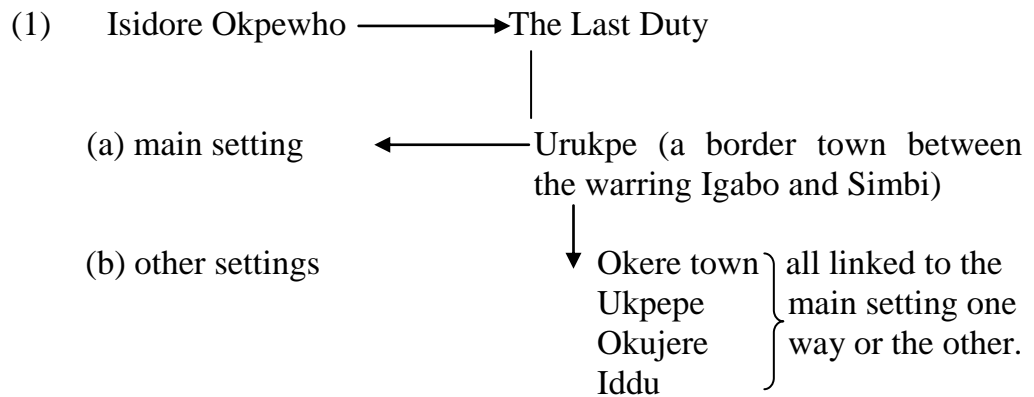
3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Setting

Your story should reflect a geographical location. It could be set in any fictional or real locale of your choice. It could be the contemporary or ancient. It could also be in the jungle, forest, ocean, mountain, a nameless town, or world in the outer space or anywhere. It could be in an environment populated by human beings, ants, animals or a slum, or a combination of all these in which the characters, think and behave in a particular way. You could describe the environment of the characters. The setting often includes the time of the story, for example, Umuofia in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a typical Igbo Village in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The concept of a setting includes:

- Specific time, and place in history and how they affect the plot.
- Environment of character (i.e. social, economic, religious background).

Fig. 1 The setting of a novel



3.1.1 Plot Structure

This is a narration/ the arrangement of events in the chronological order of their actual occurrence. You could do an artistic reorganisation of the order of events to achieve special effect. The plot could move forward and backward in time depending on the purpose the writer has in mind for arranging the events,

A plot could be chronological in nature. Plot is not the story of a novel, but a logical movement of incidents in a story - the story line. Stories can also begin in the middle (imitating the classical Latin *in-medias-res*). Story is made up of events arranged in a particular order. It is the artistic arrangement of events. A writer may tell his story in a chronological order, beginning with the earlier, or begin with the last event and tell readers what led to it, or begin in the middle (*medias res*).

The way a writer relates events in his novel grows out of the forces outside the characters. This is called external conflicts. The internal conflicts are the struggles between forces within the characters.

Consider the following ways you can order your events in a story.

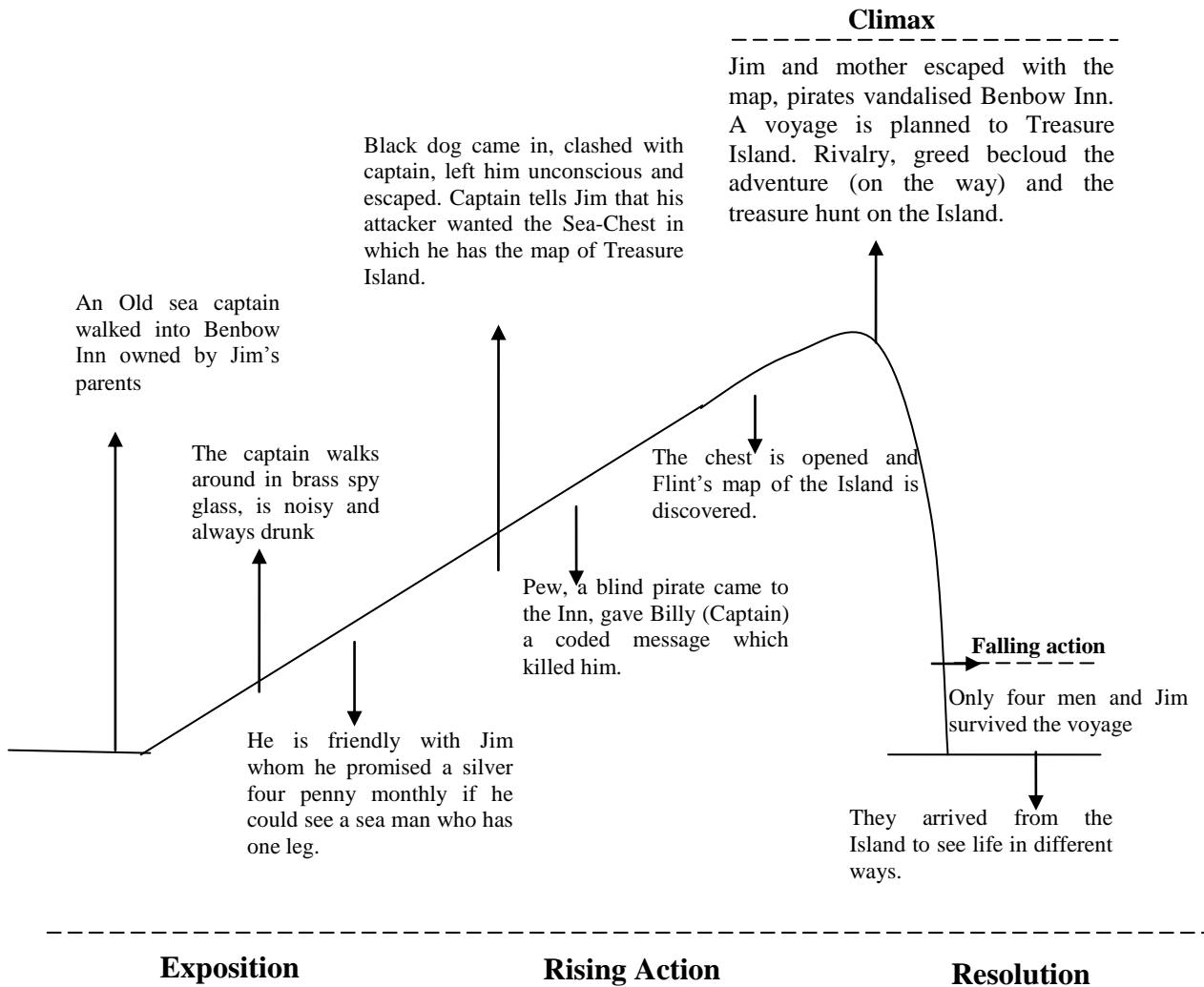
- A story is arranged in follow up/causal order.
- A story could start *in-medias-res* i.e. from the middle.
- You could use a flash back in your plot (i.e. to tell us what happened before the opening scene of the work).

Most plots of a story are known to develop in five stages:

- Exposition: The author introduces the characters and setting to get ready for the conflict.
- The conflict develops in the *rising action* stage.
- The high point of the story is its *climax*.

- *Falling action stage:* The author explains the results of the climax, some stories may end after the climax.
- *Resolution:* This is the point at which the conflict is resolved.

Fig. 2: Stages in the development of a plot structure



Source: Adapted from Glencoe Literature, Texas Edition (2000)

3.1.2 Characters

You should create fictional characters in your prose fiction. There are usually more than one character in a novel.

The writer speaks through his characters. There is usually a major character who often dominates the story. Other characters exist to shed light on the main character. Without characters, a prose fiction will not exist.

The way you create your characters will help the reader to discover the meaning of a novel. Jack Myers and Michael Simms (1989) are of the

opinion that characterisation exist through “the presentation in literature of fictitious people whose composite physical descriptions, attitudes, motives and actions are lifelike, enough for the readers to accept as representing real people”. The characters you present in a novel must be credible to the audience.

Writers can present characters using the following methods:

- Direct presentation

This tells us what the character is like by exposition or analysis. As a writer, you could present your character by physical description, psychological, intellectual or moral attitude (e.g. in Festus Iyayi’s *Violence*, the author introduces Idemudia and his wife through their poor standard of living), “he and his wife, Adisa were tenants in one of the low mud hut zinc houses along Owode Street” (1).

A writer cannot use this direct method alone, or else the story would be reduced to an essay. The characters must be active and communicative. Although this method is often economical and clear, the characters must act for the story to be convincingly real. For a story to be active, a writer must also use the indirect method to present his characters in a novel.

- Indirect presentation

In this method, the writer does not present his characters directly to his readers. Some of the characters are introduced through the other characters in the form of a delayed emergence. From the beginning of the novel, *The Great Gatsby* we only heard rumours of Gatsby from those who never met him (i.e. Miss Baker, Jordan). It was in chapter three that the hero was first mentioned “At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough coloured lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby’s enormous garden” (26).

Also, in Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*, the writer introduces Heathcliff to readers indirectly:

I have just returned from a visit to my landlord - the solitary neighbour that I shall be troubled with. This is certainly a beautiful country. In all England, I do not believe that I could have fixed in a situation so completely removed from the stir of society. A perfect misanthropist's Heaven: and Mr. Heathcliff and I are such a suitable pair to divide the desolation between us (1).

} Indirect presentation

3.1.3 Principles of Characterisation

A writer should create his characters to reflect the following principles:

- **Consistency**

The characters must behave in a way suitable to their roles in a novel. Invariably, they must be firm and consistent with their behaviours, unless there is a clear reason for a change. We see the firmness of character in *Arrow of God* by Chinua Achebe. Ezeulu, is consistent in the way he tells us the story of the land dispute between Umuaro and Okperi. He also did not change his mind about his refusal to declare the date for the New Yam Festival until he finishes the sacred yam as tradition demands.

- **Plausibility**

The characters must be life like. They must neither be paragons of virtues nor of evil and should be able to combine both good and bad virtues of life. In Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*, Ramatoulaye narrates her ordeal as a rejected wife, a widow, though strong willed as she is able to endure the pain of widowhood, the chastisement of religion and tradition, yet she survives through determination and fortitude.

- **Motivation**

The character must be clearly motivated in whatever he or she does, especially when there is a change in his or her behaviour. We must understand why such character behaves in a particular way. For instance, in Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty*, Odibo is an eunuch, but as soon as the cripple realised that he was still a 'complete man' after he had a relationship with Aku, he was motivated to confront Toje who had been hostile to him.

3.1.4 Types of Characters

E. M. Foster in his *Aspects of the Novel* (1949) describes two types of characters: flat characters and rounded or “three dimensional” characters.

Flat/static characters

They are not often given in detail in the novel. They are as important as the round characters because every character cannot be rounded. Their roles are often supportive in the novel (e.g. the two old sisters who live next to Obanua in Isidore Okpewho’s *The Victims* are examples of flat or static characters).

Rounded/dynamic characters

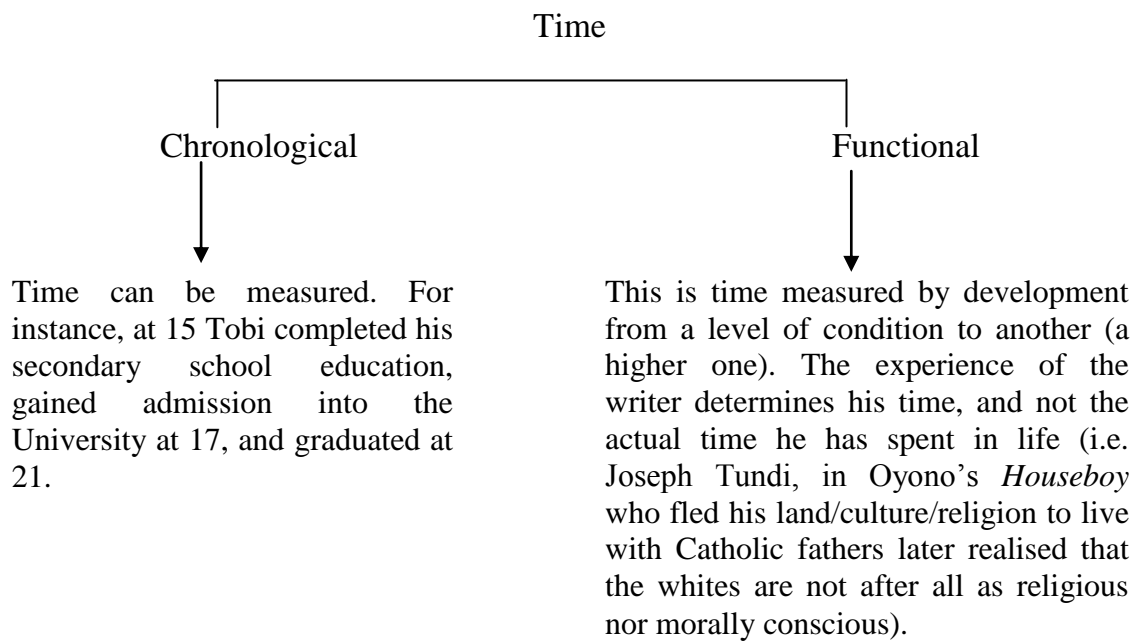
They are complex, and grow with the development of the novel. The events in the novel are built around them (e.g. Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*). The events of the novel affect them in the narrative.

Things to consider when writing a good character sketch in a novel are:

- symbolic nature of the character (what it represents, e.g. Olu Obafemi’s *Wheels* represents the rich and the poor in the society)
- what he/she says about himself
- what the character says about other characters
- what the novelist says about him
- what other characters say about him (his behaviour, thought, feelings)
- what the reader thinks about the character
- what the environment of the character says about him
- other things that we may know about the character
- time and space (i.e. chronological time and functional time)

Time and space

Time and space in the novel are important because they record the passage of time in terms of age and growth in experience. The events in the novel are built around achievement and creation through time and space. Space is a period of time. Time can be chronological time and functional time.

Fig. 3 *Time and Space in the Novel*

Source: Adapted from Ezeigbo (1998)

Point of view

This is the angle from which a writer tells his story. As the writer creates his story, he uses different characters as narrators. It is only in autobiographical novels like Camara Laye's *The African Child*, Kenneth Kaunda's *Zambia Shall Be Free* that the narrator can be distinguished from the writer. Often, the first person pronoun "I" is more consistently used. The writer may also use the third person narration such as 'he', 'she', and 'they'.

Language

Language is the tool and the medium through which literature expresses itself. How the writer uses his words is vital in the realisation of the various elements of the novel - setting, theme, characterisation, narrative technique and so on. It is the use of language that distinguishes one character from another. For example, in Achebe's *A Man of the People*, Chief Nanga, the Minister of Culture is known through the ironical use of language. The social status of a character in a novel is also known through the use of language by the novelist. In *A Man of the People*, Dogo and the cook, who are semi-literates, speak the type of English that reflect their level of education. Also in *Things Fall Apart*, the use of language by the hero, Okonkwo is reinforced with proverbs, riddles and local idioms.

How a writer uses words enables him to realise the elements of the novel like theme, characterisation and narrative technique. Language is important to the novel.

Theme

This means a central idea or meaning of a story. It is the rallying point around which the plot, characters, point of view, setting and elements of a story are organised. Stating the theme makes you think about what you have read.

How to analyse theme:

- the title of a story provides a lead to its theme
- study the symbolic meaning of the story to lead you to its central meaning (i.e. names, object, characters, and places)
- what are the general comments of the hero about the events in the story?
- express the theme of the novel in your own words clearly
- what specific social problems are expressed?
- are the stylistic devices relevant to the meaning of the work?
- what is the relationship between the overall experience of the protagonist and the theme of the work?
- is the writer's narrative point of view important to the meaning of the work?

Narrative devices

The novel often uses irony, foreshadowing, flashback, myth, paradox, suspense to sustain the interest of the reader. This is common with a novel which action begins from the middle.

3.2 Types of Novel

You may wish to write your novel in any of the types.

- **Epistolary Novel**

You may write your novel in the form of a letter or letters. The word 'Epistola' is the Latin word for 'letter'. Examples are Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* written in 1740, Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* (1980), Lekan Oyegoke's *Broken Ladders* (2003). You may also wish to let your characters communicate in the form of letters if you want your style to conform to the epistolary.

- **Magic/Marvellous Realism**

It was some Latin American writers who wrote their prose fiction in this style before other writers from the third world joined the league. Such works discuss the normal events, mythic, fantasy and fairy-tales (i.e. (Nigeria) Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*

(1991), (India) Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988) and, Gabriel Garcia Marques of Colombia's *One Hundred years of Solitude* (1967).

- **The Picaresque Novel**

It is the 16th Century Spanish style of the novel genre called 'Picaro' which means 'rogue', 'beggar', 'rascal'. The hero of this type of novel is often queer, mischievous, crafty and adventurous. Examples are Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876).

- **Sociological Novel**

This type of novel discusses the impact of the socio-cultural conditions that surround a character. It also includes the social changes that occurred in the period. Examples are Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not Child* (1964), Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), Charles Dicken's *Oliver Twist* (1838), John Steinbeck's *The Grape of Wrath* (1939).

- **Bildungsroman**

This term is taken from the German. It means "a novel of education". It centres on the developmental stages in the positive growth of the hero from childhood to maturity. Examples are George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not Child* (1964), Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861).

- **Historical Novel**

This type of novel relies on the past experience of its characters. Its setting, characters, forms are taken from the past to justify its historical continuity. Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819) was the known great writer of historical novels in English tradition. Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869) is another good example of this novel type.

Psychological Novel

This novel concerns the inner workings of the minds of the characters and not the physical reality of the character. The role of the human mind in his life experience in the form of novel of that kind was popular in the 20th century. The psychology of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung imparted on and influenced many disciplines, including literature. In the 20th century, a new group

of writers emerged, developed and popularised the “stream of consciousness” technique. This procession of thoughts passing through the human mind has been applied by modern writers to describe their characters. Examples of such writers are William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1952).

- **Political Novel**

This type of novel deals with the tactics and art of governance, using deceit, intrigues, force, hatred and love to take over or remain in power. It also includes the strategy of business organisation. Examples are Joseph Conrad’s *Nostrono* (1904), Cyprian Ekwensi’s *Beautiful Feathers* (1963), Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People* (1966) and Timothy Aluko’s *Chief the Honourable Minister* (1970) and *A State of our Own* (1986). Stanley Oriola’s *Farewell to Democracy* (1994)

- **Novel of Ideas**

As the name suggests, this type of novel teach ideas, explores certain special teachings about life. Some time a novel of ideas may take a critical stand on an existing philosophy or make ideological enquiries into something. Examples are E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*, (1924) Albert Camus’ *The Fall* (1948), Ali Mazrui’s *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo* (1975).

Other types of the novel are Gothic, detective, science fiction, thrillers, romantic, spy novels. These novels have developed over time and are significant to the overall development of man.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What factors must we consider before we write a prose fiction?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have mentioned some of the ways you can write a short story, a novella or a full novel without difficulties. We have also discussed the elements and types of prose fiction.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this Unit you have learnt that:

- you can create a prose work using a suitable setting, language, plot, point of view, characters
- your story should have a plot

- characters are important to a well written prose work
- characters have their own principles
- types of characters
- the next Unit will introduce you to the elements of poetry writing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write a short note on setting and plot.
2. Write a short story of not more than five pages.
3. Write a short story of not more than five pages using animal characters, and with setting in the animal kingdom.
4. Write a short story of not more than ten pages using all that you have learnt about prose writing.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. Ibadan: Heinemann.

_____. (1966). *A Man of the People*. Ibadan: Heinemann.

_____. (1975). *The Novelist as Teacher*. In *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.

_____. (1984). *The Trouble with Nigeria*. London: Heinemann.

Akporobaro, Frederick (2000). "The Concept of Form in the Theory and Criticism of the Novel as a Genre". *Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 10 - 22.

Allen, W. (1954). *The English Novel*. London: Penguin.

Alterbernd, L. and Leslie, L. (1966). *A Handbook for the Study of Fiction*. London: Macmillan.

Aluko, T. M. (1986). *A State of our Own*. London: Macmillan.

Amuta, C. (1985). *The Theory of African Literature*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.

Booth, W. C. (1961). *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Bronte, E. (1992). *Wuthering Heights*. Great Britain: Mackays of Chatham PLC.

Chinweizu, Jemie Onwuchekwu and Ihechukwu Madubuike (1983). *Toward the Decolonisation of African Literature*. Washington, D. C. Howard.

- Emeyonu, E. N. (1973). *Post-war Writing from Nigeria. Studies in Black Literature*. Vol. 4, No. 1. Spring.
- Ezeigbo, T. A. (1991). *Fact and Fiction in the Literature of the Nigerian Civil War*. Lagos: Vista Books.
- _____. (1981). *A Companion to the Novel*. Lagos: Vista Books.
- Fitzgerald, Scott (1993). *The Great Gatsby*. Great Britain: Wordsworth.
- Forster, E. M. (1949). *Aspects of the Novel*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Irele, Abiola (1981). *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Iyayi, Festus (1987). *Violence*. Lagos: Longman.
- Jack, M. and Michael, S. (1989). *The Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms*. New York: Longman.
- James, H. (Ed.) (1934). *The Art of the Novel*. New York: Charles Scriber's Sons.
- Joyce, James (1993). *Portrait of the Artist as a Youngman*. Herefordshire: Wordsworth Editions.
- Kaunda, K. (1962). *Zambia Shall Be Free – An Autobiography*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- Kennedy, B. (1987). *An Introduction to Fiction - Poetry and Drama*. Fourth Edition. Boston: Little Brown.
- Laye, C. (1981). *The African Child*. Senegal: Heinemann.
- Leech, Geoffrey and Michaelshort (1981). *Style in Fiction*. London: Longman.
- Massie, Allen (1992). *The Novel Today: A Critical Guide to the Contemporary Novel*. London: James Currey.
- Moore, Gerald (1969). *The Chosen Tongue*. Longman.
- Obafemi, Olu and Bodunde Charles (2003). Eds. *Criticism, Theory and Ideology in African Literature*. Ilorin: Haytee Press Nigeria Ltd.
- Okepwho, I. (1990). *The Last Duty*. Lagos: Longman.

Oriola, S. A. (1994). *Farewell to Democracy*. Lagos: OACE Publishers.

Oyegoke, Lekan (2003). *Broken Ladders*. Ibadan: Yoori Books.

Oyono, Ferdinand (1990). *Houseboy*. Johannesburg: Heinemann.

Rotimi Ola (1998). *Kurunmi*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi (1982). *A Grain of Wheat*. Ibadan: Heinemann.

Watt, I. (1971). *The Rise of the Novel*. London: Chatto and Windus.

UNIT 4 POETRY WRITING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Types of Poetry
 - 3.1.1 Techniques for Writing Poetry
 - 3.1.2 Figures of Speech
 - 3.2 Rhyme
 - 3.3 Rhythm
 - 3.4 Sound
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 Reference/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Unit is designed to take you through some facts that you need to know before you start to write poetry. The writing of poetry is a very exciting enterprise that requires deep and intellectually motivating skills. In this Unit, you will be taken through the techniques you need to write good poetry.

You have no doubt been taught poetry as aspect of creative writing by your lecturers. Even with the way you have been introduced to the elements and techniques of writing poetry, you may still find it difficult to create poetry. You could create good poetry if you engage in the practice all the time.

This aspect of creative writing is designed to put to the test, your ability to use the English language imaginatively, emotionally, vividly, and rhythmically. This aspect is designed to make you express yourself with clarity, suspense, using the correct elements of poetry. You may encounter the need to write poetry or employ some poetic styles to make your writings sensuous, imagistic, and witty. When the situation occurs, you are expected to demonstrate your skill.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- list the types of poetry;
- plan how to write a good poem;
- determine the materials needed to write a good poem;

- attempt writing a short poem; and
- identify the elements required to write a good poem.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- 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 Types of Poetry

The Lyric: A lyric is a short musical poem meant to be sung to the music of the lyre. Its ideas and language are usually simple and straight forward.

The Ode: An ode in English is a meditative poem addressed to some people or thing. It is a lyrical poem (i.e. John Keat’s “Ode to a Nightingale”, William Wordsworth’s “Ode to Duty”).

The Epic: An Epic is a long elaborate philosophical poem with serious purpose, it deals with a nation’s or person’s heroic exploits (i.e. John Milton’s Paradise Lost).

Ballads: These are narrative poems which belong to the ordinary people, rather than by a poet. There are two types of ballads: Literary and Popular or Folk Ballad. Literary Ballad reflects the features of the folk ballad. Examples are Owusu’s “Breaking Colanut” and John Keats “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”. The popular or folk ballads were known to have been composed during festivals, but have been altered by the infiltration of civilisation.

3.1.1 Techniques for Writing Poetry

Images 2

An images use a language that addresses the senses. You can use visual images to make your work life-like or realistic. The way you write a poem should give us the physical world to express our imagination. Image means a picture (a mental picture of what we can see, feels, touch, smell, hear). The clearer the poet’s picture of what he is writing, the better he achieves his purpose in a poem.

Diction

You must be careful with your choice of words. We expect the words you have used in your poem to be attractive. The language which a poet uses should be concise than other types of writing. Such words must be charged or active. This is because the writing of a poem does not give room for the elaborate use of words as we have in the novels. You can study the use of diction in the poem below. What can you say about the language of the poet? Of course, you will notice the precise use of words.

Power

Power shines like the glase of a thousand mirror
 His face lights up the night, a hunter's lamp of
 horror.
 Who dare move his heifers like the gowns of
 virgin Circling a sacred stone
 Who unleashes his bride on us decked in radiant
 colours
 Hail him! and wrap the city in sheets of bone
 Bait him! and sweep away the grove of virgin
 trees. Crush the brick walls of cascading glory.
 But here I stand in tears in the rack and ruin.
 Burning out the sand dunes in whirlwind
 Yet with this I build my lofty dreams.

Here is another example:

A Parable of Letters (for Professor Wole Soyinka)

He throws a letter and the people
 Suffer dengue fever
 But he issues no denial of responsibility
 As the ill invites a doctor
 Who diagnoses no ailments in particular?
 The doctor retreats and issues a denial of service
 And asked the poet to untie his riddle of words
 Affected by dementia
 As the people denounce his pen policy
 Demour
 Demour
 The doctor explains
 "Your letters are a deluge
 Delimit
 And all who tried to read it
 Suffer delirium tremens"
 But the giver of the letter

A defender of the faith
 And only to Him are the letters
 Defibrillator, decompression and decongestante

Word Order

The poet is expected to arrange his words into meaningful sentences, clauses and phrases (this is called syntax). The meaning of poem may also be conveyed by denotations (i.e. normal dictionary meaning) and connotations (i.e. literal/applied meaning). In writing poetry, a normal word order could be varied and words can be repeated for the sake of emphasis. Study the example which I have given below. Study its word order and sentence structure as well as its repetitive patterns in the second verse.

Underdog

As infant is lifted from the RED BLOOD
 All eyes curious of what gender this one is made
 And from the rear, they stared asking

Repetitive use of words for emphasis {

- Anus is man-like
- Anus is dim
- Anus is white
- Anus is darkish-grey
- Is this anus purple?
- Or blackish-grayish RAINBOW?

No!

Wrong duplicate
 Wasted semen
 Then, a confused silence of assessment
 All are eager to know

A rectangle or square?
 Pyramid or cone?
 Cumbersome like a cupboard
 And a cold congratulations dispatched
 From the womenfolk
 A F-E-M-A-L-E
 C-O-N-S-P-I-C-U-O-U-S

And all backs turned at her moment of no distinction

Tone

A poet's attitudes toward his subject reflect in the poem. For example, a poem may show nostalgia, anger, affection, sadness, bitterness, or happiness and any other feelings of human beings. It depends on the theme or what you are writing about. For instance, if you are writing on 'marriage', the subject will determine your choice of words and then your tone. Study the poem below and notice the use of words to determine its tone.

This poem was written as a tribute to the late poet and literary critic, E. A. Babalola, an Associate Professor of English, University of Lagos who died on 21st June, 2004. Study the tone of the poem, which I have reproduced in part here.

Now that this pilgrimage is over
 And the *tomb* opens by His will
 Leaving us to *mourn* the mystery
 Of this transformation
 And now in *shroud*
 Before your maker
 We *mourn* your triumph
 Over depressions
 And the rigours of existence
 Transformed you were
 In your synchronised
 Dancing and singing
 To heavenly mysteries
 And the hallelujah of resurrection ...
 We mourn this day
The 21st day in June 2004
 Our diary of sin and
Of a missing letter ...
I offer you roses
And white apparel to your green tomb
 You gave me knowledge
 But now, *I offer you my tears*
 I offer you tears
 That linger in my eyes
 This raining season
But you give me your cotton-filled nose
 Without your bag of humour ...

Study the words which I have italicised in the poem. What effect do the words have on you? What do the words, and phrases suggest about the tone of the poem on the remembrance of a deceased friend and teacher of the poet?

Symbol

A poem should show a person, place, an object, event or action that conveys more than its (literal) ordinary meaning. A symbol is something that represent another thing else. The meaning of a symbol is determined by the contexts in which it appears.

Here is a poem on the transient nature of man. Notice the use of ‘time’ by the poet to symbolise the temporal nature of man.

Time

Time keeps ticking away
 On a lonely path
 And as everyone travels by it
 It keeps changing
 And assuming the colour of everyone
 Like a chameleon
 And people keep changing by it
 Time pretends to have no relationship
 With anyone
 Yet, it determines the pace
 Anyone can go

“Time” has been used in this poem to symbolise the temporal nature of life. The use of a “chameleon” in the poem also suggests the permanency of change, in the sense of dying as seen in the poem.

3.1.2 Figures of Speech

Although figures of speech may be indirect, they are meant to aid our understanding of what they describe. Poets often use them to capture the imagination of the readers. Other genres (types) of literature like prose and drama also use figures of speech. But, it is only in poetry that it is used with concentration. It helps the poet to achieve colour, intensity and vividness.

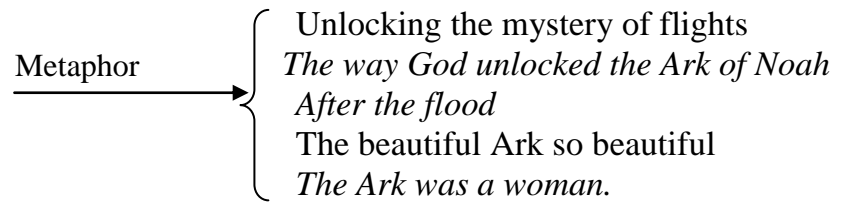
Study the use of figures of speech in the poem below:

The hunter’s shot

Notice the use
of simile here →

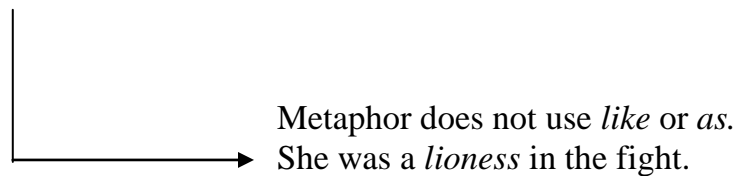
{ *The birds took off like a bullet*
When the hunter fired a
Missing shot at them

Missing through the forest
 Of trees and birds of variegated
 feather

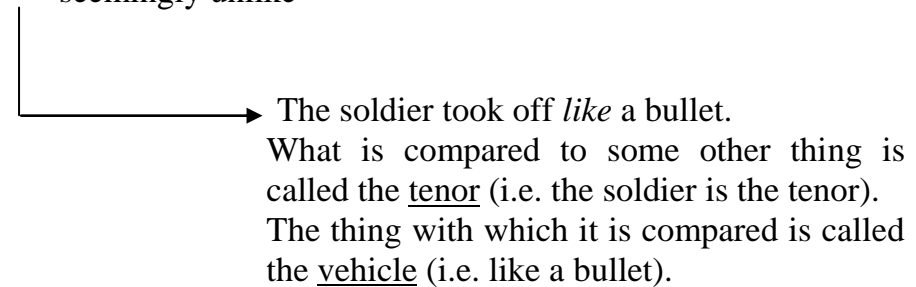


We notice the repetitive use of the figure of speech “simile” to describe how the birds flew away when the hunter fired a shot at them. You could write a poem using any figure of speech to help the beauty of your work. Figurative language is the language often used to describe effect and is not expected to be read literally. The meanings they express are usually beyond the literal level. Some of them are stated below with examples:

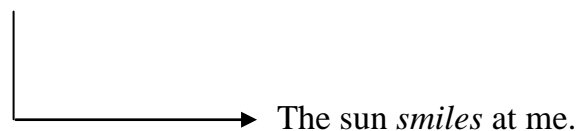
A metaphor - usually states that one thing *is another*



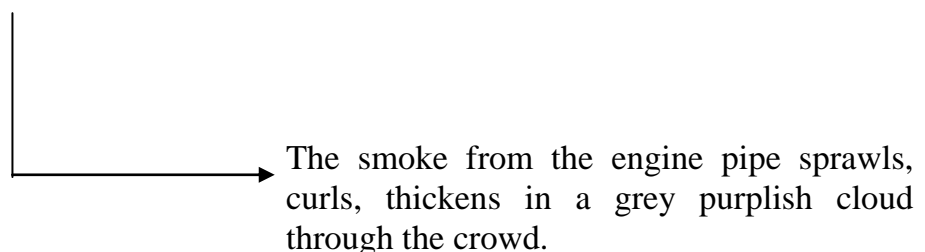
A simile - uses words such as *like* or *as* to compare things that are seemingly unlike



Personification - is a figure of speech in which an animal, an object, or an idea is given human qualities.



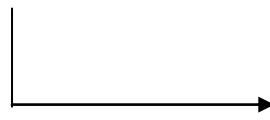
Imagery - Normally a descriptive language that evokes emotional response, appeals to the senses of touch, sight, sound, taste or smell.



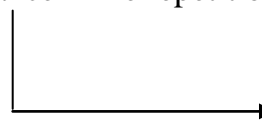
Sound Devices

Sound devices contribute to the musical quality of a poem and help to achieve emphasis.

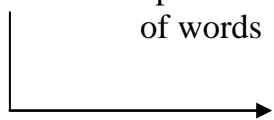
Alliteration - the repetition of consonantal sounds at the beginning of words.


 All I nocked near the net
 - n n n alliterate

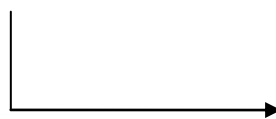
Assonance - The repetition of vowel sounds


 Ignored, she sits, still
 - i, i assonance

Consonance - Repetition of consonant sounds within words or at the end of words


 ill treated she retreated through the door.
 - t, t

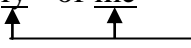
Onomatopoeia - use of a phrase or a word that suggests or imitates a sound.


 tick, tick says the clock
 - tick, tick (sounds like the movement of a clock).

3.2 Rhyme

This is the repetition of similar sounds in words that appear close to each other in a poem.

Internal rhyme - occurs within a line of poetry

Judge Tenderly - of me

 Internal rhyme

Source: Emily Dickinson: "This is my letter to the world"

End rhyme - Occurs at the end of lines

How statue - like I see the stand
 The agate lamp within thy hand
 Source: Edgar Allan Poe: "To Helen" End rhyme

Start rhyme - Refers to words that almost rhyme, but not quite

Who took the Flag today.
 Can tell the definition
 So clear of victory Slant rhyme

Source: Emily Dickinson "Success is counted Sweetest"

Rhyme scheme - Pattern of rhyme formed by end rhyme, is identified by assigning a different letter of the alphabet to each new rhyme.

3.3 Rhythm

In poetry rhythm creates pleasurable patterns to reinforce meaning. A characteristic of rhythm is its repetitive effect using phrases. Stresses are combined to provide the pleasure of the rhythm we hear. Sound effects in poetry in appropriate words give pleasure in poetry. It is only in exceptional cases that prose uses rhythm. For instance, below is a study of a few lines from a speech of Winston Churchill to the House of Commons after the Allied forces lost a battle to the German forces at Dunkirk during World War II (Meyer 1987).

A) Rhythm in prose

Repeated eleven times in this extract for beauty and emphasis {

¹We shall not flag or fail. ²We shall go on to the end.
³We shall fight in France, ⁴we shall fight on the seas
 and oceans, ⁵we shall fight with growing confidence
 and growing strength in the air, ⁶we shall defend our
 Island, whatever the cost may be, ⁷we shall fight on
 the beaches, ⁸we shall fight on the landing grounds,
⁹we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we
¹⁰shall fight in the hills; ¹¹we shall never surrender (p.
 639).

Winston Churchill conveys his intention to win the war to the British people by a repetitive (identical) use of "we shall".... The use of

repetition creates/gives pleasure through the echoing of similar sounds.
Rhyme is for the ear and eyes.

You can also study the repetitive patterns of this poem. You will notice the repetitive use of “you, who dares the stool of songs” in the poem.

“Daring the stool of songs” (for Niyi Osundare)

You

Repeated
beauty
emphasis

for
and

Who dares the stool of songs
And took from its makers
The gem of complex colours
Which you fabricated
To the a post-modern flame

You

Who dares the stool of songs
And took from its makers
The gem of complex colours
And give to your disciples
Who sat round a ritual table
Rehearsing
Redrawing and
Asking for
The mystery behind
The new gem to change its flag of honour
To sing a new song
To earn a nod of our ancestors

You

Who dares the stool of songs
And took from its makers
The gem of complex colours
Broken into the famous tunes
Of ancestral rhythm
With multiple disciples
Breaking from their discordant rhyme
To bask in a new rhapsodic order
A renewed song of ancient colour.

3.3 Sounds

The beauty of poetry is fully realised when it is read aloud. When writing a poem you must carefully choose your words and arrange them for their sound effect and meanings. One very important way that the meaning of a poem is communicated is through sound (i.e. snakes hiss, sheep bleat). Poetry has a strong relationship with music. For instance, lyric poetry originated from songs in the phonology of poetry.

Suggestions for reading poetry

- Read a poem more than once to be familiar with its contents.
- Begin your reading from its title and pay attention to it as a lead to the poem.
- When you read, do not allow the difficult words you encounter in the lines hold you back/discourage you.
- On a second reading, pay attention to unfamiliar words/lines you do not understand (i.e. try to look up difficult words in the dictionary).
- As you read, take note of the use of punctuation marks by the poet. The spaces on the page and in-between the lines, must be read.
- The structural placement of words or arrangement of words/letters in some spatial and unconventional order also has meaning in poetry.
- Study the style and diction of the poet and try to identify them with existing schools of thought (i.e. modernism or post-modernism).
- You may read your poem aloud to a friend's hearing or let a friend read it to you aloud. Through this, you will be able to appreciate its beauty and rhythmical pattern.
- Read through each line of the poem again and again.
- Read meaning into/out of the elements of the poem.
- Do not get bored by the subject of the poem, even if it is that which you dislike.
- Ensure you do a comprehensive and objective analysis of your poem because that is when the poem will come alive.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Differentiate between sound, diction, tone, symbol and figures of speech in poetry.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this Unit we have discussed the various techniques for writing poetry. We have also outlined the characteristics of poetry. Read through your work and make sure it is free of errors.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt:

- poetry thrives on use of figurative language, sound, diction, word order, tone, symbol

- some flashes of poetry can occur in prose/speeches. In Unit 5 of Module 3, you will be introduced to the elements of drama and play writing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. How can one read and understand a poem?
2. Mention the advantages of using the diction and image techniques of writing a poem.
3. Write a poem of not more than ten lines on any subject of your choice.
4. Write a poem of not more than twenty lines each on any three of the following.
 - (a) war
 - (b) death
 - (c) love
 - (d) marriage
 - (e) abortion
 - (f) National Open University of Nigeria

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Akporobaro, Frederick (1994). *Understanding Poetry*. Lagos: Lighthouse Publishing Company.
- Bitek P'Okot (1966). *Song of Lawino/Song of Ocol*. London: Heinemann.
- Dalglish, Jack, ed. (1961). *Eight Metaphysical Poets*. London: Heinemann.
- Eghagha, Hope (2002). *Rhythms of the Last Testament*. Lagos: Concept Publications Limited.
- Goatly, Andrew (1997). *The Language of Metaphor*. London: Routledge.
- Ezenwa-Ohaeto (1991). "Dimensions of Language in New Nigeria Poetry". *African Literature Today*, 17, pp. 155 – 164.
- Ezenwa-Ohaeto (1998). *Contemporary Nigerian Poetry and the Poetics of Orality*. Bayreuth African Studies 45, Bayreuth: Bayreuth University.
- Fatoba, Femi (1984). *Petals of Thoughts*. London: New Beacon Books.
- Holder, R. W. (1996). *A Dictionary of Euphemisms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ibrahim, B. F. and Akande, F. F. (2000). *Rudiments of Literature in English*. Ilorin: Haytee Press and Publishing Company Ltd.

- Jack, M. and Michael, S. (1989). *The Longman Dictionary of Poetic Terms*. New York: Longman.
- Marims, M. H. (1993). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Port Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Meyer, M. (1987). *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Mieder, Wolfgang (1989). *American Proverbs: A Study of Texts and Contexts*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Ogunpitan, Stephen (1999). *A Comprehensive Grammar of Literary Studies*. Lagos: Arimus Int. Nig. Ltd.
- Ojaide, T. and Sallah, T. M., eds. (2000). *The New African Poetry: An Anthology*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner.
- Ojaide, Tanure (1994). *The Poetry of Wole Soyinka*. Ikeja: Malthouse Press Limited.
- Olafioye, Tayo (2002). *The Parliament of Idiots*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Oriola, Stanley (2008). "Tayo Olafioye: A Poet's Season of Inconvenience". In Beth L. Virtanen and Sola Owonibi eds. *The Mines of His Mind - Critical Reflections on the Works of Tayo Olafioye*. Trenton: Africa World Press.
- Oriola, Stanley (2007). "Osundare and Olafioye: A Commitment to Novelty in Modern African Literature". In Adeyemi Daramola and Olubukola Olugasa eds. *Literature and Language, A Drama of Life - A Festschrift in Honour of S. A. Adejumo*. Yaba: BPrint.
- Osundare, Niyi (1983). *Songs of the Market Place*. Ibadan: New Horn Press Limited.
- Soyinka, Wole (1975). *Poems of Black Africa*. Edinburgh: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.

UNIT 5 PLAY WRITING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 A Drama Play
 - 3.2 Setting
 - 3.2.1 Plot
 - 3.2.2 Characters
 - 3.2.3 Types of Comedy
 - 3.2.4 Theme
 - 3.2.5 Language
 - 3.2.6 Characteristics of a Play
 - 3.3 Dialogue
 - 3.3.1 Acts and Scenes
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 Reference/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Unit is designed to take you through some of the pieces of information you need to possess to be able to write a good play for reading and for the stage. In this Unit, you will find that some of the elements and techniques of play writing which you are exposed to are things you already know. You may have been introduced to some of the elements in other genres in the previous Units of this Module. These vital elements are repeated in this Unit because they are also relevant to play writing.

The knowledge of play writing is an enterprising one. It also demands a good knowledge of creativity since plays are primarily meant to be acted on the stage. As interesting as it seems, the writing of a play demands a good knowledge of creative writing. That is why you must learn how to be focused as you try to write a play for the stage.

Creative writing, especially as it concerns with play writing, demands specific designs to express yourself with the clarity appropriate to the characters in your play as well as to your audience. You may come in contact with some situations in life in which you may be required to write a play for the stage.

Writing a play requires some extra skills so that the audience, and actors would be able to interpret your play on the stage. When such situations

occur, you are expected to be able to show a mastery of the skills required for play writing.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- write a play that comprises the elements of play writing (i.e. setting, imitation/impersonation, dialogue, plot, theme, characters, language etc)
- attempt writing a play that can be acted
- determine the materials you will need for the writing of 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 A Drama Play

This is a story that has been written to be performed on stage by actors for an audience. A playwright develops a script for people to act on the stage. He/she also writes the stage direction so that readers, actors and directors can imagine and interpret correctly, the entire story or series of actions. The actors in a play revolve around the protagonist whom the audience sometimes sympathise with. Understanding the elements of drama can help you appreciate a play.

3.2 Setting

Like in prose, the setting of a play may be a fictional or real place. The setting of the play which you write should include specific time and location in history.

Your play can only have basis when you provide a specific environment for the characters to act (behave and misbehave).

For example, Femi Osofisan's *Midnight Hotel* has its geographical setting in a typical low class hotel in Lagos. Time is between 1914 and the post independent Nigeria. Rasheed Gbadamosi's *Echoes from the*

Lagoon is set in Lagos and Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* is set in Kutuje, Ikolu, Ile-Ife, Ijekun and so on.

A play can be set in more than one location. Some plays may not have a real or actual location. The setting is usually described at the beginning of a play.

3.2.1 Plot

Your play should have an established sequence of events. Your readers should know how incidents are arranged. The plot of a play is not its story. According to Abrams, "the plot in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered in emotional and artistic effects" (1993).

A plot according to Aristotle is the first principle and the soul of tragedy. Plot is the arrangement of incidents in a piece of writing. It must have unity. That means a 'whole' possessing a beginning, middle and an end. A plot may be simple or complex.

- In a simple plot, actions or incidents move from one point to the other till the resolution of the plot. An example is *Oedipus Rex*.
- A complex plot has many subordinate themes which increase the complication of the plot as we have in *King Lear*.
- There is usually a rising action as events give rise to fresh crises. This is known as complication.
- There is a discovery which leads to a falling action.
- The plot of a tragic play is different from that of comedy at the point of resolution (i.e. a comedy ends happily while a tragedy ends in sadness).

3.2.2 Characters

Characters are often listed at the beginning of a play. The list might include a short description of each character.

This is the presentation of person or animals that perform the actions in a dramatic work. Characterisation seems secondary to action. Actions can be given their proper form, meaning and interpretation only through appropriate/effective characterisation. Acting necessitates performance, of a written play. Characters are symbols to communicate meaning, thought, feelings and ideas. The main character is the protagonist. In tragedy, he is the tragic hero (this depends on if your play is a tragedy or comedy).

- If your play is a tragedy
 - (a) Your major character/hero must arouse pity.
 - (b) He must not be all good and must not be all evil.
 - (c) He must be shown as suffering from the change of fortune as a result of wrongful act.
 - (d) He must commit the wrong act as a result of a flaw in his character.
 - (e) The unavoidable flaw in the tragic hero must lead him to violate moral laws.
 - (f) He must come to a tragic end through an action that must be serious, complete and be of certain magnitude.

- If your play is a comedy:
 - (a) Events end in happiness.
 - (b) Tone and mood are usually comic/humorous.

3.2.3 Types of Comedy (popularised by William Shakespeare)

Romantic Comedy

- The plot is based on a love affair.
- The love affair is not often smooth (e.g. William Shakespeare's *As you like it* and *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*).

Satiric Comedy

- Is designed to ridicule violations of social conventions and morals.
- Uses humour as a weapon (e.g. Wole Soyinka *The Trials of Brother Jero*).

Comedy of manner

- Deals with the life of gentlemen and ladies who live a life of leisure.
- Depicts artificial and polished life.
- Contains illicit love that goes on in society.
- Makes use of intelligent dialogue (e.g. Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*).

3.2.4 Theme

This is the message or main idea which you want to pass across to your audience. A work of drama must have a main theme (message) and sub-themes. The main theme is derived from the actions revolving around

the major character. Sub-themes are usually the other themes that surround the other characters.

For example, in Femi Osofisan's *Midnight Hotel*, the main theme is corruption while in Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi* the main theme is power. Other themes on the works are betrayal, lies, pain and endurance and so on.

3.2.5 Language

This is an important aspect of drama. It is the medium by which you can reveal your thoughts. Themes of the play are expressed using language. Though, poetry makes a more conscious use of language than prose fiction and drama. Yet, the playwright's choice of words, whether literal or metaphorical, helps in giving meaning to the play. It is the use of language that distinguishes one character from the other. For instance, a messenger in a play must speak in a language that befits his social status and orientation. A king in the same play must be assigned a 'royal language', and a politician too must be identified through his use of language in a play.

3.2.6 The Characteristics of a Play

- use of language is strict and deliberate.
- it uses figures of speech.
- it usually has a central message.
- it uses symbol and imagery.
- it has setting.
- it is written in related stanzas, rhythm, and lengths.
- plays embody a sequence of events.
- it is meant to be acted on stage.

All of these are not peculiar to plays, but are largely common to the genres of literature.

3.3 Dialogue

Most plays insist on dialogue or conversation between the characters. The dialogue reveals the plot and nature of the characters in the play. Dialogue has a lot to do with actions. Since drama is meant to communicate, words are the linguistic symbols of communication.

3.4 Acts and Scenes

Plays are divided into acts and scenes, which show a change in the passage of time and locations. For instance, a one-act play takes place in one location over a period of time.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What is the relevance of characters and language to a play?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this Unit, we have discussed the techniques of play writing. We have also talked about some of the characteristics of a play. Take note of these as you read through the work and go over your work thoroughly before you submit to your facilitator.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- setting, plot, characters, theme and language are important to a play.
- with the characteristics mentioned, a play is in some ways different from other genres of literature (i.e. prose, poetry) especially if we consider that plays are meant to be acted on stage. Though, they are somewhat similar in some aspects.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. With reference to any of the plays of William Shakespeare, Wole Soyinka, Bernard Shaw, Athol Fugard, Femi Osofisan and discuss theme and Language in relation to play writing.
2. Write a short comedy for the stage.
3. Write a short play using the techniques of play writing.
4. Write a short play that must be a tragedy.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Adedeji, J. A. (1966). *The Place of Drama in Yoruba Religious Observance*. Odu, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 83 - 94.
- Abrams, M. H. (1993). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Port Worth, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Al-Hakim, Tewfik (1999). *Fate of Cockroach and Other Plays*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- Barnfield, Gabriel (1968). *Creative Drama in Schools*. London: Macmillan.
- Becket, Samuel (1955). *Waiting for Godot*. Bristol: Western Printing Services Limited.

- Brenton, Howard (1976). *Weapons of Happiness*. London: Methuen.
- Chilver, Peter (1967). *Staging a School Play*. London: B. T. Batsford.
- Clark, J. P. (1964). *Three Plays*. London: Oxford University Press.
- _____. (1968). *Aspects of Nigerian Drama*. Nigeria Magazine, No. 89, pp. 118 - 126.
- Compline, Brackson (2006). *Revisiting the Dialogue of Plato and Aristotle*. Ikeja: Lenin Publishers.
- Fashina, Nelson (2001). *Gods at the Harvest*. Ibadan: Browns Communications.
- Fugard, Athol (1973). *Siswe Bansi is Dead*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press.
- Gbadamosi, Rasheed (1987). *Echoes from the Lagoon*. Ibadan: Onibonoje Press.
- Gibbs, James (1986). *Wole Soyinka*. London: Macmillan.
- Granville-Barker (1946). *The Use of Drama*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.
- Guoch, Steve (1988). *Writing a Play*. London: A & C Black.
- Gogol, Nikolai (2004). *The Government Inspector*. New Delhi: Heinemann.
- Levin, Harry (1976). *Shakespeare and the Revolution of the Times*. Harlow University Press.
- Male, David (1973). *Approaches in Drama Teaching*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Obafemi, Olu (2003). *Scapegoats and Sacred Cows*. Ilorin: Haytee Press and Publishing Co.
- Osofisan, Femi (1998). *Midnight Hotel*. Ibadan: Kenbim Press.
- _____. (2006). *Ajayi Crowther*. Ibadan: Bookcraft Ltd.
- Osofisan, Femi (1995). *The Engagement*. Ibadan: Agbo Areo Publishers.
- Rotimi, O. (1971). *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. London: Oxford University Press.

Shakespeare, William (1962). *The Merchant of Venice*. Edinburgh: Longman Group.

Shaw, Bernard (1988). *Arms and the Man*. Edinburgh: Longman.

Soyinka, Wole (1984). *A Play of Giants*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.

Wa Thiong'O Ngugi (1968). *The Black Hermit*. Edinburgh: Heinemann.