



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**COURSE CODE: ENG 181**

**COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO PROSE FICTION**



**ENG 181**  
**INTRODUCTION TO PROSE FICTION**

Course Team      Dr. Onyekalwuchukwu (Developer) – NOUN  
                            Dr. Onyekalwuchukwu (Writer) –NOUN  
                            Professor Abdul R. Yesufu (Editor) –NOUN  
                            Dr. I. Omolara Daniel (Programme Leader) – NOUN  
                            Dr. Onyekalwuchukwu (Course Coordinator) – NOUN





National Open University of Nigeria

Headquarters

14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way

Victoria Island

Lagos

Abuja Annex

5 Dar es Salam Street

Off Aminu Kano Crescent

Wuse 2

Abuja

E-mail: [centralinfo@nou.edu.ng](mailto:centralinfo@nou.edu.ng)

URL: [www.nou.edu.ng](http://www.nou.edu.ng)

National Open University of Nigeria 2010

First Printed 2010

ISBN 978.....

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Printed by.....

For

National Open University of Nigeria

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Pages</b>
Introduction.....	5
Course Aims.....	5
Course Objectives.....	5
Working through the Course.....	6
Course Materials.....	6
Study Units.....	6
Assessment.....	7
Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA).....	7
Final Examination and Grading .....	8
Course Marking Scheme.....	8
Presentation Schedule.....	8
Course Overview .....	8
How to get the most from this course.....	9
Tutors and Tutorials.....	11
Summary.....	11

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Welcome to ENG 181: INTRODUCTION TO PROSE FICTION**

ENG 181: Introduction to Prose Fiction is a 2 credit one semester undergraduate course. It comprises 15 study units subdivided into 3 modules. The materials have been developed to introduce the students to prose fiction which is a genre of literature. This course guide gives you an overview of the course and also provides you with information on the organisation and requirements of the course.

The course introduces you to the origin, development and the major elements of prose fiction. Some representative texts have been analysed to highlight some of the characteristics of prose fiction. The texts were also chosen to reflect the different types of prose fiction.

### **Course Aim**

- a. To expose students to the concept of Prose Fiction
- b. To acquaint the students with the origin and development of Prose Fiction
- c. To acquaint students with the idea of textual analysis of Prose Fiction

### **Course Objectives**

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

- a. Trace the origin of Prose Fiction;
- b. Trace the evolution of Prose Fiction.
- c. Discuss the major phases in the development of Prose Fiction
- d. Discuss the major elements of Prose Fiction.
- e. Explain the major thematic thrusts of the selected texts.
- f. Analyse at least a short story.

### **Working through this Course**

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

### **Course Materials**

The major materials you will need for this course are:

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



## **Study Units**

There are 15 study units in this course as follows:

### **Module I: What is Prose Fiction?**

Unit 1 – Definition /Meaning

Unit 2 – Origins

Unit 3 – Characteristics of Prose Fiction

Unit 4 – Types of Prose Fiction

Unit 5 – The Rise /Development of Prose Fiction

### **Module II: Elements of Prose Fiction**

Unit 1 – Plot

Unit 2 – Theme/ Subject Matter.

Unit 3 – Characterisation

Unit 4 – Setting.

Unit 5 – Point of View.

Unit 6 – Language.

### **Module III: Textual analysis**

Unit 1 – The Short Story : Chinua Achebe's "The Vengeful Creditor"

Unit 2 - The Novella : Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*

Unit 3 – The English Novel: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Unit 4 – The African Novel: AyiKweiArmah' *The Beautiful Ones Are not Yet Born*

### **Assignment File**

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

### **Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMAs)**

You will need to submit a specified number of the Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs). Every unit in this course has a tutor-marked assignment. You will be assessed on four of them but the best four (that is, the highest four of the fifteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for the best three (3) assignments will be 30% of your total work. Assignment questions for the unit in this course are contained in the Assignment File. When you have completed each assignment, send it, together with the TMA (tutor-marked assignment) form to your tutor. Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submission. If, for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extension will not be granted after due date unless under exceptional circumstances.

### **Final Examination and Grading**

The final examination for ENG 181 will be of three hours' duration. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the units all over before your examination. The final examination will attract 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked assignments you have previously come across. All areas of the course will be assessed. You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will also find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

### **Course Marking Scheme**

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

Assessment	Marks
------------	-------

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

### Presentation Schedule

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

### Course Overview

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

Unit	Title of Work	Week's Activity	Assessment (End of Unit)
	Course Guide	1	
	<b>Module 1: What is Prose Fiction?</b>		
1	Definition/Meaning	2	Assignment 1
2	Origins	3	Assignment 2
3	Characteristics of Prose Fiction	4	Assignment 3
4	Types of Prose fiction	5	Assignment 4
5	The Rise and Development of Prose Fiction	6	Assignment 5
	<b>Module 2: Elements of Prose Fiction</b>		
1	Plot	7	Assignment 6
2	Theme/Subject Matter	8	Assignment 7
3	Characterisation	9	Assignment 8

4	Setting	10	Assignment 9
5	Point of View	11	Assignment 10
6	Language		
	<b>Module 3:Textual Analysis</b>		
1	The Short Story- Chinua Achebe's "The Vengeful Creditor"	12	Assignment 11
2	The Novella - Mariama Ba's <i>So Long A Letter</i>	13	Assignment 12
3	The English Novel – Jane Austen's <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	14	Assignment 13
4	The African Novel – AyiKweiArmah's <i>the Beautiful Ones Are Noy Yet Born</i>	15	Assignment 14

### How to get the most from this Course

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

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment
2. Organise a study schedule. Refer to the "Course Overview" for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend in each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write your own dates for working on each unit.

3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.
4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the Introduction and the Objectives for the Unit
5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
7. Review the objectives for each unit to ensure that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the Course Objectives (listed in the Course Guide)
11. Keep in touch with your study centre. Up to date course information will be continuously available there.

### **Tutors and Tutorials**

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

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

Contact your tutor if:

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

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

### **Summary**

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



## **ENG 181 INTRODUCTION TO PROSE FICTION**

Course Team	Dr. OnyekaIwuchukwu (Developer/Writer) – NOUN Professor Abdul R. Yesufu (Editor) – NOUN Dr. I. Omolara Daniel (Programme Leader) – NOUN Dr. OnyekaIwuchukwu (Course Coordinator) – NOUN
-------------	--



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

National Open University of Nigeria

Headquarters

14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way

Victoria Island

Lagos

Abuja Annex

5 Dar es Salam Street

Off Aminu Kano Crescent

Wuse 2

Abuja

E-mail: [centralinfo@nou.edu.ng](mailto:centralinfo@nou.edu.ng)

URL: [www.nou.edu.ng](http://www.nou.edu.ng)

National Open University of Nigeria 2010

First Printed 2010

ISBN 978.....

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Printed by.....

For

National Open University of Nigeria

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **Module I: What is Prose Fiction?**

Unit 1 – Definition /Meaning

Unit 2 – Origins

Unit 3 – Characteristics of Prose Fiction

Unit 4 – Types of Prose Fiction

Unit 5 – The Rise /Development of Prose Fiction

### **Module II: Elements of Prose Fiction**

Unit 1 – Plot

Unit 2 – Theme/Subject Matter.

Unit 3 – Characterisation

Unit 4 – Setting.

Unit 5 – Point of View.

Unit 6 – Language.

### **Module III: Textual analysis**

Unit 1 – The Short Story : Chinua Achebe’s “The Vengeful Creditor”

Unit 2 – The Novella: Mariama Ba’s *So Long a Letter*

Unit 3 – The English Novel: Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*

Unit 4 – The African Novel: AyiKweiArmah’ *The Beautiful Ones Are not Yet Born*



**MODULE 1: WHAT IS PROSE FICTION?**

Unit 1 Definition/Meaning

Unit 2 Origins

Unit 3 Characteristics

Unit 4 Types

Unit 5 The Rise/Development

## **UNIT 1: DEFINITION/MEANING CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Prose
  - 3.2 Fiction
  - 3.3 Prose Fiction
  - 3.4 Prose Fiction and History
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Conclusion
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This course introduces you to a popular literary genre, prose fiction. As the name implies, it is presented in prose form and it is an imaginative art. This means that it is a product of the writer's imagination. In prose fiction, the writer tells a fictitious story to his readers to educate or entertain or to do both. In this unit, we are going to define prose fiction. This definition will guide our understanding of, not just the words "prose" and "fiction" but, prose fiction as a genre of literature. You will also be acquainted with the earliest forms of prose fiction.

### **2. OBJECTIVES.**

By the end of this course, you will be able to

- define prose fiction;
- differentiate prose fiction from other prose works; and
- define prose fiction in your own words.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT.**

We will start our definition of prose fiction with the definition of the two key words, “prose” and “fiction”. Thereafter, we will try to explain prose fiction as it relates to this course, which is as a literary genre.

### 3.1 Prose

Prose is the most typical form of language and it is derived from the Latin word *prosa* which literally means 'straight-forward.' It is like talking to someone in a straight-forward manner and not in a sing-song or poetic way. This means that anything you say or write in prose is presented in a straight-forward manner. For instance, this course material is presented in prose.

There are many views on the construction of prose but the summary of these views is that it has a simple and loosely defined structure. There is usually no effort to present prose in any particular or special structure. This lack of formal structure makes it to be adopted as the general mode of communication in many formal and informal presentations like the spoken dialogue, speeches, factual, topical and fictional writing. This means that most of the books you read are presented in prose and that you also talk in prose form.

Prose is made up of complete sentences which constitute paragraphs in a narrative form. Prose reflects the pattern of everyday speech. If words are not presented in prose, they are presented in poetry or verse form that adheres to a particular metric form and definite structure. Poetry has a more systematic form of presentation than prose. However, in prose the writer does not just present words whether they make sense or not. Words in prose are arranged in correct sentences and in a logical sequence for a meaningful understanding of the intended communication. In view of this, Samuel Taylor Coleridge insists in his definition of prose and poetry that; “prose is —words in their best order; poetry,—the best words in their best order.” (Quoted in Hall 62). Even in everyday speech, we arrange words in a proper way for the presentation to make sense in the language of communication. In writing therefore, anything that is not presented in verse is presented in prose.

Prose is the medium used, as stated earlier, in most written and oral communications. This is because of the advantage it has over verse which is in musical form. The dissemination of written information in text books, magazines in commerce dates back to the 15th century when Monasteries sold edifying collections of saints' and virgins' lives composed in prose. Prose became in this environment the medium of silent and private reading (Whiteman 16). Prose then, had an additional advantage for translators, who could go directly for meaning, where verse had to be translated by people skilled as poets in the target language.

### 3.2 Fiction

Fiction is derived from the Latin word *fictum* which means “created”. Fiction is a term used to denote anything, mainly stories or accounts that are not real. Can you recall the fairy tale or other stories that your mother or grandmother used to tell you about animals, monsters, or even human beings that existed in faraway countries or in the primordial times. These are

fictional narratives. Fiction is therefore any form of narrative which deals, in part or in whole, with events that are not factual, but rather, are imaginary and invented by its author.

Apart from the general meaning of fiction as non-factual accounts, it is also used to denote a major branch of literature especially the novel and also drama/ other theatrical presentations in the cinematic and musical mode. The important factor here is that the story or presentation is not factual or real.

### 3.3 Prose Fiction

We have learnt the meaning of the words “prose” and “fiction” as separate words. Now let us try to merge the two words to get the meaning in our present context, that is, as a genre of literature. What then is prose fiction? It is fictional work that is presented in a narrative form. Fiction and narrative are words that distinguish prose fiction from any other form of narrative or fictional work. For instance, drama is fiction but it is presented in dialogue and not narrative. Prose fiction as a literary genre is made up of the short story, the novella and the novel. Prose fiction tells a story and the fact that the story is not factual distinguishes it from history.

Prose fiction is an artistic work that “has a personal narrative, a hero to identify with fictional inventions, style, and suspense – in short anything that might be handled with the rather personal ventures of creativity and artistic freedom” (Kermode 23). It may exaggerate or distort facts or the story may be completely an invention of the writer. It depends on the style of the writer and or what the writer wants to achieve. The story in prose fiction is invented by the writer but is presented in a realistic manner.

Prose fiction treats essentially personal subject matter which is open to various interpretations by the reader. What we read in prose fiction are events, incidents, and experiences that affect human beings. It relays human experience from the writer’s imagination and is seen as a field of “cultural significance to be explored with a critical and didactic interest in the subjective perceptions both of artists and their readers” (Whiteman 12).

The earliest form of literary presentation was in verse but as time went on there was a shift from verse to prose and this dates from the early 13th century. The *Prose Lancelot* or *Vulgate Cycle*, collection of passages of that period, is believed to be the earliest form of literary presentation in prose. This collection indirectly led to Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* compilation of the early 1470s. The collections were said to be from historical sources for the sole purpose of instruction and national edification (*Wikipedia*). Prose fiction in the contemporary period is expected to serve the same purpose. The novel has become the dominant form of prose fiction followed by the short story.

The development of modern prose fiction in its present form particularly the novel is traced to the development of *belles-lettres* (beautiful letters) which is associated with elegance and style. They included an amalgam of genres that included history and science in vernaculars, personal memoirs, political discourse, fiction and poetry. Gradually, prose fiction in this

wider spectrum soon became a prominent medium for the creation of a distinct style of writing and communication. The style gave the artist an opportunity for artistic experimentation and originality needed to exhibit and market his or her style. The reading of prose fiction later became fashionable and it remained close to everyday language, "...to the private letter, to the art of "gallant" conversation, to the personal memoir and travelogue" (Maynard 22).

### **Self-Assessment Exercise.**

Explain one unique characteristic of prose fiction.

### **3.4 Prose Fiction and History**

Sometimes, students feel that prose fiction and historical narratives are the same or are similar since both present human experience. It is important for us to show the relationship between the two. Both are narrative projects but history is based on actual events and real names of the participants, actual dates and places are mentioned. History is therefore an empirical social experience because the historian is concerned with empirical data, operating as much as possible at the level of facts in pursuit of specific truths. It is a factual documentation with the sole aim of education and preservation for posterity. Early historians could include inventions in the factual account as long as they were rooted in traditional knowledge or in order to orchestrate a certain passage. Historians thus invented and composed speeches for didactic purposes (Whiteman 22).

On the other hand, the literary artist is concerned with historical data as long as they provide him with the experiences he intends to present in his art. However, the language of the literary artist does not subsist on hard facts. He mediates facts in pursuit of both specific and universal truths while trying to please in the process. The literary artist is therefore "...faced with the problem of disciplining history to obey his artistic purpose" (Chidi Amuta, 89)

However, novelists depict the social, political, and personal realities of a place and period with clarity and details more than historians. History is factual documentation while prose fiction is a work of art. Prose fiction could be based on history but the author uses vivid and graphic representations of characters and incidents to present an entertaining story.

Writers of prose fiction like Historians could document and present facts but not as accurately as the historians because whereas historians present real names of the people involved, places, and dates, in prose fiction real names are not used though known places and dates could be mentioned. This means that a historical event could be presented in prose fiction but the writer manipulates the story in an artistically satisfying manner. The writer here uses fictitious names to avoid litigation. In many works of prose fiction, the author/publisher indicates that the names are fictitious and regrets resemblance of any known person.

Prose fiction could use informal language for particular effect but historical language is

expected to be formal and correct at all times. The language of prose fiction language is distinct and this enables the author to manipulate language to suit his or her purpose/style and for the readers' appreciation.

The relationship between literature and history. History is an empirical social experience; the historian is concerned with empirical data, operating as much as possible at the level of facts in pursuit of specific truths. On the other hand, the literary artist is concerned with historical data to the extent that they provide him with the experiences that constitute his art. But the language of the literary artist does not subsist on hard facts. He mediates facts in pursuit of both specific and universal truths while trying to please or to disturb in the process. The literary artist is therefore faced with the problem of disciplining history to obey his artistic purpose. Chidi Amuta, "Literature of the Nigerian Civil War" 89 Yemi Ogunbiyi (ed.) (1988) *Perspectives on Nigerian Literature 1700 to the Present* Vol one Guardian Books Lagos

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

List two similarities and the differences between Prose fiction and history.

### **4.0 SUMMARY**

Prose fiction is a combination of two distinct words, "prose" and "fiction". The former means a presentation of spoken or written words in a narrative manner while the latter means a non-realistic account. Prose fiction is therefore an imaginary work that is presented in a narrative form. It is a literary genre that presents human experience to educate and entertain the readers. It tells a story that deals with cultural, social and political issues in the world but the characters are not real (known) human beings but bear human traits and dispositions. Although the story in prose fiction is fictitious, it contains identifiable characters, locations and incidents and these add to make the story that is presented as realistic as possible. Prose fiction is different from history which is a documentation of past realistic events.

### **5.0 CONCLUSION**

In this unit we have tried to explain prose fiction. It is not a compound word and that is why we started by explaining the two words "prose" and "fiction" separately and later merged their meanings to arrive at the meaning of prose fiction as it relates to this study. We also tried to differentiate prose fiction from history since both of them tell stories. We also explained that prose fiction is an aspect of literature that is presented in a narrative form.

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

In your own words, explain the meaning of prose fiction and how it differs from history.

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

Amuta, C. (1988). "Literature of the Nigerian Civil War" in Yemi Ogunbiyi ed. *Perspectives on Nigerian Literature 1700 to the Present*. Vol. 1. Lagos: Guardian Books.

- Hall, O. (1989). *The Art and Craft of Novel Writing*. Cincinnati: Story Press.
- Kermode, F. & Hollander J., eds. (1980). *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*. Seventh edition. Vol. II. London: Oxford University Press.
- Maynard, M., ed. (1992). *The Norton Anthology: The World Masterpieces*. Sixth Edition Vol. 1. London: W.W. Norton.
- Whiteman, G.P. (2006). "The Role of Fictional Narrative and Semi Fiction in Organizational Studies" *ERIM Report Series: Research in Management*

## **UNIT 2: ORIGINS**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Content
  - 3.1 Origins
  - 3.2 The Epic
    - 3.2.1 *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
  - 3.3 The Bible
  - 3.4 Romance
  - 3.5 Geoffrey Chaucer
  - 3.6 Boccaccio
  - 3.7 Sir Thomas Malory
- 4 Conclusion
- 5 Summary
- 6 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7 References Main /Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION.**

Prose fiction is said to have evolved from a variety of writings known as "belle letters" in French. However many scholars trace its origin to some other longer narratives like the epic and other forms of imaginative writings of the early centuries. In this unit we are going to trace the origin of prose fiction to these writings by studying some selected authors of the narratives. This will guide our understanding of prose fiction as a branch of literature from the earliest forms of the genre.

### **2. 0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- state the origin of prose fiction
- list some of the earliest prose fictional works

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Origin

The origin of prose fiction as a literary genre is traced to the ancient world of “the Mediterranean basin and the period...roughly 800 B.C. - A. D 400”. In this place and time the intellectual and religious foundations of modern Western outlook were laid. The literature of that world “...which is still the background of our institutions, attitudes, and thought, was written in three languages – Hebrew, Greek, and Latin” (Mack 1). The people who created these languages lived separately with their independent civilisation but the “...development of the Mediterranean area into one economic and political unit brought them into contact with one another and produced a fusion of their typical attitudes ...of Western thought” (Mack 1) reflected in these early writings.

Some scholars refer to these early fictional narratives as the extended fictional prose and are seen as the antecedents of the prose fiction. However, it is possible that some early prose fictional writers may have not been aware of these early writings but may have been influenced by verse epics. The origin of prose fiction in this course material is associated with early epics, some stories in the bible, romances and the works of notable writers like Boccaccio, Geoffrey Chaucer, Sir Thomas Malory and others.

The development of prose fiction as a genre in Europe emerged with the availability of paper which gave writers the opportunity to document and circulate their composition which contained entertaining exploration of subject matters that concern an individual.

#### 3.2 The Epic

An epic is a long narrative poem which tells a story that involves a hero. Western tradition of the prose fiction dates back to the verse epics of the earliest centuries like the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (1300-1000 BC), Indian epics like *The Ramayana* (400 BCE and 200 C) and *Mahabharata* (4th Century BC). However, these were not as popular as the Anglo-Saxon epic of *Beowulf* (c. 750-1000) rediscovered in the late 18th and early 19th centuries) in early modern Europe.

Other notable epics include Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (9th or 8th Century BC), and Virgil’s *Aeneid* (29-19 BC) which were read by Western scholars since the Middle Ages. At the beginning of the 18th Century, modern French prose translations brought Homer to a wider public, and with this publicity his works were accepted as forerunners of the modern novel which is the genre of prose fiction. Other ancient prose narratives which influenced the modern prose fiction include the incredible stories of Lucian of Samosata, and Lucius Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*.

Some of these were presented in verse (poetic forms) though in form of narratives while others were presented in prose. In whatever form it is presented, the epic tells imaginative or historical, stories that are artistically constructed, in a sequential order with a beginning, a middle and an end just like the modern prose fiction. However, many of them lack the



causality and verisimilitude that are vital characteristics of prose fiction as a literary genre. We will illustrate with *The Epic of Gilgamesh* which is regarded as the oldest.

### **3.2.1 *The Epic of Gilgamesh***

This epic is regarded as the first great heroic narrative in the literary world. Its origins stretch back "...to the margins of prehistory, and its evolution spans millennia. Tablets containing portions of *Gilgamesh* have been found at sites throughout the Middle East and in all languages in cuneiform characters, wedge-shaped characters incised in clay or stone" (Mack 12 ).

This epic presents the adventures of a legendary hero, Gilgamesh, the King of Uruk, who is a tyrannical and arrogant ruler. His people complain of his oppressive and tyrannical tendencies to the Sumerian gods. The gods responded by creating Enkidu, a powerful figure with a blend of human and animal qualities who is raised by wild beasts. He becomes a threat to the community but fortunately, a prostitute seduces and transforms him. The prostitute leads him to Uruk for a confrontation with Gilgamesh in fulfillment of the original intent for his creation. Ironically, their confrontation results in "...a deep bond of friendship" and both as companions direct their "...prodigious energies...toward heroic achievements" (Mack 13). They get involved in several adventures encountering humans, animals, and gods and achieve popularity and fame. In one of such adventures, they encounter Ishtar, a powerful woman, who tries to seduce Gilgamesh and was rebuffed. The woman is enraged by this just but harsh rejection; so she sends the Bull of Heaven against the people of Uruk. Gilgamesh and Enkidu are forced to destroy the Bull but Enkidu dies in the process.

The death of his companion "...reveals the hollowness of mortal fame and leads Gilgamesh to undertake a solitary journey in search of the secrets of immortality"(Mack 25). This specific goal leads him to series of adventures and encounters with wild beasts, monsters, difficult and hazardous terrains. He is discouraged at every step but perseveres and finally he meets Utnapishtim who listens and promises to help him. Unfortunately, he fails the two tests given to him by Utnapishtim. The first test is to remain awake for six days and seven nights but he could not; the second test is to get the plant that assures eternal rejuvenation. He finds the plant but carelessly loses it to the serpent. He returns, disillusioned but consoled because Utnapishtim assured him that his worldly accomplishments will endure beyond his own lifetime.

I have summarized the story, but get any good literary anthology and read the full version of this epic for a better understanding and appreciation. It contains a story but is inclined towards fantasy instead of realism which is the hallmark of prose fiction.

### **3.3 The Bible**

Some scholars refer to the Bible as the forerunner of modern prose fiction. This group uses the Genesis, the first book of the Bible as a point of reference. This book which presents the account of the creation and fall of man is regarded by these scholars as the Hebrew myth of creation. However, Christians and some other scholars insist that it as an authentic historical

account. In this course we are not going to study the Bible as a text but refer you to the stories in the Bible which scholars in the latter group see as forms of prose narratives. These narratives in the Old Testament are focused mainly on individuals. The creation and the fall of man (Genesis 1-3) is centred on Adam and Eve; the first murder (Genesis 4) is on Cain and Abel; and the flood (Genesis 6-9) is on Noah. These stories contain some interesting narratives but are not full length accounts with systematic development of characters who engage in actions as seen in the epic above.

The second set of narratives in the Bible is centred on individuals that engage in some actions with beginning, middle and an end. These include the story of Joseph (Genesis 37-46); the story of Job (Job) the story of Ruth (Ruth). These ones show the development of the characters, their growth from innocence to maturity as rounded characters, a presentation of action in chronological causal order with a beginning, middle and an end as we encounter in modern prose fiction. Some of the early novels took this path and the titles of such novels reflect the names of such characters. Hence, just like we have the books of Ruth and Job we also have novels like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*.

### **3.4 Romance**

The word *roman* or *romance* in fiction dates back to some historical publications of the 11th and 12th-century southern France (*Wikipedia*). The central subject matter was initially derived from Roman and Greek historians and was later adapted by the Dutch and Germans in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (1380–87) is a late example of this European form of writing.

The subject matter of the early romance was based on Arthurian histories that were fashionable in the late 12th century because of their ability to glorify the northern European feudal system as an independent cultural achievement. The works of Chretien de Troyes set an example, in that his plot construction subjected the northern European epic traditions to ancient Greek aesthetics. The typical Arthurian romance focuses on a single hero and leads him into a double course of episodes in which he proves both his prowess as an independent knight and his readiness to function as a perfect courtier under King Arthur. The model involved quest and adventure as basic plot elements: the quest was a mission the knight would accept as his personal task and problem; the adventure represents a situation where tests are sent by God to the knight on a journey, whose course he (the knight) would no longer try to control. This plot framework is still part of some modern world Hollywood movies which still unite, separate and reunite lovers in the course of adventures designed to prove their love and value. This plot is also found in some modern prose fiction but with some modifications.

Other popular romances with unexpected and peculiar adventures are *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight* (c. 1380). The two are regarded as the "...cream of Middle English metrical romances...told with a unity of narrative effect, a vigorous style and highly poetic colouring that are most unusual for the romance...Instead of the usual manifold adventures that befall the hero there are only two, and these are made to depend one upon the other" (Woods et al 171). The two central incidents serve as tests for Gawain's character as a Knight. One, the beheading incident, tests his physical courage and his fidelity to his words; the incident of the lady in the

castle of the Green Knight, questions Gawain's chastity and moral courage. The ultimate purpose of romance is didactic.

Although romance is not categorized as modern prose fiction but it contributed to its foundation because of its presentation of stories in a chronological sequence with characters. The didactic aspect of romance is still an aspect of modern prose fiction as the modern reader, after reading a prose fiction "...should leave...a wiser person with deeper understanding of life (Ezeigbo 24).s

### **Self-Assessment Exercise.**

Apart from romance, list other forms of early writings that share some characteristics prose fiction.

### **3.5 Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375)**

Giovanni Boccaccio was an Italian author and poet. His tales in *Decameron* constitute "...the greatest achievement of a prose fiction in vernacular language of southern Europe during the medieval period" (Mack 1467). The exact details of his birth are uncertain. A number of sources state that he was born in Paris and that his mother was a Parisian and his father, a Florentine merchant. He grew up in Florence, studied canon law and later pursued his interest in scientific and literary studies. (Mack 1468). His final years were troubled by illnesses, some relating to obesity and what often is described as dropsy, severe edema that would be described today as congestive heart failure. He died at the age of sixty-three on 21 December 1375 in Certaldo, Florence, where he was buried. Boccaccio never married, but had three children.

His studies allowed him the opportunity to travel widely and make good contacts with fellow scholars. He produced in this period, *Filostrato* and *Teseida* (the source for Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Knight's Tale* respectively) and *Filocolo*, a prose version of an existing French romance, and *La caccia di Diana*. Boccaccio is renowned for his *Decameron* which he wrote in 1352. It was Boccaccio's final effort in literature and one of his last works in Italian, the only other substantial work was *Corbaccio* (dated to either 1355 or 1365). Boccaccio revised and rewrote the *Decameron* in 1370-1371. This manuscript has survived to the present day.

Boccaccio provides a dramatic framework for his narrations in which the story tellers are seven young ladies and three gentlemen who have withdrawn from Florence to the countryside, to escape the Black Death or the plague of 1384. They are refined and cultivated ladies and gentlemen who decide to tell stories to enliven their stay. Each member of the group is assigned to tell a tale each day. Sometimes, a general topic is assigned to the

storyteller but at other times, the narrator "...follows his own taste and judgment" (Woods et al. 52).

Boccaccio's contribution to prose fiction is his dialogue which scholars believe surpasses others in verisimilitude. In his hundred stories contained in *Decameron*, he presents a great variety of people and situations "...aptly and often acutely characterised, and abundant dialogue of great liveliness and realism more than that of virtually all of his contemporaries"(Consoli 52). Some of the tales are: The story about Brother Alberto and his impersonation of Angel Gabriel; and the story of Federigo and the Falcon. Boccaccio presents these tales in such graphic description that the reader is made to see successive scenes in vivid details. He creates memorable and amusing characters, and relates the incidents of the narrative closely to the personalities of those characters. These are fundamental attributes of contemporary prose fiction.

### 3.6 Geoffrey Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) was born in London. He was an author, poet, philosopher, bureaucrat, courtier and diplomat. Although he wrote many works, he is best remembered for his *The Canterbury Tales*. He is sometimes called the father of English Literature and is regarded as the greatest Middle English writer. Chaucer is credited by some scholars as the first author to demonstrate the artistic legitimacy of the vernacular English language rather than French or Latin which were the popular languages then.

His name is derived from the French *chausseur*, meaning *shoemaker*. Chaucer had a successful career as a writer with nearly five hundred written items testifying to his career though not much is known about his early life and education. The recorded part of his life was that of officialdom: he worked as a diplomatic agent, the Comptroller of the Customs, a superintendent of the king's works and also a Member of Parliament for Kent in 1386. He is thought to have started work on *The Canterbury Tales* in the early 1380s.

Chaucer traveled to Picardy the next year as part of a military expedition, and visited Genoa and Florence in 1373. It is speculated that, on this Italian trip, he came in contact with Petrarch and Boccaccio. They introduced him to medieval Italian poetry that influenced his writings especially in the forms and stories. In 1378, Richard II sent Chaucer as an envoy/secret dispatch to the Visconti and to Sir John Hawkwood, English mercenary leader in Milan. It is believed that the character of the knight in the *Canterbury Tales* was based on the person of Hawkwood, whose description matches that of a fourteenth-century condottiere. (Woods et al, 92)

**Demise:** He is believed to have died of unknown causes on 25 October 1400, but there is no firm evidence for this date, as it comes from the engraving on his tomb, erected more than one hundred years after his death. There is some speculation—most recently in Terry Jones' book *Who Murdered Chaucer?: A Medieval Mystery* -that he was murdered by enemies of Richard II or even on the orders of his successor Henry IV, but the case is entirely circumstantial. Chaucer was buried in Westminster Abbey in London, as was his right owing to his status as a tenant of the Abbey's close. In 1556, his remains were transferred to a more

ornate tomb, making Chaucer the first writer interred in the area now known as Poets' Corner.

**Literary Career:**Chaucer's literary works fall conveniently into three periods named according to the different literary influences discernable in his work: the French period, from his beginnings to 1370; the Italian period, from 1370-1385; and the English period, from 1385-1400. His first major work, *The Book of the Duchess*, an elegy for Blanche of Lancaster (who died in 1369) was written in the French period. He wrote most of his lyrics and some allegorical romances during this period too. "All these early works follow models laid down by earlier contemporary writers. To some extent, the works of the Italian period are works inspired by the earlier writings of Italian authors or by the atmosphere of the fourteenth-century Italian culture with which he became acquainted during his trips to Italy." (Woods et al 105) Chaucer's original ingenuity started emerging in the works of the Italian period. Some of his works include:

- *The Parliament of Fowls* is a charming satire, on model of animal story, of parliament and of representation of people;
- *The House of Fame*, although incomplete, is a more trenchant satire upon gossips, reputations, and rewards for "merit";
- *The Legend of Good Women* is a collection of short biographies in verse of famous heroines of antiquity, quite in the medieval tradition which saw in the lives of great men and women models for conduct or a terrible example to shun. The work was like a mirror of life held up for all in positions of responsibility to see;
- *Troilus and Criseyde*, a long narrative poem in the manner of medieval romance, on a story from the medieval Troy legend. Some scholars refer to it as the first psychological novel in English literature because of its insight into human motives and its masterly characterizations; the suave and worldly go-between Pandarus and the enigmatic Cressida are remarkable portraits for the medieval period when the analysis of a human soul for more than didactic purposes was virtually unknown. *Troilus and Criseyde* is historically interesting, also because it happens to be the finest of all the treatments of the Troy legend in Middle English literature. It is regarded as the finest work of Chaucer's Italian period. His major works made up from a collection of stories may have been compiled over a long period.
- Others are: *The Romaunt of the Rose*, *The Book of the Duchess*, *Anelida and Arcite*, *Treatise on the Astroble* and many more.

Chaucer is remembered most as the author of *The Canterbury Tales*, which is a collection of stories told by fictional pilgrims on the road to the cathedral at Canterbury. These tales are believed to have contributed immensely in the shaping of English literature.

**Characterisation:** The *Canterbury Tales* contrasts with other literature of the period because of the naturalism of its narrative, the variety of stories the pilgrims tell and the varied characters who are engaged in the pilgrimage. Many of the stories narrated by the pilgrims seem to fit their individual characters and social standing, although some of the stories seem ill-fitting to their narrators. Some scholars attribute this to the incomplete state of the work. Chaucer drew on real life for his cast of pilgrims: the innkeeper shares the name of a

contemporary keeper of an inn in Southwark. Scholars have suggested real-life identities for the Wife of Bath, the Merchant, the Man of Law and the Student. The many jobs that Chaucer held in medieval society—page, soldier, messenger, valet, bureaucrat, foreman and administrator—probably exposed him to many of the types of people he depicted in the *Tales*. He was able to shape their speech and satirize their manners.

*The Canterbury Tales* stands as the supreme monument to Chaucer. The array of characters in the prologue to this “varied collection of stories both popular and artistic would have been sufficient to assure the author a high place, and the sweep and versatility of the stories themselves are a further tribute to his genius”(Woods et al 104). Except for *Piers Plowman*, no other work of the Middle English period shows the same awareness of the social scene. However, *The Canterbury Tales* surpasses its rival in “poise, colour, ordered art and humour”(Skeat 54). It has universal appeal and transcends its age.

**Contributions to Development of Prose Fiction:** Chaucer is both a child of his age and the herald of the Renaissance English literature. Although his works are regarded as poetry by many, his treatment of issues of human concern, the chronological arrangement of incidents, effective and efficient deployment of characters, vivid and realistic presentation of incidents and events in his works, qualifies him to be classified as one of the originators of modern prose fiction. His knowledge is limited to his age, and devotion to the church, but “...his power to transcend his own era lies in his cool appraising humour, his facility of descriptive phrase, his vigorous narrative, his remarkable receptivity to the workings of human nature, and his consequent appeal to the humanity of the ages marks him out as the greatest”(Whiteman 8).

**Language:** Apart from the irregular spelling, much of the vocabulary in Chaucer’s works is recognizable to the modern reader. Chaucer is also recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as the first author to use many common English words in his writings. These words were probably frequently used in the language at the time but Chaucer, with his ear for common speech, is the earliest manuscript source. *Acceptable, alkali, altercation, amble, angrily, annex, annoyance, approaching, arbitration, armless, army, arrogant, arsenic, arc, artillery* and *aspect* are just some of the many English words first attested in Chaucer (Internet). These words are still in use and have influenced the diction of prose fiction over the years.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise.**

List four reasons why the *Canterbury Tales* is regarded as the forerunner of modern prose fiction.

### **3.7 Thomas Malory**

**His Life:** Not much is known about the life of Thomas Malory. He was involved in the distressing wars of the fifteenth- century England known as the Wars of the Roses. In 1445, he was a member of parliament and in 1451, he raided a monastery that occupied the land which was formerly in his possession but was taken from him by a prelate of an opposing group during the civil strife. He tried to recover a property that he presumed was rightfully

his but was arrested, charged of crimes of extortion, robbery and rape and sent to prison. He spent the last twenty years of his life in prison after he had been convicted of these multiple crimes that may have been trumped up charges.

**Contributions:** His major contribution to the development of prose fiction is his compilation and arrangement of the various cycles of Arthurian legend, “Knight, Prest, and Commoner” lumped together under the title of *Morted’Arthur*. The work was completed while the author was in prison. He made use of French versions of the Arthurian stories, condensed them, and rewrote them in a unified form by revolving them around the central figure of King Arthur himself (Woods et al. 105) It seemed as if he was aware of the extinction of knighthood and did his best to immortalize chivalry in story.

In this book, *Morted’Arthur*, he presented what is regarded as the best Arthurian legend that has been composed in English. His sources were, in the main, the extant medieval romances about Arthur and his group, particularly the huge French poems about Lancelot, the Grail and Tristram. However, he condensed, expanded or modified the original material to suit his purpose. The result is a tale that is told in a simple, almost informal style. His simplicity is artful as he presents pomp and ceremony of knightly career, all the splendor of the knight’s high quests, and all the pathos of their falls in vividly. The reader of the last book in the collection gets a feel of the disintegration and passing of the old order, the breaking of a great social system.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise.**

Explain Thomas Malory’s major contribution to the development of prose fiction.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

It is difficult to trace the origin of prose fiction but the works of some early writers influenced the genre the way it is conceived of in modern literature. These writers set out to write poetry which was the oldest form of literature but the style of presentation of their stories and the portrayal of characters made their works very close to prose fiction. This justifies the tracing of the origin of prose fiction to their writings. The works in reference are fictitious and are prosaic.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

We have tried to discuss the contributions of some medieval writers to the evolution of prose fiction as a literary genre. Unlike Western drama whose origin is traced to the Dionysian festival in Greece, prose fiction cannot be said to be a product of a particular event or an invention of one person or country. However, we have tried to link prose fiction with the Medieval romance.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

List the contributions of Geoffrey Chaucer to the evolution of prose fiction.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Consoli, J. P. (1992). *Giovanni Boccaccio: an Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Garland.

Hopper, F.V. (1970). *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (Selected): An Interlinear Translation*. London: Barron's Educational Series

Skeat, W.W. (1889). *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Speirs, J.(1951). *Chaucer the Maker*. London: Faber and Faber.

Woods, George B, Home A. Watt & Geroge K. Anderson (1936). *The Literature of England*

*Vol 1: From the Beginnings to the Romantic Movement*. Chicago: Scott, Foresman.

## **UNIT 3 CHARACTERISTICS OF PROSE FICTION**

### **CONTENTS**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Verisimilitude

3.2 Time and Space

3.3 Volume

3.4 Atmosphere

3.5 Tone

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References /Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

We have defined prose fiction and discussed its evolution. In the definition, we said that for a written work to qualify as prose fiction, it must be fictitious or imaginary and must be presented in prose form. In this unit, we are going to discuss the specific characteristics that make prose fiction unique. The characteristics include its ability to present life-like experiences through vivid descriptions of events presented in the works.



## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- List the characteristics of prose fiction.
- Explain the term verisimilitude and its place in prose fiction
- Distinguish between atmosphere and tone in prose fiction
- Explain the terms time and space in relation to prose fiction
- Explain the relevance of volume in the classification of prose fiction.

## 3.0. MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude in Prose fiction is used to describe the situation whereby the story is presented in such a way that the events are realistic. However you may come across the term slice of life-tranche de vie which is used to describe the level of realism that is advocated in naturalism. It is however prominent in the novel, the short story and the novella. It gives the sense that what one reads is "real," or at least realistic and believable. For instance, the reader possesses a sense of verisimilitude when reading a story in which a character cuts his finger, and the finger bleeds. If the character's cut finger had produced sparks of fire rather than blood, the story would not possess verisimilitude. It is difficult therefore for fantasy and science fiction stories that present impossible events to have verisimilitude. However, it could have it if the reader is able to read them believing what is presented to be true though he knows that it is imaginary. This is known as the willing suspension of disbelief. Verisimilitude is having the quality of appearing to be true or real. In other words, it is something that has the quality of truth or reality.

Prose fiction is basically for entertainment so is enjoyed or appreciated in intimate reading situations. The reader, alone is immersed in the fictional world created by the author. This world is appreciated more if the element of verisimilitude is present. In ancient times, verse epics were recited to selected audiences and in this closer performance there was a greater intimacy between the audience and the performer than the performance of plays in theatres. Have you watched a stage play in a theatre? The stage is usually set some metres away from the audience but in the recitation of epics or story-telling, the listeners sat very close to the performer and could even touch him or her. This is the greater intimacy.

The intimacy is closer in prose fiction where the reader is alone and is reading and at the same time visualising the performance of the characters in his mind as the narration unfolds. It was fashionable to read novel in those days because the incidents portrayed were lifelike the readers were able to identify with the characters and incidents. Also, in the early stages of the development of prose fiction, verisimilitude made it possible for realistic representation of incidents so, it became the medium of open secrets, rumours, private and public gossip. Thus "...individualistic fashions, personal views, intimate feelings, secret anxieties, "conduct" and "gallantry" spread with novels. Love became the typical field of experience portrayed in prose fiction and with the introduction of satirical fictions, the scope of the subject matter widened in the 17th and 18th centuries" (Forster 15). In prose fiction, the reader is invited to personally identify with the novel's characters and this can only be achieved if the work presents a believable aspect of life.

### 3.1 Time and Space

The writer in prose fiction is not restricted like the playwright who is expected to condense the story within a limited time and place and in a dialogue. This means that the writer has the liberty to present graphic details about the character and action. This aids the writer's ability to describe the environment, the actions of the characters and even their innermost thoughts and feelings.

**Time:** We all know what time is. It is a period when something happens. For instance, I am writing now. Later I might state the time when the writing was done. Time includes exact time according to the clock, the date in terms of day, month, and historical period.

**Space:** Space, on the other hand is a period of time. You see that both of them are inseparable and that is why sometimes they are confusing. It is that extent of time between a particular action and another one.

According to AkachiEzeigbo, time and space are very important in prose fiction because "...every action in which people are involved is concerned with the passage of time in space. ...the picture that is built...acquires concreteness as a result of its passage through time/space" (15). She presents two categories of time -functional time and chronological time as illustrated below:

TIME	
Chronological	Functional
I	I
This is time that can be measured or quantified; for example, at 20, Tom began work at 25 he left development Home, and at 35 he married of situation to another (higher one) Time is here gauged or determined by how much experience has been gained; not by how much time has elapsed or passed.	This is time that is not measured in terms of growth. It is

Time is therefore important both chronologically and functionally. The time and space range helps to determine the 'goodness' or progress of characters or otherwise. Characters finally become what they are as they are assessed based on the experiences they have undergone as they pass through time and space.

**Illustration:** If we take Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* for instance, you may say that Okonkwo killed somebody when (time) he went to the funeral ceremony and the bullet he shot into the air inadvertently hit someone and the victim died. In the same work, you will recall the incidents that take place in the space between when he is on an exile and when he returns. This means that action takes place only when there is a passage of time. The space can be long or short. The space between your waking up from sleep and taking your

breakfast is short but the space between your first year in this university and your graduation is a longer period.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

State the difference between time and space in prose fiction.

### **3.3 Volume**

In a literal sense, the volume here refers to the size of the work. This size is determined by the length of the work which is in turn evaluated by the number of pages of a particular type of prose fiction. The novel is the longest genre of narrative prose followed by the novella and the short story. Sometimes, students ask how long a novel should be – in order to be more than a novella or a short story. This question is very important but it is difficult to ascertain specifically, the number of pages in each category. The requirement of length has been traditionally connected with the notion that the novel presents an “epic length performances that try to cope with the totality of life” (Lubbock 30). The novella is by contrast focused on a point, the short story on a situation whose full dimensions the reader has to grasp in a less complex process of interpretation. The requirement of length is actually secondary to the requirement of a certain perspective on life. The difference between the ancient Homeric epic and the modern novel is, according to Lukács, that the new genre is the perfect form to reflect the modern individual's experience of the world: "Equilibrium, coherence and unity" had been features of the ancient epic. A "fragmentary nature of the world's structure" is by contrast the typical experience modern novels provide”(Lubbock 23). As a guide on volume in prose fiction, we present the following from the internet.

- Short story is a work of at least 2,000 words but under 7,500 words. (5-25 pages)
- Novelette is a work of at least 7,500 words but under 17,500 words. (25-60 pages)
- Novella is a work of at least 17,500 words but under 50,000 words. (60-170 pages)
- Novel is a work of 50,000 words or more. (about 170+ pages)

### **Self-Assessment Exercise.**

Explain the importance of volume in the categorization of prose fiction.

### **3.4 Atmosphere**

Atmosphere in prose fiction is the emotion that pervades the work. It is the emotional feeling that one gets as one reads a particular work. This feeling is stronger in some works than in others. The intensity of emotion in any particular work depends largely on the ability of the author to employ descriptive details that “...heighten the intensity of atmosphere. Language plays an important role here. The choice of words by the author helps to convey the desired atmosphere. The atmosphere is further heightened by the tempo of the action, the quality and clarity of the dialogue (Ezeigbo 23). Many novelists evoke atmosphere very well in their works. For instance, Festus Iyayi evokes the atmosphere of violence and depravity in his novel, *Violence* and this is achieved through dialogue and vivid description of events in the book. The atmosphere in a work can change from one event or situation to the other. This is why I see atmosphere as the mood/emotion of the moment.

### 3.5 Tone

The tone is closely related to atmosphere but is not as obvious as atmosphere. It is the writer's attitude to theme that is being explored. It is usually elicited in the narration without the writer pointing it out or making direct comment. A good writer presents the story objectively without taking sides but the tone is clear. Tone could be that of contempt, ridicule, condemnation, admiration, exhortation and so on. Like in atmosphere, tone could change in the course of a narration. For instance, a writer's tone for the good characters may be that of admiration and that of condemnation for the villain.

#### Self-Assessment Exercise.

Distinguish between atmosphere and tone in prose fiction.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The writer in prose fiction tries to present an interesting story and this is achieved through the portrayal of life-like events and incidents. This is called the verisimilitude. She or he achieves this through a proper manipulation of language to create appropriate and credible atmosphere.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have presented the basic characteristics of prose fiction. We are concerned with the novel, the novella, and the short story, which are basically the same but differ in volume.

### 6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Read the passage below and identify the atmosphere and tone of the writer.

*OsimeIyere watched the faces of the men as their names were read out and saw how they looked at each other, uneasily at first, and with relief as they heard their names. Then came the last set of names. They were nine of them and Mr. Ohiali was one of them. They separated the last nine and told the rest to go away.*

*Osime stepped out of the crowd as they jostled among themselves and hurried away.*

*Osime stepped forward and approached the second lieutenant.*

*'Excuse me sir', he said and all the soldiers frowned and looked at him.*

*'I am the tenant that one of the men spoke about, one of the men you now hold'.*

*'Yes?'*

*'I want to vouch that he was speaking the truth' ...*

*'And you are from which state?' The man asked.*

*'I am from this state'*

*'Which part of it?'*

*Osime told him.*

*'And what is your job'*

*'I am an editor on Daily News'*

*'A journalist?'*

*'Yes'*

*'I see, ... we have had a lot of problems with journalists in this war'*

*'I am not here to cause any trouble' Osime said.*

*But journalists always cause trouble and we have had to be very severe with some of them in this war’.*

*Corporal! The second lieutenant called.’*

*Yes Sir!*

*‘See this man to the road block’*

*But Excuse me...’*

*‘You have been dismissed unless you want to be one of them’ ...*

*There was a shot and then another and then three more and Osime could see two bodies lying on the ground away from the wall and five soldiers were holding their guns and pushing one of the remaining seven away from the wall, into the space that led to the banks of the river, then there were four more shots and another body lay on the ground. Even as he looked, Osime saw his landlord break away from the rest of the group and make a run for the river.*

*There were immediate shouts but the soldiers let him run for some time...then just as he reached the bank of the river, there was a sudden outburst of gunfire. It looked for a moment as Mr. Ohiali would make the river. Then he seemed to bend over backwards and crumble as the bullets hitting him first propelled him forward and then broke his back and he fell not forward but on his back, his face twisted, his hands frantically but unconsciously trying to push his intestines back into his stomach as they come out of the large gaping hole in his belly.*

*Osime watched and could not believe his eyes and all of a sudden he felt very sick and was holding his stomach and bending over the grass and the vomit came out of his mouth and water came out of his eyes. The lance corporal watched him and turned his face away and spat on the grass twice.*

*‘Do you still want to see the Captain?’ he asked.*

*‘Yes.’ Osime nodded and gathered up two handfuls of sand and covered the vomit with it and wiped his eyes with the back of his hand and stood up. ‘Now can I see him (Festus Iyayi, *Heroes* 55-57. You can read the novel or just chapter seven to get a fuller grasp of the atmosphere and tone)*

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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

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

Iyayi, F. (1986). *Heroes*. Harlow Essex: Longman

Lubbock, P. (1921). *The Craft of Fiction*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Roscoe, A. (1981). *Mother is Gold*. London: Cambridge University Press.

## **UNIT 4: TYPES OF PROSE FICTION**

### **CONTENTS**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Novel

3.1.1 The Picaresque Novel

3.1.2 Gothic Novel

3.1.3 Epistolary

3.1.4 Historical

3.1.5 Social/Sociological

3.1.6 Bildungsroman

3.1.7 Psychological

3.1.8. Political/Novel of Ideas

3.1.9 Magic/Magical Realism

3.2 The Novelette

3.3 The Short Story

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor- Marked Assignment

7.0 References/ Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Prose fiction is distinguished from other forms of prose because of its artistic merit, fictional base, and its design to create an epic totality of life, based on history, contemporary issues and the individual. The portrayal of life in prose fiction is done at different levels by different authors using different styles giving rise to different types of fiction. The basic types of prose fiction include novels, novelettes, short stories, novella, [fables, fairy tales]. In some

categorizations, “films, comic books and video games” are regarded as prose fiction (McKeon 30). Apart from the basic types we also have others like science and philosophical fiction.

- **Science Fiction:** This is the branch of prose fiction that combines entertainment and scientific speculation.
- **Philosophical Fiction:** Philosophical fiction is an amalgam of fiction and philosophy that sometimes tilts towards propaganda.

These kinds of fictions constitute thought experiments exploring consequences of certain technologies or philosophies. There may be other types but in this course we will concern ourselves with the novel, the novelette and the short story which are the basic and popular types.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, should be able to

- List types of prose fiction
- Identify each major type
- List and explain different types of novel

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 The Novel

**Definition:** *The Oxford Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines the novel as a fictional prose narrative or tale presenting the picture of real life, especially the emotional crises in the life-history of the men and women portrayed. In *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, the novel is defined as “a fictitious prose narrative of considerable length, portraying characters, actions, or scenes representative of real life in a plot of more or less intricacy” (Harmsworth 78). It is a long narrative in literary prose that has its historical roots both in the medieval and early modern romance and in the tradition of the novella. The present generic term “novel” is coined from the Italian word *novella* which means “a compact prose tale of somewhat longer length than the short story” (Kayode-Iyasere 113). In many European countries, the novel is known as *roman* which means new or a link to the early romance.

The medium of communication for the novel and other types of prose fiction is print and paper which accelerated the evolution and spread of this literary genre.

**Origin:** The term *novel* refers back to the production of short stories that remained part of a European oral culture of storytelling in form of fairy tales, jokes, little funny stories designed to make a point in a conversation; the exemplum a priest would insert in a sermon belong to this tradition. These stories were later collected, written and circulated in a wide range of products from practical compilations of examples designed for the use of clerics to such poetic cycles like Boccaccio’s *Decameron* or *The Canterbury Tales* as we saw in the last unit. The origin of the novel is usually traced to these early writings. Also, the European tradition of the novel as the genre of extended prose fiction is rooted in the tradition of medieval “romances”. There are many types of novel but we will illustrate with the major ones.

#### 3.1.1 The Picaresque Novel.

**Meaning:** The picaresque novel is taken from the Spanish word "*picaresca*", from "*pícaro*", which means "rogue" or "rascal". However in the English -speaking world, the term "picaresque" refers more to a literary technique or a model than to the precise genre that the Spanish call *picaresco* (Mckeeon 20). The English-language term refers to an episodic recounting of the adventures of the central character.

**Origin:** This type of novel originated in Spain, where it was possibly influenced by Arabic literature, which also featured the episodic exploits of a rogue character. It flourished in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and continues to influence modern literature. It was also popular in the Classical world and Petronius's "Satyricon" and Apuleius's "The Golden Ass", known as "Milesian tales", are the last two surviving examples of the genre of that age (Burgess 32). Also, Medieval Arabic literature have novels with similar themes and structures that are comparable to later European picaresque novels.

**Modern Period:** In England, Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) is considered picaresque although some scholars feel that it lacks the "...sense of religious redemption of delinquency" that was considered vital in the Spanish version (Price 16). Also the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West* is considered to have considerable picaresque elements and since it was written in 1590, it is contemporary but may not "have been directly influenced by the European genre" (Ezeigbo 6).

**Composition:** It is a popular sub-genre of prose fiction which is usually satirical and depicts, in realistic and often humorous details, the adventures of a roguish hero of low social class who lives by his wits in a corrupt society. The hero is often a rascal, often mischievous, shrewd wicked and roguish, but charming and somehow likable in a way as he or she gets involved in a long succession of adventures and escapades.

**Examples:** Henry Fielding proved his mastery of the form in *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743) and *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), but, he claimed that he wrote these novels in imitation of the manner of Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote* and not in imitation of the picaresque novel. In spite of his view, these works have the characteristics of the picaresque. Also, Charles Dickens who was influenced by Fielding, wrote his first six novels in the picaresque form. Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and NkemNwankwo's *Danda* are other examples of the picaresque novel.

### 3.1.2 Gothic Novel

**Meaning/Origin:** The term "Gothic" originally referred to a prominent Germanic or Teutonic tribe in medieval Europe called Goths. English Gothic writers often associated medieval buildings with a dark and terrifying period, characterized by harsh laws enforced by torture, with mysterious, fantastic, and superstitious rituals. The Gothic novel is believed to have been invented by the English author Horace Walpole, with his 1764 novel, *The Castle of Otranto*. Gothic literature emerged as a "rejection of the clarity and rationalism of the neoclassical style of the Enlightened Establishment" (Bloom 68). This novel is linked to the ruins of gothic buildings which are believed to be a representation of the inevitable decay and collapse of human creations. It is also identified with the development of sentimentality as



well as with the cult of the mysterious, the abominable, the absolute atrocities of the dark ages. If the element of verisimilitude is fundamental in the classification of a prose work as novel, then one may be tempted to exclude the gothic novel because some of the incidents and characters are not realistic.

**Features:** Melodrama and parody (including self-parody) are some of the features of the gothic novel. It represents an appreciation of the joys of extreme emotion, the thrills of fearfulness and awe inherent in the sublime. It contains such atrocious crimes as horror, fantasies, kidnapping, rape, sodomy, terror, and murder. Prominent features of Gothic fiction include the portrayal of terror (both psychological and physical) and mysterious situations and incidents. The gothic novel which is sometimes referred to as gothic horror is a genre of literature that combines elements of horror and romance. It is seen as a presentation of a pleasing sort of terror, an extension of Romantic literary pleasures and was popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Themes:** The themes treated include darkness, death, decay, madness, secrets, and hereditary curses. Some of the novels are satirical because the "...excesses, stereotypes, and frequent absurdities of the traditional Gothic made it rich territory for satire" (Skarda,32).

**Characters:** The characters are mainly stock characters. They include tyrants, villains, bandits, maniacs, Byronic heroes, persecuted maidens, femme fatales, monks, nuns, madwomen, magicians, vampires, demons, angels, fallen angels, revenants, perambulating skeletons, the wandering Jew and the Devil himself. In such novels therefore you may find out that the characters are made up of humans, weird beings, uncanny and creepy creatures, monsters, the supernatural and ghosts.

**Setting:** The gothic architecture of the medieval period is said to have inspired this genre of the novel. Consequently, the novel is usually set in the medieval period of the Dark Ages. The actions take place in the very tall buildings like castles with dungeons, mansions, secret passages, hidden chambers of horrors, monasteries, often remote, crumbling, and ruined and other dark places of the medieval period.

**Plot:** The basic plot of the gothic novel presents a threatening mystery and an ancestral curse, as well as countless trappings such as hidden passages and fainting heroines. This plot is also marked by the suffering of an innocent heroine oppressed by a wicked and debauched villain. Other features of the plot include the presence of ghosts, mysterious happenings and disappearances which might be given credible explanations later in the novel. The actions are manipulated to evoke terror and horror in the reader.

**Influence:** The gothic novel influenced later novelists in two ways: parody and imitation.

**Parody:** Some novelists wrote parodies of the Gothic novel and the most famous is Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818) in which the naive protagonist, after reading too much Gothic fiction, conceives herself a heroine of a Radcliffian romance and imagines murder and villainy on every side. Another example of Gothic parody in a similar vein is *The Heroine* by Eaton Stannard Barrett (1813). In the novel, Cherry Wilkinson, a fatuous female protagonist with a history of novel-reading, fancies herself as the heroine of a Gothic

romance. She perceives and models reality according to the stereotypes and typical plot structures of the Gothic novel, leading to a series of absurd events culminating in catastrophe. After her downfall, her affectations and excessive imaginations become eventually subdued by the voice of reason in the form of Stuart, a paternal figure, under whose guidance the protagonist receives a sound education and correction of her misguided taste (Skarda 31).

**Imitation:** The gothic novel influenced some novelists like Charles Dickens and many others. The direct influence of the gothic novel is evident in the gloomy villain, forbidding mansion, and persecuted heroine found in Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* (1864) and also Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Charles Dickens was said to have read gothic novels as a teenager and incorporated their gloomy atmosphere and melodrama into his own works but located the action in a more modern period and an urban setting. These works are *Oliver Twist* (1837-8) and *Bleak House* (1854) in which he juxtaposed a wealthy, ordered and affluent civilisation next to the disorder and barbarity of the poor within the same metropolis. *Bleak House* in particular is credited with seeing the introduction of urban fog to the novel, which became a frequent characteristic of urban Gothic literature and film (Mighall 22). The mood and themes of the gothic novel held a particular fascination for the Victorians, with their morbid obsession with mourning rituals, mementos and mortality in general.

**Example:** *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is usually regarded as the first Gothic novel but one of the best and popular example is Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The writers were inspired by the Gothic architecture and perhaps imagined what must have transpired in such buildings. They have been concerned with the ruins of such once magnificent building and related it to human life that blossomed at a time and was ruined later by age and death.

For instance, Horace Walpole, whose *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is often regarded as the first true gothic romance was inspired by Gothic architecture. He said that he was so obsessed with medieval gothic architecture "that he built his own house, Strawberry Hill, in that form, sparking a fashion for gothic revival" (Punter 177). He declared that in the novel, he wanted to combine elements of the medieval romance, which he deemed too fanciful, and the modern novel, which he considered to be too confined to strict realism (Punter 178). This confirms my assertion above that in terms of realism in the novel, gothic novel should not be classified as such.

In America, two notable writers of the end of the 19th century wrote in the Gothic tradition. They are Ambrose Bierce and Robert W. Chambers who presented a horrific, pessimistic, and decadent tradition in their works.

### 3.1.3 Epistolary Novel.

**Meaning:** An epistolary novel is a novel written as a series of documents. The usual form is letters, although diary entries, newspaper clippings and other documents are sometimes used. Recently, electronic "documents" such as recordings and radio, blogs, and e-mails have also come into use. The word *epistolary* comes from the Latin word *epistola*, meaning a letter. The epistolary form can add greater realism to a story, because it mimics the workings of real

life. It is thus able to demonstrate differing points of view without recourse to the device of an omniscient narrator.

**Origin:** There are two schools of thought on the genesis of the epistolary novel. The first claims that the genre originated from novels with inserted letters, in which the portion containing the third person narrative in between the letters was gradually reduced. (Doody 76) The other view claims that the epistolary novel arose from miscellanies of letters and poetry in which some of the letters were tied together into a (mostly amorous) plot. (McKeon 65) The first truly epistolary novel is the Spanish "Prison of Love" (*Cárcel de amor*) (c.1485) by Diego de San Pedro in which a large number of inserted letters dominated the narrative. The origin of the genre in English novel is traced to James Howell (1594–1666) with "Familiar Letters". He writes of prison, foreign adventure, and the love of women.

**Development:** The epistolary novel as a genre became popular in the 18th century in the works of such authors as Samuel Richardson, with his immensely successful novels *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1749). In France, there was *Lettres Persanes* (1721) by Montesqui, followed by *Julie ou la Nouvelle Heloise* (1761) by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. These writers used the epistolary form to great dramatic effect, because the sequence of events was not always related directly or explicitly. In Germany, there was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Die Leiden des Jungen Werther* (1774) (*The Sorrows of young Werther*) and Friedrich Holderlin's *Hyperion*. The first North American novel, *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) by Frances Brooke was written in the epistolary form.

Types: there are three types of epistolary novel: the monologic, dialogic and polylogic.

- **Monologic:** In this style, the letter is given to only one character, like in Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*.
- **Dialogic:** In this case the narrative, in form of letters are presented by two characters, like in Mme Marie Jeanne Riccoboni's *Letters of Fanni Butlerd* (1757).
- **Polylogic:** This has three or more letter-writing characters as we have in novels like *Clarissa*, and *Dangerous Liaisons*. One unique feature of this type is the "dramatic device of 'discrepant awareness' which is the simultaneous but separate correspondences of the heroines and the villains creating dramatic tension" (McKeon 52).

**Contemporary Examples:** of epistolary novel include Alice Walker's the *Color Purple* (1982). *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) was written by Stephen Chobsky in the form of letters from an anonymous character to a secret role model of sorts. Richard B Wright's *Clara Callan* (2001) uses letters and journal entries to weave the story of a middle-aged woman in the 1930s. *The Boy Next Door* (2002) by Meg Cabot is a romantic comedy novel that is presented entirely in form of emails sent among the characters. *Lemony Snicket: The Unauthorized Autobiography* (2002) by Lemony Snicket Daniel Handler uses letters, documents, and other scripts to construct the plotline. *We Need to Talk about Kevin* (2003) is a monologic epistolary novel, written as a series of letters to the narrator's husband Franklin.

**Criticism:** Some scholars believe that the occurrence of letters within letters in epistolary novels might confuse readers about the point of view of a given section of the work.

### 3.1.4 Historical Novel

**Meaning:** Historical novel as the name implies is based on some historical events. In this type of novel, the characters and events are taken from history. It is a genre in which the plot is set amidst historical events, or more generally, in which the author uses real events but adds one or more fictional characters or events, or changes the sequence of historical events. Historical fiction may centre on historical or on fictional characters, but usually represents an honest attempt based on considerable research (or at least serious reading) to tell a story set in the historical past as understood by the author's contemporaries.

**Origin:** The origin of the historical novel is traced to Luo Guanzhong's 14<sup>th</sup>-Century *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, which covers one of the most important periods of Chinese history. In Western Europe, the pioneer of the genre was the German author, Benedikte Naubert (1756-1819), who wrote 50 historical novels. Her technique of focusing attention on a person of minor historical significance and witnessing events through his eyes was borrowed by Sir Walter Scott who had read her works. However, some scholars trace the origin of modern historical novel to Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

**Development/Effects:** The historical novel was popularized in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by artists classified as Romantics. Many regard Sir Walter Scott as the first novelist to have used this technique, in his novels of Scottish history such as *Waverley* (1814) and *Rob Roy* (1818). His *Ivanhoe* (1820) gains credit for renewing interest in the Middle Ages. Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831) and Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* are other early examples of the historical novel. The effect of early historical novels is that they played an important role in the rise of European popular interest in the history of the Middle Ages. Hugo's *Hunchback*, for instance, is given credit as the catalyst for fueling the movement to save Gothic architecture in France. This led to the establishment of the *Monuments historiques*, by the French government for historic preservation. Also, Scott's novels ignited public interest in Scottish history and still illuminate it while Sigrid Undset's *Kristin Lavransdatter* fulfilled a similar function for Norwegian history and later won a Nobel Prize for Literature (1928). Some writers of historical novel have been able to distance themselves from their own time and place in order to gain perspective on society and on the human condition while recounting a historical event fictitiously. Robert Stevenson's *Kidnapped* recounts mostly private adventures set against the backdrop of the Jacobite troubles in Scotland while Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* is based on the French Revolution.

### 3.1.5 Social/Sociological

**Origin:** The social or sociological novel, also known as social problem novels or realist fiction, originated in the eighteenth century England but gained popularity in the nineteenth century with the rise of the Victorian Era. It was also seen in many ways as a reaction to industrialization, social, political and economic issues and movements. The social problem novels were not confined to England but were written throughout Europe and the United

States. An example is the Russian author, Leo Tolstoy, who championed reform for his own country, particularly in education and added his novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

**Features:** The social novel deals mostly with the impact of economic and social conditions of a period on characters and events around him. It is also concerned with the culture of a people and their way of life. In Victorian England, for instance, the social novel became an instrument of protest and for creating awareness on abuses of government, industry and other repercussions suffered by the working class in England. The novel presented sensational accounts and stories of the working class poor with the intention of eliciting the sympathy of the middle class who may help to advocate legal and moral changes in the society.

**Types:** There are two major types of the social novel: the industrial and the moral types. The industrial novel focused on the country's working class in the rural and urban towns. It relayed deplorable conditions in factories and mines, the plight of child labour and endangered women, and the constant threat of rising criminality, epidemics due to overcrowding and poor sanitation. The moral novels presented a moral or supernatural element that linked "reform to Christianity and played on the perception that the middle class were more economically sound and also more devoted to their religion, therefore more prone to assist the lower classes before the aristocracy"(Davis 66). An example of this was Charles Dicken's *Christmas Carol* where the lead character Scrooge is instructed by several ghosts to live a Christian life and help his less fortunate neighbours and employees.

**Examples:** Some of the social novel writers and their works are; Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*(1838) *Hard Times* (1854), George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*(1883), John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Ngugi WaThiongo's *Weep Not Child* (1964), and many others. However, a novel could be classified under two types, for instance, Chinua Achebe's *Things fall Apart* contains historical elements so could pass as a historical novel.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise.**

Explain the main preoccupation of the social novel.

### **3.1.6. Bildungsroman**

**Origin:** Bildungsroman which in German means "novel of formation" or "novel of education" is a genre of the novel which focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood. It emerged during the German enlightenment and it evolved from folk tales of a dunce or a youngest son going out in the world to seek his fortune. Usually in the beginning of the story there is an emotional loss which makes the protagonist decide to undertake his journey.

**Characteristics:** The genre is characterized by a number of formal, topical and thematic features. It tells a story about the growing up or coming of age of a sensitive person who is looking for answers and experience. The aim of the novel is to present maturity, so change is important. The protagonist achieves maturity gradually and with difficulty and there is

usually a main conflict between him and society. Typically, the values of society are gradually accepted by the protagonist and he is ultimately accepted into society. This acceptance ends the protagonist's mistakes and disappointments. In some works, the protagonist is able to reach out and help others once the maturity is achieved.

**Plot:** Usually, the plot follows a certain pattern in which the protagonist grows from child to adult in the novel. At an early stage, a loss or some sort of discontent pushes him or her away from home or the family setting, providing an impetus to embark on a journey. This main character often develops through "self-actualization". The process of maturation is "long, strenuous and gradual, involving repeated clashes between the protagonist's needs and desires and the views and judgments enforced by an unbending social order". (Minden) There are some novels whose plots are similar to the bildungsroman. For instance, a military story might show a new recruit undergoing a baptism by fire and becoming a battle-hardened soldier, while a fantasy quest story may show a transformation from an adolescent protagonist into an adult who becomes aware of his or her lineage or powers. However neither of these story types corresponds exactly to the bildungsroman (Jeffers 16). Charles Dicken's *David Copperfield* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* are good or classical examples of this fictional type in English literature.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

List three examples of the bildungsroman and their authors.

#### **3.1.7 Psychological Novel**

**Meaning:** The psychological novel, which is also referred to as psychological realism, is a work of prose fiction which places emphasis on the motives, circumstances, and internal action which springs from the interior of the character, and manifests in the external action. The psychological novel states what happens and in addition explains the motives behind this action.

**Origin:** *The Tale of Genji*, written in 11th century Japan, has often been considered the first psychological novel. In the West some scholars trace the origin of the psychological novel to Giovanni Boccaccio's *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta* (1344) while others insist that the first psychological novel as a genre started with the sentimental novel like Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. (Bayam 1697).

**Features:** In this type of writing character and characterization are very important, and the novelists often delve deeper into the mind of a character than in other types of novels. The psychological novel can be called a novel of the "inner man," as it explores the minds of characters rather than the physical aspects or the external reality in which the characters operate. In some cases, the stream of consciousness, flashbacks and interior monologues are some of the techniques that may be employed for better illustration of the inner workings of the human mind. The stream of consciousness technique has been adopted by modern authors as they describe in details what goes on in their character's mind. This is presented in an "unbroken flow of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the unconscious minds of characters in the novel" (Ezeigbo 10).

**Examples:** Some of the examples of writers and their works are: James Joyce's *Ulysses*(1922), Virginia Woolf's *Mrs.Dalloway*(1952) and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

### **3.1.8 Political/Novel of Ideas**

As the name implies, political novel deals with politics or the science and art of government. It presents "the art of the possible, the strategies and tactics of governance, and the whole business of organizational intrigue: the maneuvering for power and advantage and the interplay of Machiavellian forces and characters" (Ezeigbo). These novels deal with issues of good and evil, justice and injustice, hate and love as the characters scheme and seek political positions. The novelists believe in Aristotle's dictum that man is a 'political animal' so could not be excluded from the game of politics, with its carefully orchestrated power-play. Characters and the setting are given prominence in this type of novel.

**Examples:** Some examples of this genre of the novel are Joseph Conrad's *Nostramo*(1904), Peter Abrahams's *A Wreath for Udomo*(1956), CyprianEkwensi's *Beautiful Feathers* (1963), Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), and Timothy Aluko's *Chief the Honourable Minister* (1970).

#### **Self-Assessment Exercise.**

Explain the focus of the political novel.

### **3.1.9 Magic/Magical Realism**

This term is used to describe the prose fiction of some Latin American writers and now also used to describe the works of other Third World writers who exhibit the same artistic/novelistic idiosyncrasies. The novels under this label contain a mixture of realism and fantasy. In other words, they are graphic representations of ordinary events and experiences presented in detailed descriptions, with elements of fantasy and surrealism. Other features of this type of fiction are dreamlike states, mythic elements and supernatural forces, as well as fairy-tales.

Well-known practitioners of this genre are Gabriel Garcia Marquez of Colombia who wrote *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967); Salman Rushdie's (India) *Midnight Children* (1981) and *Satanic Verses* (1988); and Ben Okiri's (Nigeria) *The Famished Road* (1991).

#### **Self-Assessment Exercise.**

List four features of the magical realism novel.

## **3.2 The Novella**

Novella is simply a term used for a miniature or short novel. It shares all the characteristics of the novel and can fall into any of the categories of the novel. However it is not as popular as the novel and sometimes, readers cannot differentiate between a novel and a novella. It is a written fictional prose narrative longer than a novelette but shorter than a novel. The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America Nebula Awards for science fiction defines the novella as having a word count of between 17,500 and 40,000. Other definitions start as low as 10,000 words and run as high as 70,000 words (*Wikipedia*).

The novella is regarded as one of the richest and most rewarding of literary forms because “it allows for more extended development of theme and character than does the short story, without making the elaborate structural demands of the full-length” book – the novel. It therefore provides an intense and detailed exploration of its subject by providing to some degree both the concentrated focus of the short story and the broad scope of the novel.

**Structure:** A novella has generally fewer conflicts than novels, yet more complicated ones than short stories. The conflicts also have more time to develop and their endings are usually located at the brink of change. Sometimes, they are not divided into chapters but in such cases, white space is often used to demarcate the sections (Barnet 312). Novellas are often intended to be read at a single sitting, just like the short story since they maintain a single effect.

In most cases, there are no subplots or multiple points of view. Most often it is concerned with personal and emotional development rather than with the larger social sphere. The novella “generally retains something of the unity of impression that is a hallmark of the short story, but it also contains more highly developed characterization and more luxuriant description” (Obstfeld 40). The Germans were the most active writers of the *Novelle* (in their language) and for them it is a fictional narrative of indeterminate length—a few pages to hundreds—restricted to a single, suspenseful event, situation, or conflict leading to an unexpected turning point, provoking a logical, but surprising end.

**Origin:** The English word “novella” is derived from the Italian word “novella”, feminine of “novello” which means new. For the Germans it is “Novelle” ; plural: “Novellen”. (Wikipedia) The novella is a common literary genre in several European languages and the idea of the novellas dates back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century prose narrative, *Arabian Night* but as a literary genre its origin is traced to the early renaissance literary work like Giovanni Boccaccio’s *The Decameron*. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the novella was fashioned into a literary genre structured by precepts and rules (McKeon 24).

**Examples:** English language novellas include George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and The Sea*, Charles Dicken’s *A Christmas Carol*, Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. However, opinions are divided on the classification of these works as novella instead of novel.

### 3.3 The Short Story

The short story is a genre of prose fiction that is usually written in prose, often in narrative format. This format tends to be more pointed than longer works of fiction, such as novellas and novels or books. A short story is defined based on the length but this differs somewhat even among professional writers. Since the short story format includes a wide range of genres and styles, the actual length is determined by the individual author's preference. Another major determinant of the length of a short story is the submission guidelines that are relevant to the story's actual market. Guidelines vary greatly among publishers. Many short story writers define their work through a combination of creative, personal expression and artistic integrity. Consequently, definitions of the short story based upon length splinter even



more when the writing process is taken into consideration. Short stories are usually used for literary competitions so the organizers often stipulate guidelines for submission.

A classic definition of a short story is that one should be able to read it in one sitting, a point most notably made in Edgar Allan Poe's essay, "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846). In contemporary usage, the term short story most often refers to a work of prose fiction that is not longer than 20,000 words and not shorter than 1,000.

**Origin:** Short stories have their roots in oral story-telling traditions and the prose anecdote, a swiftly sketched situation that quickly comes to its point. The art of story-telling is doubtlessly older than the record of civilization. Perhaps the oldest and most direct ancestor of the short story is the anecdote and illustrative story, straight to the point. The ancient parable and fable, starkly brief narrative used to enforce some moral or spiritual truth, are reflected in many contemporary short stories.

Short story in written form dates back to oral story-telling traditions which originally produced epics such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Oral narratives were often told in the form of rhyming or rhythmic verse, often including recurring sections or, in the case of Homer, Homeric epithets. Such stylistic devices aided recall, rendition and adaptation of the story. Short sections of verse might focus on individual narratives that could be told at one sitting. Another school of thought traces the origin to fables invented in the 6th century BC by a Greek slave named Aesop. These ancient fables are today known as Aesop Fables. The other ancient form of short story was the anecdote and they functioned as a sort of parable, a brief realistic narrative that embodies a lesson.

**Characteristics:** Short stories tend to be less complex than novels. Usually a short story focuses on one incident, has a single plot, a single setting, a small number of characters, and covers a short period of time. A typical pattern in a short story could be presented with exposition, complication, climax and resolution as in longer forms of fiction. However, some short stories may not follow this pattern while some do not follow any patterns at all. For example, modern short stories only occasionally have an exposition. More typical, though, is an abrupt beginning, with the story starting in the middle of the action (*in medias res*). As with longer stories, plots of short stories also have a climax, crisis, or turning point. However, the endings of many short stories are abrupt and open. As with any art form, the exact characteristics of a short story vary by its creator.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

There are many types of prose fiction. The genre evolved from storytelling traditions of various societies in the world, epic narratives, and romance to the present form. In modern prose fiction, the novel, the novella and the short story are the most popular genres. The novel stands out among the rest but for any prose fiction to be classified as a novel, it must present an element of verisimilitude. This explains why thriller and some other melodramatic prose fictions are not classified as novel. The short story and the novella share the same characteristics with the novel but they are shorter in length. The length also differentiates the novella from the short story as the latter is shorter than the former.

## 5.0SUMMARY

We have seen in this unit that the novel, the short story and the novella are the main genres of prose fiction. The novel is the most popular and there are many types of novel. Basically, all these types are the same in terms of the presentation of an aspect of life but they differ in terms of style. The author's intent, to a large extent affects the work. A writer of a historical novel would embark on a research to be able to situate the work appropriately in its historical period. On the other hand, a picaresque novelist needs only to tell an interesting adventurous story which could be from his/her imagination or based on events or experiences.

## 6.0 TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENT

List five types of novel and explain one of them.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READINGS

Abrams, M. H. (2005). *Glossary of Literary Terms* (8th ed.). Boston: Thomson Wadsworth.

Alexander, A. P. (2009). *Literature and the Delinquent: The Picaresque Novel in Spain and Europe, 1599-1753*. Madrid: Visor Libros.

Barnet, S., Morton Barman and William Burto (1987). *Literature for Composition*. 2nd Edition. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman & Company.

Bloom, C. (2007). *Gothic Horror: A Guide for Students and Readers*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

British Fantasy Awards Constitution (Wikipedia Accessed 17 Sept 2009).

Burgess, A. ().

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

Fuchs, B. (2004). *Romance*. London: Routledge.

Kayode-Iyasere, W. (1997). "The Novel and Its Types" in R. A. Masagbored. *The Way of Prose Fiction: Exploratory Perspectives*. Benin City: Headmark.

Magill, F. (1997). *Short Story Writers*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. California: Salem Press.

McKeon, M. (1987). *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

McKeon, M. (2000) *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*. Baltimore: Johns

Hopkins University Press.

Mighall, R. (2003). *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mighall, R. (2007). "Gothic Cities", in C. Spooner and E. McEvoy, eds, *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*. London: Routledge.

Morrell, J. P. (2006). *Between the Lines: Master the Subtle Elements of Fiction Writing*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books.

*Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*. (Accessed 7 Mar 2010)

Obstfeld, R. (2002). *Fiction First Aid: Instant Remedies for Novels, Stories and Scripts*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books.

Punter, D. (2004). *The Gothic*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.

Price, Leah (2003). *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to*

*George Eliot*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Sanderson, Mark (4 November 2003). "The Picaresque in Detail". Telegraph (UK). <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3605787/The-picaresque-in-detail.html>.

Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America Awards FAQ. (Accessed 16 May 2009).

Selgin, P. (2007). *By Cunning & Craft: Sound Advice and Practical Wisdom for Fiction Writers*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books.

Skarda, P. (1986). "Gothic Parodies". In Jack Sullivan ed. (1986) *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*, 178-9.

Sullivan J. ed. (1986) *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*, 178-9.

Woods, George, Homer A. Watt and George K. Anderson (1936) Chicago: Scott, Foresman & Company

## **UNIT 5 THE RISE/DEVELOPMENT**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Reading Class
  - 3.2 Circulating Libraries
  - 3.3 Leisure
  - 3.4 Shift in Reading Taste
  - 3.5 Printing Press
  - 3.6 Colonial Influence (for African novel)
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Prose fiction is a product of man's imagination and literary creativity which took several centuries to develop to its present form. It started with the traditional story-telling, the epic through romance which is the first fictitious narrative in prose. The French romance influenced European writings for centuries as it brought to "... the English Novel the gift of sustained and complex form and architectonic beauty"(Ezeigbo 2). Apart from the contributions of the likes of Geoffrey Chaucer, Malory, Boccaccio and others who initiated and continued the tradition of fictional narrative either in verse or in prose, other influences flamed the embers of the narrative form to the present genre of prose fiction, especially the novel which is the most popular type.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVE**

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

- Trace the development of prose fiction
- List the factors that contributed to the rise and development of prose fiction
- Discuss the contribution of each influence

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

The evolution of prose fiction required cheap carrier media. Unlike verse, prose can hardly be remembered with precision. Oral traditions had helped prose narrators with stock narrative patterns as employed in fairy tales with or without complex plot structures. However, these stories were not as long as prose fiction which needed a medium that would enable the storyteller tell the story correctly. It is important for us to draw a distinction between the narratives in oral traditions and the prose fiction. The oral narrative is rendered orally in a particular community. The Prose fiction we are discussing in this material, on the other hand, is expected to be read beyond the immediate environment of the author because they are written and printed so could be circulated to many places. Below are some of the factors that aided the rise and development of the new genre.

#### **3.1 Availability of Paper**

Before the 1450s volumes of verse epics were presented in parchment and their owners recited them on festive occasions. The parchment was too expensive to be used for stories that one would read for leisure but was prestigious. Consequently, only libraries and a few wealthy individuals could afford them. Later, in the course of the 14th and 15th centuries, prose legends became fashionable among the female urban elite who needed to read these books again and again for inspirational purposes so the need for mass production arose.

Fortunately, paper was introduced as a carrier medium and this accelerated the development of prose fiction because paper made the production of cheap books possible. Consequently, one could then buy a book exclusively for one's private diversion to be read as many times as possible. This created an avenue for production of books in large quantity as the existence of paper in different formats and sizes aided the production of books which someone could carry about or kept to be read at ease privately at home or in public without the support of a table. It became fashionable as part of the early modern reading culture for people to read novels in coffee houses or on journeys. The reader who immerses him- or herself in the novel and wishes to stay undisturbed or to be disturbed only with a look at his or her reading is here an early modern precursor of the modern commuter reading a novel or putting on headphones with the intention to stay private in the public.

#### **3.1 Literacy/The Reading Class**

Literacy spread among the urban populations of Europe due to a number of factors: Women of wealthier households had learned to read in the 14th and 15th centuries and had become consumers of prose fiction. The Protestant Reformation enkindled propaganda and press wars that lasted into the 18th century so people followed the events by reading the articles. Consequently broadsheets and newspapers became the new media of public information. The early modern customers even learnt to read and write through these publications and writing

skills spread among apprentices and women of the middle classes. The personal letter became a favourite medium of communication among 17th-century men and women.

Popular titles sold more as people bought them not necessarily because of the subject matter but "...because they were the books everyone had heard of, or books of an eternal value to be chosen if one was not too sure about one's abilities to judge. The prefaces exploited these insecurities praising the solid value of the old and well known titles" (Woods et al 456). Prose fiction became in this situation the medium of open secrets, rumours, private and public gossip, a private, unscientific and irrelevant reading matter, yet one of public relevance as one could openly see that the book one was reading had reached the public as part of a larger edition.

Whether in 11th-century Japan or 15th-century Europe, prose fiction tended to have developed intimate reading situations. Individualistic fashions, personal views, intimate feelings, secret anxieties, "conduct" and "gallantry" spread with novels and people wanted to be part of this new culture. Love became the typical field of experience that prose fiction explored. The reader is invited to personally identify with the novel's characters and a large number of this reading public was more noticeable in the towns and cities where the literacy level has increased considerably.

### **3.2 Circulating Libraries**

The establishment of circulating libraries in Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> century also contributed to the development of prose fiction. Subscription rate was cheap and affordable and they stocked wide varieties of prose fiction. It is difficult for one to buy all the published works, so many people patronized the library. Also, some tradesmen, housewives, farmers, shopkeepers who could not afford to buy the books were opportuned to borrow them from the libraries thereby increasing the demand for prose fiction.

### **3.3 Leisure**

Prose Fiction was no longer a predominantly aristocratic entertainment around 1700 in England. However printed books gained the power to reach readers of almost all classes, the reading habits differed as more people irrespective of class tried "to follow fashions" by reading more books. In France, their works taught new, on the surface freer, gallant exchange between the sexes as the essence of life at the French court. Aristocratic and bourgeois customers sought distinctly French authors to offer the authentic style of conversations in the 1660s.

Within this period in England, literature became the primary preoccupation of women. They participated fully in learning and reading because "they have more spare time on their hands, and led a more sedentary life..." (Joseph Addison *Guardian* 1713. No 155 quoted in Obstfield). Women of the aristocratic and middle classes were left on their own most of the times because "most men led full and busy lives and were hardly at home for most of the day, weeks or even months depending on their profession" (Ezeigbo 5). As the women did not participate in their husbands' leisure activities, they spent their time in reading voraciously for their own leisure. In addition, the affluent families had nannies, valets and servants who

did all the household chores so the ladies and their daughters had time to read as many novels as possible.

The women of the lower class were not left out. After the industrial revolution, these women had more time for leisure because they now had access to factory-made goods like soaps, bread, cloth and other household goods which were previously produced manually by them. They therefore spent their leisure in reading literature to entertain themselves and since prose fiction is easier and simpler to read than poetry and drama, more novels and short stories were produced to cater for the interest of this reading public.

### **3.4 Shift in Reading Taste**

In the medieval period, most literate people in Britain read the Bible and other devotional works at their leisure. The industrial revolution brought with it economic and social transformation as well as increase in secular interests and people combined their religious inclinations with secular tastes. Consequently more people devoted their leisure to reading literature instead of religious books and the writers continued with innovations as time went on to meet the changing tastes of the reading public. Readers of fiction were made to experience another life in an intimate privacy of fiction. Topical issues became the subject matter of fiction. For instance, Charles Dickens led the audience into contemporary British workhouses as his novels presented firsthand accounts of child labour and crime became a personal reality with Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (Barnet et al 98).

The exploration of the individual's perception eventually revolutionized the very modes of writing fiction. The potentially isolated hero that stood at the centre of romantic fictions since the Middle Ages gave way to the early novel(la) that placed the story itself at the centre: it was driven by plot, by incident and accident, rather than being the story of a single larger-than-life figure. However, the individual reappeared with characters like Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, Pamela, and Clarissa that reintroduced the old romantic focus on the individual as the centre of what was to become the modern novel.

Other countries of the world produced their own fiction to reflect their socio-political issues and some longed for national literatures with novels as the "essential production that could link the present with the past" (Obstfeld 23). Africans were not left out as Chinua Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* as a reaction to his perceived wrong portraiture of Africans in earlier novels by foreigners.

The search for one's personal style stood at the centre of the competition among authors, now that novelists had become publicly celebrated minds and contemporary novelists are stepping into new awareness, winning prestigious prizes and awards. They belong to various associations like the world association of writers P.E.N. Some of the authors are renowned both in their countries and abroad while the 'exiled author', who is celebrated by the international audience but is persecuted at home has become a common feature in contemporary times. The author that is seen as a keeper of his or her nation's conscience is a new cultural icon of the age of globalization.

The thematic preoccupation of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century novelists have expanded to include personal anxieties, daydreams, magic, crime, class stratification, political/military confrontations and hallucinatory experiences and more. The term "Kafkaesque" has joined the term "Orwellian" in common parlance to refer not only to aspects of literature, but is used in the world to refer to situations similar to the ones portrayed by the novelist in their works. In all these, the writers strive to meet the reading taste of their readers.

### **3.5 Printing Press**

The invention of printing immediately created a new market of comparatively cheap entertainment and knowledge – the market of chapbooks. The chapbooks presented a more elegant production which the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century authors propagated as the *belleslettres*. Later, it became the wider sphere in which the modern ensemble of "literary genres" of poetry and fiction gained greater cohesion in late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The belle lettres later gave way to the separation of the genres. The statistics of the genres printed showed that prose fiction was the highest. For instance, "The press output and the money made with fiction have risen disproportionately since the 18<sup>th</sup> century" (Barnet 132).

### **3.6 Literary Journals/Criticism**

The reviewing of fiction changed the situation for the fictional work in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It created a public discussion about what people were actually reading in novels. It had at the same moment the potential to divide the market into a sphere to be discussed and a low production critics would only hint at. The subcultures of trivial fiction and of genres to be sold under the counter with pornography as its most influential field followed the arrival of literary criticism in the 1740s and 1750s. Literary criticism published in newspaper and literary journals helped to popularize or bring down works and this in turn influenced the circulation of such works.

Constructive criticism has not left the world of fiction since its introduction from the earliest times. In Britain, literary criticism was evident in new entertaining journals like *The Spectator* and *The Tartler* at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Other literary journals emerged in the middle of the century with the offer of new, scientific reviews of art and fiction. By the 1780s, critical public reception constituted a new marketing platform for fiction, and authors and publishers recognized it as such. One could write to satisfy the old market or one could address the authors of secondary criticism and gain an audience through their discussions. Later, prose fiction was introduced in the curricula of school and university education and this further boosted the production of prose fiction aided by the availability of the printing press. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the public perception of the place of a particular novel was no longer supplied simply by social status and fashionable geographical provenance, but by critical media attention.

### **3.8 Colonial Influence (for African novel)**

The African prose fiction emerged after the colonization of the continent. Colonial masters brought their education and many Africans became literate. They began to read what the foreigners wrote about Africa in the works they published which they felt presented the



African in a very derogatory light. Consequently, these early educated Africans sought to correct the lopsided portraiture of the African by writing their own works in which they presented what they claim is the true picture of the African societies before the advent of colonialism. In addition the devastating effects of colonialism on Africa were also presented in those early works. Some of such works include CamaraLaye's *African Child*, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and FerdnandOyono's *The Old Man and The Medal*.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Prose fiction as a vibrant literary genre in its present form evolved over the centuries. It unfolds in a complex interaction between authors, their publishers, the reading public, literary criticism, and its inclusion in the curricula of schools. The latter provided through their branches of academic criticism many of the topics, the modes of discussion and to a good extent the experts themselves who teach and discuss literature in schools and in the media. Modern marketing of fiction reflects this complex interaction with awareness of the specific reverberations a new title must find in order to reach a wider audience.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have discussed the factors that contributed to the development of prose fiction. It is clear that the age, culture and other socio-political issues are reflected in prose fiction. Good authors are celebrated with awards and prizes and criticism can make or mar a prose fictional work. Authorstherefore strive for excellence through the improvement of their individual styles. This assures the acceptability and popularity of their works.

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

List the factors that contributed to the development of prose fiction and discuss one of them.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

- Barnet, Sylvan, Morton Barman and William Burto (1987). *Literature For Composition*. Second Edition. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman & Company.
- Ezeigbo, A. (1998). *A Companion to the Novel*. Lagos: Vista.
- Obstfeld, R. (2002). *Fiction First Aid: Instant Remedies for Novels, Stories and Scripts*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novel>
- Woods, George, Homer A. Watt and George K. Anderson (1936). *The Literature of England. Vol.1: From the Beginnings to the Romantic Movement*. Chicago: Scott, Foresman & Company.

## **MODULE 2 ELEMENTS OF PROSE FICTION**

Unit 1: Plot

Unit 2: Theme /Subject Matter

Unit 3: Characterisation

Unit 4: Setting

Unit 5: Language

## **UNIT 1: PLOT**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Plot
    - 3.1.1 Simple Plot
    - 3.1.2 Complex Plot
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In prose fiction, the author tells a story by dramatizing human conditions and human relationships. In doing this he/she uses characters to live out the experiences presented in the work as they engage in certain actions and involve themselves in series of events and incidents which are arranged in a particular sequence. This is plot. A story that is well arranged is presented in an artistically satisfying manner. Plot is one of the elements of prose fiction. Other elements are theme, subject matter, characterisation, setting, point of view and language. An author who deploys these elements effectively will produce an effective work. The first element, plot will be discussed in this unit.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

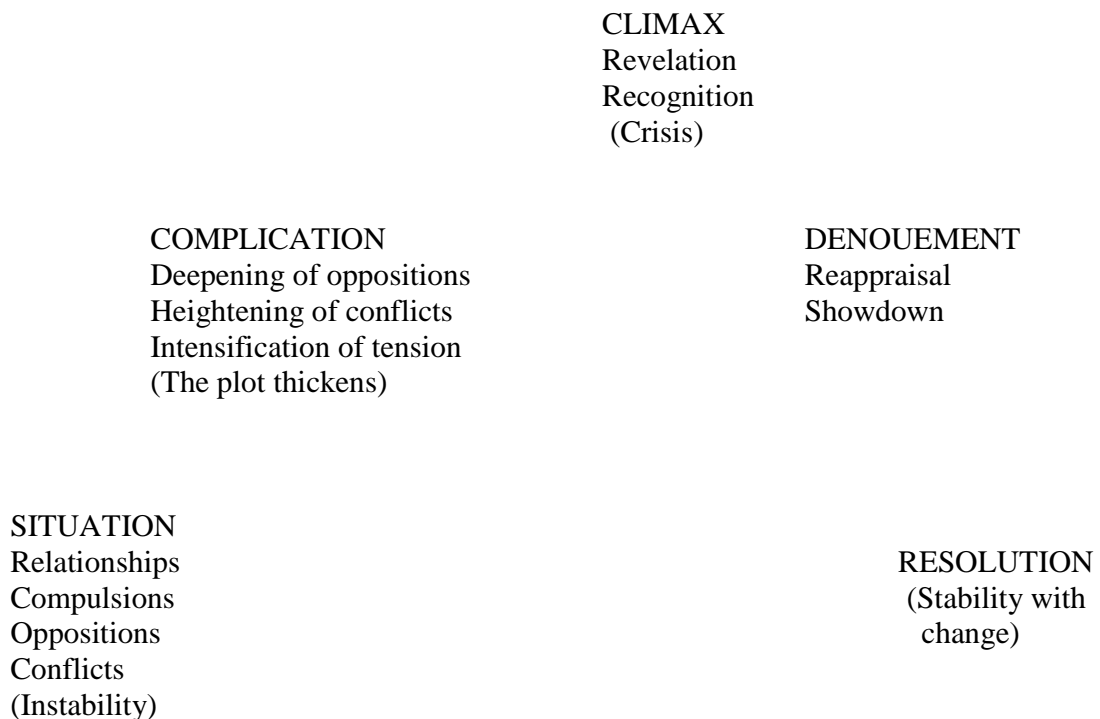
- Define plot.
- State the basic types of plot
- Identify each type of plot in a prose fictional work

- Identify a sub plot in a prose fictional work
- Differentiate between a story and a plot

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Plot

Plot, or storyline, is often listed as one of the fundamental elements of fiction. It is the rendering and ordering of the events and actions of a story. You have encountered plot in other course materials like *Elements of Drama* and *Creative Writing I*. Usually, plot has a beginning, middle, and an ending. Plot starts with a situation depicting the characters' interpersonal relationships and they are usually in conflict with each other or with an outside force. As the story progresses, the conflicts deepen, intensify and are heightened and lead to a complication of action and it rises to a climax and moves down to a resolution. This could be depicted as follows as presented by Oakley Hall (64):



M. H. Abrams, in his definition, states that “the plot in a ... narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered towards achieving particular emotional and artistic effects” (Abrams 159). In his own contribution, E. M. Forster explains that a story is a narrative ‘arranged in their time-sequence’ while plot is also a narrative of events with “emphasis falling on causality.” He goes ahead to illustrate: “The king died then the Queen died’ is a story but that ‘the king died and the queen died of grief’ is a plot. The time sequence is preserved but the sense of causality overshadows it (87). So what differentiates a

story from plot is that incidents in the plot unfolding are based on previous actions. However, this is not applicable to all types of plot. There are two basic types of plot: simple and complex plots.

### 3.1.1 Simple Plot

In simple plots, as the name implies, the incidents are presented in a simple straight forward manner. In this type of plot, the incidents or events are closely knit and are strung together in a linear sequence. This means that events and incidents are presented in a chronological order as one event leads to the other and the subsequent event is dependent on the preceding one. A very good example is Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. I know that most of you have read the novel but if you have not, do so immediately. In the novel, Okonkwo's father, Unoka is a lazy man so his son works hard to avoid his father's fate. Okonkwo inadvertently kills a man during a funeral ceremony and he is sent on exile. He would not have gone on exile if he did not kill the person. This is a very simple and popular novel, so, pick it and read and you will see that incidents follow one after another from the beginning to the end.

A simple plot, in most cases, presents the adventure of one character, usually the hero, from the beginning to the end. Other good examples are Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*.

### 3.1.2 Complex Plot

Complex plot as the name implies is more complicated than the simple plot. The story here does not run chronologically from the beginning to the end. In many cases, the story is presented in a disjointed manner and the reader will have to rearrange it to form a logical sequence. This type of plot, according to Ezeigbo "requires disentanglement" and it is a type in which "the author's point of view necessitates some rearrangement and realignment of circumstances or events" (11) for it to make meaning. We will again examine Chinua Achebe but this time, his novel, *No Longer at Ease*. The first chapter of the book presents Obi Okonkwo as he is caught in a bribery act and this is the incident that should have ended the novel. In this case, the novel starts from the last incident and the story starts to unfold after that. Consequently, at the end of the novel, the reader has to recast the plot as presented so as to piece the different parts together.

In some novels, there is a subplot which is a second story that is complete and interesting in its own but is integrated in the main plot in such a way that it forms part of the main story. A subplot that is well integrated helps to broaden the reader's perspective on the main plot so it concretises instead of diffusing the overall effect of the story.

**Subversion of Plot:** I have decided to add this section because you may find a novel that does not adhere to the principles of plot which we have discussed so far. The traditional concept of plot has been subverted since the first part of the 20th Century especially after the First World War when writers deviated from the conventional plot construction. These writers tried to recreate human experience, not strictly in the realistic form but from other perspectives of literary modes like absurd, modernism, structuralism post colonialism and many other forms. "Predictably, recent critical theories have radically eroded, interrogated, and revised many traditional concepts in the classification of plot" (Ezeigbo 12).

## **Self-Assessment Exercise**

List different types of plot and explain one of them.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Plot is the sequential arrangement of incidents in a literary work. In some works, the incidents may be arranged in a chronological causal sequence. This is called simple plot. In some other works, the incidents may be arranged in a disjointed manner. In this case, the story does not flow smoothly from the beginning to the end, instead, the reader will have to piece the disjointed parts together and rearrange them to give a coherent whole. Some works contain sub plots which are stories within the main story but integrated in the main plot to give the reader a broader perspective of the events in the work.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have learnt that there are two basic types of plot – the simple and complex plot. We learnt also that some modern writers have deviated from the traditional or conventional modes of plot construction and have invented other types.

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

Define simple plot and illustrate with a prose fictional text.

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

Abrams, M. H. (1993). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Portsmouth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

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

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

Harmsworth, J. R. (1968). *Dictionary of Literary Terms*. London: Coles

Morrell, J. P. (2006). *Between the Lines: Master the Subtle Elements of Fiction Writing*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books.

## **UNIT 2 THEME/ SUBJECT MATTER**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Theme
  - 3.2 Subject Matter
  - 3.3 Title
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/ Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The fundamental or basic feature of the novel, as we know is story- telling and we have been told that this story is a product of the writer's imagination. In most cases, the story is woven around a particular idea which the writer wants to communicate to his/her readers. This idea is what we refer to as the theme. It is not enough to just write the idea down that would not be a creative writing but just a word or group of words on a page. It would not make sense. The writer decides on an idea and builds a story around it. Characters and actions are created to dramatise this idea. The way this is treated is the subject matter which sometimes is reflected in the title. This is different from the style which is how the idea is presented in form of language use, chapters and so on. We will explain this in details later.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- define theme
- define subject matter
- differentiate between theme and subject matter

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Students often confuse theme and subject matter in literary appreciation. We will therefore try to explain the two very well with illustrations to make it clearer to you. You may also refer to your course material, ENG 162, *Elements of Drama* where I tried to distinguish each of them as it relates to drama.

#### 3.1 Theme

Theme is the central dominating idea in a literary work. It is what Alter and Lewis refer to as “the general vision of life or more explicit proposition about human experience that literature conveys.” (79) According to J. R. Harmsworth, “in non-fiction prose, it may be thought as the general topic of discussion, the subject of discourse, the *thesis*.” In literary works, theme is the “abstract concept which is made concrete through its representation in person, action and image in the work.” (123). In her own definition, AkachiEzeigbo sees theme as representing for the “... reader what a story amounts to or the sum-total of the idea that the novel gives about life...It is something deeper than subject matter: indeed it is the vision of the novel and the profound questions it raises about life” (20). Morrell sums up the definition for us. He contends that theme which is a “conceptual distillation of the story, is often listed as one of the fundamental elements of fiction. It is the central idea or insight serving as a unifying element, creating cohesion and is an answer to the question, 'What did you learn from the piece of fiction?' In some cases, a story's theme is a prominent element and somewhat unmistakable” (263).

You may have noticed that all these definitions have one thing in common, though presented from different perspectives. They present theme as the central or dominating idea in a literary work about human experience. Theme is usually seen as an abstract concept like love, marriage, corruption, bad leadership, crime, justice, and many other issues that reflect human experiences. This means that the theme is not written down anywhere in the work so you have to read the novel, novella or short story very well to decipher the theme. If you have read Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, the central idea there is marriage. There are different forms of marriage and couples marry for various reasons. You will see also, how pride and prejudice affect a particular marriage.

In most novels from East Africa, we find the themes of possession and dispossession of land while the South African novels, until recently, present the themes of apartheid, racism. The themes of oppression and subjugation are common in the prose fiction from the two regions.

#### 3.2 Subject Matter

The subject matter in prose fiction is a kind of summary of what is presented in the work. It is what the story is all about. It is the subject of discussion in the work which is different from theme. The theme refers to the ideas which are stated abstractly but the abstract ideas are dramatized through the subject matter. Let us use NgugiwaThiong’o’s *A Grain of Wheat* for illustration. The theme of heroism and betrayal is dramatized through the presentation of the experiences of some characters



who are presumed heroes by the public. Ironically they have in one way or the other betrayed their cause during the Emergency. On the eve of Uhuru these characters are inundated with guilt, shame and jealousies. These feelings threaten to ruin their inclination and commitment to Uhuru. They must resolve and reconcile these warring emotions and attitudes, and redefine their relationships with each other to be fully part of the Uhuru celebrations. Each character tries to analyse the reasons for his action in the Mau-Mau Freedom Fight and to resolve his inner conflicts, doubts and fears, and seek means of expiating his guilt and redefine his relationship with the other characters. "Each character is painfully groping his way towards self-knowledge. Wangari, Gikonyo's mother, says very succinctly to her son: 'But you are a man now. Read your own heart, and know yourself'" (Palmer 26).

### **3.3 Title**

The title of any work is the distinguishing name of that work. The work is known by that name. It appears on the cover of the book and in most cases on the page after the cover. This page is not numbered but is appropriately called the title page. Usually the title appears on the top of the cover and the title page while the author's name follows it either immediately below or at the bottom page. In addition to the title and the author's name, the title page contains the publisher's name. The title could be in upper or lower case. There are no strict rules about this but the author and the publisher decide what is preferable to them. The title varies from one word, a phrase to a sentence. Usually the title is not punctuated.

Sometimes, the name of a character in the novel is used as the title. In this case, you will notice that the entire story revolves around this particular character. Such prose fiction presents the life experiences or adventures of this character. Many early English novels have such titles. Some of them are: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and many others.

The title and the subject matter are interrelated. In most cases, the title reflects the subject matter. Festus Iyayi's *Heroes* examines the concept of heroism in the Nigerian civil war. This is explicated through the experiences of a journalist who encounters civilians, army officers and soldiers of the ordinary ranks who are involved in the war at different levels. The novel presents a situation where the masses are exploited by a few wealthy and powerful people. The senior army officers stay in the rear, at the peaceful zones enjoying themselves with women, food, drink and parties while the junior officers are sent to the war fronts to fight and die. The children of the poor are sent to the war fronts to die while the children of the rich are sent abroad to study. The army officers who do not fight in the war are recognised as heroes while nobody is concerned with those who die in the battlefield. The latter should actually be the heroes.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

State the relationship between the theme and the subject matter in Prose fiction?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Subject matter concerns two aspects of prose fiction that seem to be the same yet they are different. The subject matter is how the idea is explicated to form the story. If for instance, the theme of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is colonialism, the subject matter becomes the story of Okonkwo and the disintegration of a once harmonious society as a result of

Colonialism. You can see that to an extent, the title reflects that disintegration, hence the falling apart of the society of Umuofia. This is why we say that there is a close relationship between the subject matter and the title because many titles echo their subject matters. The author is more concerned about the subject matter which is informed by the theme. On the other hand, the critical reader is concerned about the theme, the underlying idea in the novel..

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

We have discussed two important aspects of prose fiction which though each is distinct, are related. The theme is explicated in the subject matter while the title reveals the subject matter in many instances.

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

List ten titles of novels. Read one of them and write down the theme, the subject matter and the relationship between the title and the subject matter.

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

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

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

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

Iyayi, F. (1986). *Heroes*. Harlow, Essex: Longman.

Harmsworth, J. R. (1968). *Dictionary of Literary Terms*. London: Coles.

Palmer, E. (1972). *An Introduction to the African Novel*. London: Heinemann.

## **UNIT 3: CHARACTERISATION**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Character (protagonist/antagonist/foil)
  - 3.2 Characterisation
  - 3.3 Types of Characters
    - 3.3.1 Flat characters
    - 3.3.2 Round characters
    - 3.3.3 Stereotypes/Stock
    - 3.3.4 Allegorical characters.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/ Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The basic characteristic of prose fiction that distinguishes it from other genres of literature is that it tells a story in narrative form and each story depicts the lives of individuals though fictitious. In fiction, these individuals are referred to as characters. The story unfolds through the interpersonal relationships and interactions of the characters. Characters are therefore very important in prose fiction. This unit is entitled characterization which though related to character is not the same as character. You will find out the difference between the two words in the course of our discussion in the main content of this unit.

### **2.0. OBJECTIVES**

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

- Explain characterization in prose fiction
- Explain character
- Distinguish between character and characterization
- List different types of characters

### 3.0. MAIN CONTENT

Characters in fiction are the human beings, animals or supernatural beings that act out the story presented in the work.

#### 3.1 Character

The author creates characters and presents his or her story through the actions and words of these characters. The novelist, depending on the point of view he or she uses, may allow one of the characters in the work to tell the story, otherwise, he narrates the story him/herself, telling the reader what this character did or did not do as the story progresses. Characters therefore are indispensable in any form of prose fiction no matter how sketchy or how short the work is. Basically in a prose fictional narrative, there are two major characters, the protagonist and the antagonist. There are other characters too. They include the minor or supporting characters. The minor or supporting characters are involved in fewer actions or incidents in the work. Their roles are just to support the major characters in propelling the plot of the story. Characters are developed through appearance, words, feelings, and reaction of others.

##### 3.1.1 Protagonist

In most cases, one character stands out in the work and indeed attracts the reader's attention. It appears as if the story revolves around him/her or that it is his/her story that is being told. That character becomes the driver of action in the story. She/he therefore is responsible for achieving the story's objective or goal. In many storytelling traditions, the protagonist is usually the main character or the hero/heroine.

Some scholars refer to the protagonist as the **Point-of-view character** because he/she is the character from whose perspective the audience experiences the story. This is the character that "represents the point of view the audience will empathize, or at the very least, sympathize with. Therefore this is the "Main" Character" (Ezeigbo 23).

##### 3.1.2 Antagonist

You may deduce from the name who the antagonist is. In literal sense, he is someone who antagonizes. We will not take it in that literal sense. The character that stands constantly in opposition to the protagonist is the antagonist. He opposes the protagonist or is pitted against him/her in all cases and situations. The antagonist is sometimes referred to as **foil**. However, foil is also seen as the character that stands in contrast to the protagonist in a way that illuminates their personality or characteristics. The foil here may not necessarily be pitted against the protagonist in a confrontational manner but in comparison.

### **3.2 Characterization**

Characterization is often listed as one of the fundamental elements of fiction. It refers to the way an author creates and manipulates the characters in the work to explicate his/her theme. A character is a participant in the story and is usually a person, but may be any personal identity, an animal or an entity whose existence originates from the fictional work. The author is usually careful in the selection of these characters and ensures that the role of each character is clear. Some characters are used and dispensed with while others are active participants in the story from the beginning to the end. The former are the minor characters while the latter are the major characters.

The writer reveals the character in such a way that the reader becomes familiar with the character's nature through the character's words and actions. A character is also revealed through his relationship with other characters and reaction to situations and events. Sometimes the character's thoughts are revealed by the writer depending on the narrative mode or point of view.

#### **3.2.1 Types Of Characters**

There are different types of characters and the author decides the ones to use depending on the message and the effect she/he desires to create.

#### **3.2.2 Flat Characters**

The flat characters are those characters who remain the same in the course of the story from the beginning to the end. Some scholars refer to them as static characters. They do not undergo significant changes during the course of a story. In the real sense they are not affected by circumstances around them and are usually very rigid in their belief. Many of them are usually tragic characters because they are prepared to pursue any goal they believe in to its (perceived) logical conclusion even at the risk of losing their lives.

A good example of a flat character is Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. If you have read the novel, you will notice that he is a very strict and hardworking person who has no patience with the poor and the weak. He believes in action and not words. He is a strong adherent of his tradition and is prepared to uphold it and fight anybody or institution that threatens the existence of that tradition. He therefore opposes the colonialists, refuses to see any progressive aspect of the Whiteman's civilization and remains rigid in this belief even when others are bending to the wind of change. In the end, he takes his own life.

The flat characters are very predictable because there seems not to be any change in their growth and activities.

#### **3.2.3 Round Characters**

Round characters are those characters that grow in the course of the narration. Most of the time, they grow from innocence to maturity and adapt to situations accordingly. They respond to changes in their environment and react differently to different situations. Meka in Ferdinand Oyono's *Old Man and the Medal* is an example of round character.

#### **3.2.3 Stereotype/Stock**

In characterization, a stereotype exhibits particular attributes by which a particular individual, group, or race is known. In a prose fiction, it may be one or two characters that

(is) are stereotypes. The writer creates such characters for special effects or to make a point. This attribute of the stereotype may or may not be true but it is the notion or opinion which people have about that group and could equally be applicable to other groups. For instance, in Nigeria, it is generally believed that the Igbo Man will be ready to do anything including selling or killing a friend or relation to make money. This means that they love money obsessively. A writer may therefore create an Igbo man in his work to reflect this notion. Meanwhile this is not true. If it is the truth, there will no longer be poor people in Igboland or most of them must have been killed by the wealthy few. Besides, there is no tribe or ethnic group that does not love money obsessively and ritual killing is not limited to the Igbos alone.

**A stock character** is closely related to the stereotype but here the character is a true representation of a particular group especially a profession. In most cases, stock characters are created for satirical purposes. For instance, soldiers and some other related professionals are associated with force and brutality especially in Nigeria. A writer might therefore create such character(s) to draw attention to their brutality, viciousness, cruelty and the irrationality of most of their actions. Writers of most novels that satirize military leaders, portray such leaders as despotic, tyrannical and dictatorial.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

Explain what you understand by stereotype or stock character in prose fiction.

#### **3.2.4 Allegorical Characters**

Allegorical characters are characters that are not human beings. Such characters are employed and manipulated by the writer to convey a double meaning of the subject matter at the literal level and a deeper level. In such works, all the characters are allegorical. Such a work “would normally operate at a primary level as well as the secondary level of significance. ... narration offers the writer an opportunity to describe one subject under the guise of another and thus to be ambivalent in his or her themes” (Ezeigbo 24).

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Characters are the representation of human beings in any fiction. The characters could be humans, animals or abstract qualities but exhibit human characteristics. This means that there are different types of characters. Characterisation is the act of creating the characters by the writer. In a work where characterisation is good, the characters are consistent, their actions are properly motivated. Such writer reveals characters through their actions, words and interaction with other characters. The writer also reveals characters by him/herself in the course of narration depending on the point of view adopted.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

We have seen in this unit that characterization is an indispensable element in prose fiction. The characters dramatize the action of the narrative through their interpersonal relationships thereby conveying the writer's message. The writer has the liberty to create any type of character that suits his or her purpose but for effective characterization, he ensures

that the characters are consistent. A character is a participant in the story in form of a person, animal or abstract quality. The important factor is that the character is an entity whose existence originates from a fictional work or performance.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Differentiate between characterization and character in prose fiction.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READING**

Card, O. S. (1988). *Character and Viewpoint*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books.

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

Morrell, J. P. (2006). *Between the Lines: Master the Subtle Elements of Fiction Writing*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books.

## **UNIT 4 SETTING**

### **CONTENT**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Definition

3.2 Importance of Setting

3.3 Identification of Setting

3.4 Types of Setting

3.4.1 Historical Setting

3.4.2 Physical Setting

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

7.0 References/ Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

**Setting** in fiction comprises the location and time of a story and is often listed as one of the fundamental elements of fiction. It is the place and time in which the story takes place. Sometimes setting is referred to as milieu, to include a context (such as society) beyond the immediate surroundings of the story. In some cases, setting becomes a character itself and can set the tone of a story (Morrell 2). Setting is important in fiction because the story being told in a particular work must take place in a particular location and at a particular period. The characters discussed in the last unit cannot operate in a vacuum. They need a place and a period to live and interact and that place and period constitute setting in literature.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to

- Define setting in prose fiction
- Identify setting in a prose fictional work
- List different types of setting
- Identify landmarks and other issues that indicate setting

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Definition

Setting is defined as “the physical, and sometimes spiritual, background against which the action of a narrative takes place”(Harmsworth 108). Basically, there are two types of setting- physical setting and geographical setting. The reader identifies setting easily through the mention of some identifiable locations and dates but in some cases the writer does not mention real names of locations or known historical dates so all the names are fictitious. In the latter case, it is difficult to identify setting in the work. However there are pointers which could enable the reader identify the setting. These pointers include names of the characters, issues they discuss and other events in the work.

#### 3.2 The Importance of Setting

In the introduction, I tried to explain briefly what setting is, we will talk more about that. In addition, we will look briefly at the different types of setting and why and how the writer makes use of setting. Setting is one of the important elements of prose fiction which the author uses to accomplish various goals like

- **Enhancement of Verisimilitude:** Setting in form of description of time, place, weather, furnishings and other elements of setting are usually included because they help to give a sense of reality and credibility to the plot of the story.
- **Mood:** Setting may emphasize the mood of a character. For instance a rainy day may bring out or strengthen a feeling of sadness in people. On the other hand this setting could be appropriate to the events that are occurring in a narrative.
- **Special Effects:** A writer may use a particular setting for “...an important effect upon the actions of a character (as the river and the market do on Nwibe in Achebe’s “The Madman.” (Adeleke52).

#### 3.3 Identification of Setting

A narrative can be specific or vague depending on the style of the writer. Setting is identifiable in a work through various means or landmarks. In some works, specific dates and locations are mentioned but in some they are referred to indirectly. Setting could be implied through a character and is made obvious in the various names, physical appearances, behaviour and language associated with such characters.

A story that emphasizes a particular attitude or behaviour or religion may also help the reader to identify the geographical location of that story. For instance, if characters go to mosque excessively, chew cola, and wear *Babaringa* and say *ranka-dede*, then, the setting is most likely in Northern Nigeria while most of Achebe’s novels are set in Igboland and are obvious through the names of the communities, characters, proverbs, and the general mannerisms of the people.



Sometimes, the narrative may not give a particular time but gives it in an indirect way as stated earlier. A narrative set in Nigeria for example, may not give dates but talks about WAI, Better Life For Rural Women or SAP, any reader that is familiar with the historical development of Nigeria will deduce both the physical and historical setting of the work.

### **3.4 Types of Setting**

There are two main types of setting. They are the physical and historical settings.

#### **3.4.1 Physical Setting**

The general locale of a work is its geographical or physical setting. In other words, it is *the place* of the scene. The geographical location of a work is not synonymous with where it is written. For instance, Soyinka wrote *Death and the King's Horseman* in Great Britain but the place or the location of the play is Yorubaland (or to be specific, Oyo town). In addition to the general locale of a work, there may be specific places also where different actions take place. *Things Fall Apart* is set in Nigeria, in Igboland, in Umuofia and numerous other specific locations like Okonkwo's compound; the bush and so on. The physical setting is therefore the location in which action takes place (Abrams, 157).

#### **3.4.2 Historical Setting**

Some writers give dates and places of the action of their work, while others give the information indirectly. This is referred to as the time setting, temporal setting or the historical setting. This type of setting in a work may be immediate or remote. The temporal setting of a work entails the time element which is almost always (but not necessarily so) different from the time the work is written. The concept of time setting also encompasses what it evokes and carries along with it like the cultural, social, economic and religious issues raised in the work. The time setting also influences the mode of writing and the subject matter. For instance, *Things Fall Apart* was published in 1958, two years before colonialism ended officially in Nigeria but the events of the story may have taken place some years earlier and the story itself must have been written earlier than the date of publication. This is very appropriate because the temporal setting presented two years later would not have presented a true picture of the events in the novel. The typical Achebean post-colonial Nigerian society is shown in *A Man of the People* and *No Longer at Ease* written immediately after Nigeria's colonial overlords had left, so the two novels contain post-colonial events to justify their post-independence setting.

#### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

List and explain different types of setting in prose fiction.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Setting in fiction is the location where the action of the story takes place. You know that even in the traditional society, stories start with phrases like "once upon a time...in the land of..." That land of whatever is where the action takes place and it is called setting. Abrams (157) explains that it is the general locale and the historical time in which the action occurs; the setting of an event or episode in a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place. Apart from the place and time of a story, setting also includes any "...elements of a

story that results from the place or time (such as the weather, historical events that affect the people in the story, or the kind of environment in which the characters live)(Adeleke52).

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we discussed setting as an important element of prose fiction because a story must be located somewhere in terms of time and space. The two major types of setting are the physical and time setting. We also said that some settings are clearly stated by the writer but in some works the reader is left to recognize the setting through some objects, names and other landmarks that indicate the place and time of the fictional world depicted in the work.

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

List five ways of identifying setting in Prose fiction.

### **7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READINGS**

Abrams, M. H. (1993). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Port Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

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

Harmsworth, J. R. (1968). *Dictionary of Literary Terms*. London: Coles.

Adeleke, T “Plot and Setting” in R. A. Masagbor ed.(1997). *The Way of Prose Fiction: Explanatory Perspectives*. Benin: Headmark.

Morrell, J. P. (2006). *Between the Lines: Master the Subtle Elements of Fiction Writing*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books.

## **UNIT 5: POINT OF VIEW**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Point of View
  - 3.2 Omniscient Point of View
  - 3.3 First Person Point of View
  - 3.4 Second Person Point of View
  - 3.5 Multiple Point of View
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/ Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

We must have learnt by now that a writer tells a story but we have not discussed how that story is told. A story teller may tell the story as if he/she is a participant in that story or present it in such a way that it will be clear that he or she is reporting what happened to others. This manner of narration is basically called point of view. In this unit we will discuss this point of view and the different types we have in prose fiction

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- Explain point of view
- List different types of point of view
- Identify the particular point of view used in a work.

- State the advantages and disadvantages of a particular point of view.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Definition of Point of View**

In prose narrative, a writer could present the story in different ways. This is called point of view. Abrams defines point of view as the mode (modes) established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, dialogue, actions, settings and events which constitute the narrative work of fiction (165). The point of view signifies the way in which an author tells his/her story. It helps the reader to empathize with specific characters and to understand certain ideas. In other words, point of view reveals the position from which the events are presented by the writer and observed by the reader. The story could be presented through the mouth of one or more of the characters or by the writer. A narrator may be either obtrusive or unobtrusive, depending on the author's intended relationship between himself, the narrator, the point-of-view character, and the reader. Point of view is therefore the perspective from which the reader hears, sees, and feels the story (Kennedy 62).

#### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

Define point of view and state its importance in prose fiction.

#### **3.1 Types of Point of View**

There are many types of point of view. When the story is told by one of the characters in the narrative, it is called the first person narrative. The writer might decide to narrate the story him/herself. In this case, it is called the omniscient point of view. Other forms of narrative modes include the second person narrative and the multiple or mixed point of view. The writer therefore has many choices regarding the narrator of his or her story but the omniscient narrative mode is used by many writers.

##### **3.1.1 Omniscient Point of View**

The third-person point of view is a narrative mode in which both the author presents events and situations through narration, and through the senses and thoughts of more than one character. The writer presents the actions, hopes, aspirations and other psychological and emotional states of the characters through an “overarching godlike perspective that sees and knows everything that happens and everything the characters are thinking” (Kennedy 62). This is why this point of view is referred to as the omniscient narrative or the eye of God. Do you know why it is called the eye of God? God sees and knows everything about everybody including their thoughts and feelings. In this type of narration, the writer is presumed to see and know everything about the characters including their innermost thoughts.

Likewise, the omniscient narrator can tell the reader things that the main character does not know, or things that none of the characters know, or things that no human being in the fictional world could ever know. This means that this narrative goes beyond the characters' knowledge and experiences as it allows the writer to explore and describe the thoughts and feelings and the environment in the work.

Apart from the third person omniscient narrative, there is the **third-person limited** point of view, which limits narration to what can be known, seen, thought, or judged from a single character's perspective. The narrator is the teller of the story, the orator, in the oral tradition, or its in-print equivalent. The story is presented in the third person but the narrator does not present the thoughts and feelings of the characters.

The Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe masterfully employs this point in most of his novels. In one of his novels, *Arrow of God*, Achebe as the narrator describes the actions, thoughts and feelings of the characters to reflect the limits of human power in relation to historical and spiritual forces beyond human control within the framework of the story. The novel is concluded with the writer's entry into Ezeulu's mind, the central character, in order to reveal to the reader the "...baffling contradictions in which Ezeulu is trapped because his actual experience has run counter to his most strongly held expectations and his life, therefore, has lost its centre of meaning" (Adepoju 90).

#### **Self-Assessment Exercise.**

State two reasons why many writers use the third person point of view.

#### **3.4 First Person Point of View**

In the first person point of view the narrator speaks directly from his or her own experience, often represented by the narrator's consistent use of the first person pronoun "I". This narrator who says 'I' is often a participant in the events of the story. He /she may be an observer, the protagonist or a minor character but the narrator seems to be standing a little to one side, watching a story that mainly concerns him/herself or someone else as it unfolds.

The first person point of view has an advantage of revealing intimately to the reader the character's growing response to his experience and environment as portrayed through the progression of the narrative. This firsthand account of the narration produces an intimacy that helps to further captivate the interest of the reader. It also helps to reduce the communicative distance between the reader and the experiences of the characters, as portrayed in the story. When the first-person narrator is the protagonist or major character in the work, he/she tells his/her own story, as in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Camara Laye's *The African Child*.

It is difficult for the narrator in this point of view to present a broad vision of the action and understanding of the other characters. The information is limited because he is presenting the story from his own individual point of view but this "limitation is made up for by the immediacy of communication created through this style of narration" (Adepoju 96).

#### **Advantages and Disadvantages**

The intimacy mentioned above is an advantage because it makes the narration sound realistic as it is a firsthand account from a participant. He/she can only present accounts of events he has witnessed or state the source of the information he did not experience. The advantage is that the narration is seen as "authentic as the narrator imbues the story with a sense of actuality" (Ezeigbo 22). It is as if the reader is listening to a witness who actually witnessed the event. The narration is, therefore, vivid.

Another advantage is that the reader experiences the greatest sense of involvement in this mode of narration. Thus, empathy with the protagonist, whose experience and adventures the reader shares, is developed to the fullest.

The only disadvantage of this mode is that the narrator is limited in the information he/she is capable of giving because he/she cannot report what was not observed and cannot probe the inner personalities of the characters.

### **3.4 Second Person Point of View**

This point of view is rarely used by writers. As the name implies, it is a narration presented in the second person pronoun, “you”. You will agree with me that that it is difficult to tell somebody a story in which that person is not involved by saying ‘you did this ...you did that’. However, it has been used in a short story by AkachiEzeigbo. This point of view is not realistic.

### **3.5 Multiple Point of View**

This occurs when a number of characters tell the story. There may or may not be a central narrator; but there are usually a number of voices/narrators who move the story forward, each contributing to and passing judgment on the action.

This narrative technique has the advantage of allowing the reader to “hear” the story from different perspectives and angles. Thus, the account provided is a detailed, fully developed three-dimensional one.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Point of view is the perspective from which the story is narrated. It represents“ the vantage point of awareness from which the events of the story unfold. Generally, the omniscient point of view is represented by the writer narrating the story through the description of the actions and the characters from his vantage point as the creator of the story who is aware of all aspects of the characters’ lives and the progression of the story that the characters themselves do not know. The first person point of view presents a more seemingly authentic account of narration in prose fiction

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

We have seen that point of view is the perspective through which the story is presented in prose fiction. There are four types of point of view but most writers use the first and third points of view. The former presents the narration through the mouth of a participant in the story and that narrator presents only events he/she witnessed or the information someone else related to him other. The narrator in the third person point of view knows and presents a holistic account of events and characters in the work because he/she sees beyond all the characters.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

List four types of point of view and explain one of them in detail.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READING**

Adepoju, T. (1997). "Point of View or Vocalisation" in R. A. Masagbored. *The Way of Prose Fiction: Exploratory Perspectives*. Benin City: Headmark.

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

Kennedy, X. J. (1976). *An Introduction to Fiction*. Boston: Little Brown.

Card, O. S. (1988). *Character & Viewpoint*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books.

Harmsworth, J. R. (1968) *Dictionary of Literary Terms*. London: Coles.

## **UNIT 6: LANGUAGE**

### **CONTENT**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Language/Style

3.2 Atmosphere and Tone

3.3 Symbolism

3.4 Allegory

3.5 Standard and Non- Standard Language

3.6 Uses of language

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor- Marked Assignment

7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Literature is a verbal art. This means that it communicates through language. We know that language is used for communication generally in form of speech, conversation, gossips, admonitions, preaching, and teaching and in several other means of verbal communication. We are emphasizing verbal here because there are other forms of communication like signs, facial expression and others. This communication entails the use of words. Language in literature is unique and expressive because it reveals the writer's mind, his personal experience and perspective on the theme and subject matter of a particular work. In this unit we will discuss the use of language in prose fiction which to a large extent determines the style of the writer.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- Explain the use of language in prose fiction
- Explain the relationship between language and style in prose fiction

- Explain the terms atmosphere and tone in relation to prose fiction
- Determine an appropriate use of imagery in a particular prose fictional work
- Define symbolism and allegory in prose fiction

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Language in literature is unique because the writer uses words in their denotative and connotative senses. This is very important for the conveyance of not just the message of a particular work but also the desired emotion. He/she therefore employs the use of symbols and imagery to create the right emotion, atmosphere and tone in the works as the case may be. The writer also has the liberty of not using words in their conventional sense but to even invent words to suit a particular purpose. This is called poetic licence.

#### 3.1 Language/Style

Language is the vehicle or channel of communication in all genres of literature but each genre has its own use of language that makes it unique or that is appropriate for its mode of presentation. In prose fiction the writer has an abundant time and space. You will recall our discussion on time and space in Module 1. The writer tells not just the story as it concerns events, incidents and situations but in the omniscient narration, probes the inner workings/feelings of a character. All these are presented in a particular language. The writer chooses the best words that would convey his message appropriately. He also chooses the particular language of communication. For instance, he may decide to write in his vernacular or a general language like English. The way he presents his story through language is what we regard as the writer's style.

**Style** is therefore not so much as *what* is written, but *how* it is written and interpreted. In prose fiction, style refers to language conventions used to construct the story. A fiction writer may manipulate diction, sentence structure, phrasing, dialogue, and other aspects of language to create his or her style. The communicative effect created by the author's style is sometimes referred to as the story's voice and every writer has his or her own unique style, or voice. Style is sometimes listed as one of the fundamental elements of fiction. You may have heard people say that a particular writer's style is accessible and that of the other one is obscure. Two Nigerian renowned writers, Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka fall into this category. Achebe's style is said to be accessible because of the simplicity of his language. Any average literate reader can read, understand and enjoy his novels at first reading. On the other hand, it is very difficult for the same reader to understand most of Soyinka's novels at first reading. That reader needs a dictionary by his/her side and may have to read the novel several times to understand what it is the writer is trying to communicate.

#### 3.2 Atmosphere and Tone

Atmosphere is defined as "the mood which is established by the totality of the literary work" (Harmsworth 12). Akachi Ezeigbo defines it simply as the "the emotion which pervades..." any novel or story (24). It is the general feeling we get when we are reading a particular story. It could be an atmosphere of violence, harmony, peace, horror and so on. Atmosphere is evoked in a work through the writer's manipulation of language. The writer uses his descriptive ability to convey or heighten the intensity of atmosphere in work.



Tone is closely related to atmosphere. It refers to the writer's attitude to the idea/subject presented in the work. The writer's tone to a large extent influences the perception of the ideas and events explored in the work. In real life, we say that it is not necessarily what is said but how it is said – the tone in which it is said. The tone of a writer could be any of the following: contempt, condemnation, hostility, admiration, censure, commendation, or exhortation. The tone in a particular novel could be one or a combination of two or more and is discernable, most of the times, in the attitude of the writer to particular characters.

### **3.3 Symbolism**

Symbolism is the representation of one thing with another one that may not have a direct relationship with the original one. Symbol is a sign, shape, or object that represents a person, idea or value. AkachiEzeigbo explains that symbolism is a literary technique that allows the artist to attach symbolic meanings to particular objects, words and sounds ... to generate meanings which are universally intelligible" (25) and acceptable. The commonest universally accepted symbol is the cross which is a representation of Christianity as it signifies Christ's redemptive sacrifice for mankind.

You may be wondering why we are discussing this under language. It is part of the writer's use of language as his or her ability to use symbolism appropriately contributes to the beauty of his/her style.

### **3.4 Allegory**

Allegory is a literary style whereby the writer manipulates characters, actions and setting to convey a double meaning. The double meaning shows that the thing used conveys its literal meaning as well as an underlying or deeper meaning. It is the writer's use of language that could enable him/her to use animals as characters and make them speak and act as humans. The writer is able to discuss one subject under the guise of another. It is used mostly in satires as in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* which is a satirical attack on the Russian communist system. In the novel, Orwell uses animals to portray the injustice and double standard which reflect the insincerity of the communist system of government.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

Differentiate between symbolism and allegory.

### **3.5 Standard and Non- Standard Language**

Standard language as the name implies is the formal and accepted form of any language. Writers write in any language of their choice but each language has the structure that is accepted as correct. This correct version is what we call standard language and writers are expected to use that correct version in their works since one of the functions of literature is to teach, so the reader learns more on the usage of English language by reading well-written novels.

However, a writer may deviate from this norm but usually for special effect. What did we call this deviation in the last unit? I hope you remember...Poetic licence. This is where non-standard language comes in. Non-standard language comes in the form of slangs, transliterations, colloquialisms, pidgin, infusion of vernacular and other ungrammatical

expressions that may be adopted in prose works for specific reasons. For example, it could be used to depict what region or ethnic group a character belongs to, or his social class or literacy level. For instance, a Nigerian houseboy may be made to speak pidgin. Even physiological defects like stammering may be depicted in the language as we notice in this passage from Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (9):

Ththat is why wwe must acc-c-cept the universal d-d-dome, b-b-  
because ththere is no d-d-d-direction. The b-b-bridge is d-d-dome  
of rreligion and b-b-bridges d-d-don't jjjjust g-g-go from hhere to  
ththere; a bridge also faces backwards.

These are intended to bring realism into the work (Teilanyo 32). So when you are reading any prose fictional work and you come across some forms of language that are not grammatically correct, you know that it is for a specific purpose. Note that this is different from a poorly written work. We find such poor works in the contemporary Nigeria where many people have been forced by hard times to write and publish themselves without proper editorial input.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

Explain non-standard language in Nigeria and list three ways it could be used in prose fiction.

### **3.6 Use of Language**

Apart from conveying the message, language is also used to delineate characters, infuse humour (comic relief), signify setting and social, religious or cultural background or status/class of some or all the characters. For instance, language will often signal comedy and many writers use minor character as comical characters, because it is believed that serious matters is usually handled by the major characters.

Language is also used to infuse cultural background in what some scholars refer to as local colour. Many African writers use "literal translation of vernacular words or expressions directly into his language of creation, say English" (Teilanyo 33). For instance in Achebe's *Arrow of God* (55), we see Ezeulu the Chief Priest saying: "I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there". The word *eye* is translated to reflect the Igbo cultural background. He would have simply said that he wanted his son to represent him or to be his representative there.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Language is the tool of the writer as it is his or her medium of communication. The writer uses language to convey message as well as create desired effects in the work. He uses language symbolically and allegorically to convey surface and deeper meanings in the work. Language helps the writer to distinguish one character from the other or depict the status of a particular character. Language is also used to denote setting, create atmosphere and tone. Literary artists have the liberty to use both standard and non-standard and this is called poetic license.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have discussed the use of language in prose fiction. It is the means of communication for the writer as he or she uses it to convey his or her message. We tried to discuss different ways in which language could be used in prose fiction. Apart from conveying the message, language is used to create special effects and it determines the style of the writer.

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

Explain the relationship between language and style in prose fiction.

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

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

Harmsworth, J. R. (1968). *Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Toronto: Coles

Teilanyo, D. I. (1997). "Language of Prose Fiction." In R. A. Masagbor, ed. *The Way of Prose Fiction: Exploratory Perspectives*. Benin: Headmark

### **MODULE 3: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS**

#### **CONTENT**

Unit 1 The Short Story: Chinua Achebe's "Vengeful Creditor".

Unit 2 The Novella: Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*.

Unit 3 The English Novel: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

Unit 4 The African Novel: AyiKweiArmah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.

## **UNIT 1: SHORT STORY – CHINUA ACHEBE’S “VENGEFUL CREDITOR”**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Background of the Author/Work
  - 3.2 Theme/Subject Matter
  - 3.3 Plot
  - 3.4 Setting
  - 3.5 Characterization
  - 3.6 Language/Tone/Atmosphere
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor- Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

We will discuss one short story in this unit as a representative study for the illustration of some of the features of a short story. We will identify the theme, the setting, the tone and discuss characterization. Remember that I said that short stories are so short that you can start and finish one within a few minutes. This one, I read for the first time in fifteen minutes, gave it to my daughter who read it within almost the same time because it has only 22 pages from pages 48-69 of a collection of twelve short stories published in one hundred and twenty three pages. You can see that even with twelve stories the volume is smaller than his famous novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. This will give you an idea of how short the short story is.

Please, get all the texts we will analyse in this module and read them very well for a better understanding of the works as we discuss them. I deliberately included texts that you can get easily from the market and the ones you can read and enjoy the story.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- Identify theme/subject matter in the story
- Present the plot of the story
- State the setting of the story
- Determine the relationship between language and characters in the story.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Background of the Author/Work

Chinua Achebe does not need much introduction. He is from Ogidi in the present Anambra State of Nigeria. Achebe is known primarily as a novelist though he is also a poet. His novel, *Things Fall Apart*, published in 1958 is considered one of the most important African novels. He has written relatively few short stories in his career, but his collection *Girls at War and Other Stories* like his novels, has received overwhelming positive reviews from critics. This his story, "Vengeful Creditor" first appeared in 1971 in the inaugural issue of *Okike: A Nigerian Journal of New Writing*, founded by Achebe, and it was later reprinted in his collection of stories, *Girls at War and Other Stories* from which we chose the short story for study in this unit.

#### 3.2 Theme/Subject Matter

The main theme of the short story is betrayal. Mr. and Mrs. Emenike promise to send their maid, Veronica, to school but did not eventually. They therefore betray the trust both Vero and her mother had in them before Vero left the village to live with them. She was made to understand that the condition for sending her to school is the growth and maturity of Goddy, (the baby she is to take care of for them). Unfortunately, in her own estimation, Goddy is not growing as fast as she wants so he feels betrayed. She feels that sending her to school was a debt they owe her but unfortunately, the 'debt' could not be paid until the boy she is looking after is no longer there. In her naivety, she tries to poison the boy hoping that they would send her to school if the boy dies. It boomerangs and she is sent home instead.

In the subject matter Achebe presents an impoverished young girl whose hope of going to school was dashed and in frustration, tries to poison the baby she is looking after because the baby, Goddy "wasn't growing fast enough" for her to go to school. The story focuses on the gap between the wealthy and the poor in the tumultuous environment of a haphazardly modernizing African country. The overt political issue at stake is the government's institution of free primary education for children, a policy the well-to-do Emenikes resent because it means that they will have difficulty keeping their servants. In order to obtain a nurse for their baby, Mr. Emenike promises an impoverished girl that she will eventually be able to go to school – her only chance at obtaining a better life for herself. She agrees and follows him to

the city to take care of his baby. Gradually, it dawns on Vero that she may not realize her dream of going to school because “more weeks passed and little Goddy was beginning to say a few words but still no one spoke about Vero going to school”(63). As it becomes clear that the Emenikes are not going to make good on their promise, the maid, Veronica, becomes increasingly resentful and acts out her frustration on the Emenikes and their child by giving a red ink to the baby hoping that the baby might die and she would be free to go to school.

### **3.3Plot**

"Vengeful Creditor" opens as Mrs. Emenike, an educated and well-to-do Nigerian woman, is coming out of a supermarket. She is irritated at the decline in the standards of service in the store ever since the government instituted free primary education. She complains that her household servants have been quitting lately, returning to their native villages to go to school. She wonders how "a working woman with a seven-month-old baby" is expected to cope.

The newspaper has published many letters written by highly educated people who are critical of the government's policy. The Emenikes are representative of these critics: he is a mid-level bureaucrat, while she is a social welfare officer. They oppose the programme and are affected by it directly when several of their servants quit because they want to go to school. The defection of their baby-nurse makes Mrs. Emenike particularly angry. However, since more than twice as many children have enrolled in school as the government had anticipated, financing for the scheme becomes a problem and after a single school term, the programme is suspended.

In an impoverished village, one of the people who is "broken-hearted" at the suspension of free education is Veronica, a ten-year-old girl whose widowed mother, Martha, is struggling to care for four children. Martha is educated, having attended a missionary school, but the death of her carpenter husband has left her a destitute. She therefore allows her daughter Vero to be taken to the city by Mr. Emenike to cater for his baby but with a promise that she will go to school.

Vero takes care of the baby but with each passing day, her hope of going to school grows dimmer as the baby, in her estimation is not growing fast. She therefore decides to poison the boy to make way for her to go to school. Her action boomerangs as she is treated like a criminal by both her foster parents and her mother.

### **3.4Setting**

The story is set in an unnamed independent African country. However, the names of the characters and some transliterated expressions show that it is set in Igboland, South-East of Nigeria. The fact that Chinua Achebe is from Anambra State lends credence to that fact.

### **3.5 Characterisation**

The characters are developed within the limitations of time and space available to the author. There are few major characters while the minor characters are presented and disposed of appropriately. An interesting aspect of characterization in this short story is the delineation of

characters through language. The characters who have acquired higher Western education speak Standard English while the illiterate and semi-literate ones communicate in pidgin.

### **3.6 Language**

The language is simple and direct. There is minimal use of imagery or symbolism. Language is used appropriately to convey the hilarious mood that pervades the story. The issue presented in the story is a serious one but is treated in a comic tone that suits the satiric mode of the story. “Vengeful Creditor” in particular is noted for its satirical qualities in depicting “women and their aspirations, blighted ... by the society and the circumstances that surround them.” () The atmosphere of sadness is also present in Vero’s melancholic attitude at home with Goddy. It shows the young girl’s thoughts and her feelings really well when the family she was working for denied her the education that they promised.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

“Vengeful Creditor” is about the young girl whose hope of going to school was raised and dashed by the inconsistencies of the Government that initiated free education programme and aborted it almost immediately. It contains a lot of humour while commenting on politics and the social aspect of going to find a child to look after your own child. Amazingly, all these are presented in just a few pages, filled with a resounding message.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this short story, Chinua Achebe presents the sad tale of a young girl who was denied an opportunity for education. This is a short story which is a sub-genre of prose fiction. You can read it in a few minutes. It is humorous and interesting so make sure that you read it for a fuller understanding of the story. The language is simple and the subject matter, contemporary.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

List all the characters in the story and group according to minor and major ones

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

Achebe, Chinua (1977). *Girls At War and Other Stories*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. London: Heinemann.



## **UNIT 2: THE NOVELLA – MARIAMA BA’S *SO LONG A LETTER***

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Background of the Author/Work
  - 3.2 Theme/Subject Matter
  - 3.3 Plot
  - 3.4 Setting
  - 3.5 Characterization
  - 3.6 Style
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The work, *So Long a Letter* by Mariama Ba, is a novella which is one of the types of prose fiction. This means that it is longer than the short story we discussed in the last unit but shorter than the novels we will discuss in the next two units. It is written in the epistolary style. I hope that you remember the epistolary style we discussed in our study of types of prose fiction. The story which presents the story of Ramatoulaye Fall, a recent widow is written in form of a letter from Ramatoulaye to Assiatou her friend. She recounts how her husband, Moudou, betrayed their marriage by marrying their daughter’s friend. Ramatoulaye records her anger at both Moudou and the Islamic customs that allow polygamy to privilege men and place women in disadvantaged positions.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you should be able to

- Recount the story presented in the work

- State the setting
- State the type of prose fiction it is
- State the theme and the reason why the work is called epistolary
- List the major and minor characters in the work

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Background Of The Author/Work

Mariama Ba, a Senegalese was born in 1929 and had her Western education in Senegal. She was a teacher and an advocate for women's rights. She was divorced, like her character Aissatou, and she joined several feminist organizations in Senegal. Her focus is on the problems women face in polygamous marriages. *So Long a Letter* which is her first novel was published in 1980 and in 1981, *So Long a Letter* was awarded the first Noma Award for Publishing in Africa. This book is an evidence of the immense contributions African women have made and continue to make in the building of their societies. The book has already been translated in more than a dozen languages and perhaps will appear in more.

Mariama wrote many books in which she openly share her thoughts and feelings. Her other works include: *Scarlet Songs* (1986), and *La Fonction Politique des Litteratures Africaines Ecrites (The Political Function of African Written Literatures)* (1981).

Mariama Bâ will always be an inspiring figure for African women. She maintains steps that should be taken to reverse our traditions and customs that are against modernity and against the well-being of women.

#### 3.2 Theme/Subject Matter

The theme of polygamy is prominent in the work. In her long letter to her lifelong friend Aissatou, Ramatoulaye muses on how Aissatou's marriage was ruined by polygamy just like her own. Ramatoulaye and Aissatou, both highly educated women, have been victimized by the traditional customs that deny women status equal to that of men. However, as Ramatoulaye relates in the narrative, each woman is able to become successfully independent as they refuse to accept subservient position of a wife expected of them by their custom. This theme is made obvious in her letter to Daouda: " You think that the problem of polygamy is a simple one. Those who are involved in it know the constraints, the lies, the injustices that weigh down their consciences in return for ephemeral joys of change..." (68)

The theme of feminism is equally discernable in the work. The discriminatory use of power in the society by men to humiliate women forces Ramatoulaye to deal with its consequences. This discriminatory power is presented in form of male domination that emanates from the

society's construction of a patriarchal ideology. In this set up, Ramatoulaye as a woman, seems not to have any right to determine her destiny. Aissatou rejects this notion and chooses her own life without being denied a life of her own by her husband Mawdo who also married a young wife.

This strong exploration of feminism is perhaps what makes the novel a strong voice for the oppressed woman in Africa. The woman is oppressed by culture and by virtue of her position. Aissatou rejects this and slowly Ramatoulaye realises she cannot look to her culture for much. To demonstrate how males are insensitive, Ba projects female rationality and responsibility. She also portrays men's irresponsibility by using their sexual instincts.

### **3.3 Plot**

The novella begins with the normal salutation of an informal letter and is a reply to the one written to her by her friend, Aissatou. It opens with "Dear Aissatou, I have received your letter. By way of reply, I am beginning this diary, my prop in my distress. Our long association has taught me that confiding in others allays pain"(1). As expected, the story is a recollection of past events. The events are therefore not presented in a chronological logical sequence but in a series of flashbacks. However the flashbacks are well-coordinated in such a way that the story still forms one organic whole.

She gives her friend the details of her husband's death and the funeral ceremonies that followed the death. She starts the work with how she was informed of the death and in the process, recalls the major events in her and Aissatou's lives from their childhood, through school, their courtships, marriages and betrayals by their husbands.

Ramatoulaye's husband, Moudou Fall, died suddenly of a heart attack. Following the strictures of her Muslim faith, Ramatoulaye must remain in seclusion for a long period of time. This seclusion is broken, however, by the ritualized visits of relatives and friends of the dead man. During the first days, Ramatoulaye must share her home with Binetou, her co-wife. This young woman is the same age as Ramatoulaye's oldest daughter. She concludes the letter with information on the challenges of bringing up adolescent children and the general well-being of her children.

### **3.4 Setting**

The setting of the novella is Senegal, a predominantly Muslim community. The names of the characters and other known names and events attest to this fact. For instance, she talks of the "smell of *lakh* cooling in calabashes" (5). *Lakh* as explained in the notes at the end of the work is a Senegalese food prepared from roughly kneaded millet flour, which is cooked in water and eaten with curds.

### **3.5 Characterization**

The protagonist, Ramatoulaye, is inspired by her friendship with Aissatou and by her resolute behaviour in the face of adversity. At the beginning of the story, Ramatoulaye was stressed. She writes to her friend to relieve this stress. As a Muslim, she refers to God when her

husband Modou Fall died. She also refers to him and to Sharia law concerning polygamy, when her husband, after twenty five years of marriage, marries her daughter's friend Binetou. Even though Modou abandoned her and spends their money on Binetou, Ramatoulaye decides to stay with him because of her faith. She feels that she has no choice, because life must go on. She therefore ensures the availability of the basic necessities in her house. She takes care of her family, pays duties and bills and finds food but she is lonely and she misses her "warm" husband. Gradually she tries to overcome her shyness or shame, she goes to the cinema alone. She finds peace and warmth in religion, friends, books, writings and cinema. Ramatoulaye allows her daughters to wear trousers and modern clothes to reflect her emancipation.

In talking to Aissatou about the hardships in her life, Ramatoulaye is actually reflecting on her own experiences. The two have reacted to their husbands' polygamous states differently; Ramatoulaye contemplates the merit of quitting the marriage and in the end stays. She is a clear representation of a woman aching to free herself from the bondages of tradition. On the other hand, Aissatou's decision in the end is far more radical than that made by Ramatoulaye as she did not hesitate to leave her husband. Whether the decisions each woman made for herself were correct may be left to the reader, but the book nonetheless as a whole serves to communicate firsthand common experiences of women around the world face on a daily basis.

**Aissatou** rises out of her position to disprove oppressive culture. She is a radical woman and an inspiration for Ramatoulaye and her daughter Daba. Aissatou takes charge of her life and walks out of a polygamous relationship. She is Ramatoulaye's best friend. When her husband took a second wife, Aissatou refused to condone his actions. She divorced him and sought power in her own right. When Ramatoulaye writes to her, Aissatou is working for the Senegalese embassy in the United States, overseeing her sons' education, and proving her independence. She is the daughter of a goldsmith so that noble background always made Aissatou proud and defiant. She married Mawdo Bâ, a man of a higher caste, despite the disapproval of his family. Later, she refuses to listen to the naysayers who claim that her sons will be irretrievably hurt by her divorce.

She is educated and even without a husband she believes that she still has a life to hold on to, integrity to move by and an enslaving culture to challenge. This is an important aspect of the message of the novel that the author relates through this character. She therefore acts as an inspiration for a woman suffocating under the whims of culture.

**Daouda Dieng** is one of the most progressive of the male characters in *So Long a Letter*. His attitude to women and life generally is reflected in the peace and harmony that surrounds his family and in his success as a politician. His views on the role of women and on women's emancipation guide his political affiliations and pronouncements. For these views, he has been called a "feminist" at the National Assembly but he remains undaunted in his flight for social justice" (p.61), insisting that

Women should no longer be decorative accessories, objects to be moved about, companions to be flattered, or calmed with promises.  
Women are the nation's primary, fundamental roots, from which all else

grow and blossom. Women must be encouraged to take a keener interest in the destiny of the country.(pp.61-2)

Through Daouda, Mariama Ba articulates a comprehensive formula for national integration, involving women in national developments and politics. Daouda believes as he explains to Ramatoulaye, that women should not limit their activities to caring for their husbands, their class and their children, but rather should be equally engrossed in public life (p.62).

**Abou**, Daba Fall's husband, is another progressive male character in the work. He believes in equality between spouses and helps Daba recover some of her father's possessions after Moudou Fall's death.

The unprogressive characters in *So Long a Letter* include **Modou Fall, Mawdo Ba, Tamsir, Binetou** and **her mother** and her **Aunt Nabou**, Aissatou's mother-in-law who arranges Mawdo's second marriage and thus makes it inevitable for Aissatou to divorce him. It is their active support of polygamy for very selfish motives that brings about the disruptions and conflicts generated in the families of Modou Fall and Madou Ba. "The bitter conflict in the family affects the social and economic condition of the characters. But its most destructive impact is seen in the life of Modou Fall. He not only becomes financially bankrupt and falls into debt, but also loses his health so that within five years after his second marriage, he dies of heart attack" (Ezeigbo,12).

### 3.6 Style

The book is written in the form of a letter, or a diary, from a widow, Ramatoulaye, to her childhood girlfriend, Aissatou, who lives in the United States. The letter indicates that she found support, friendship and values from female confidants, unity and harmony. The story is presented in the first person narrative. The reason for this is clear. When you write a letter, it is as if you are talking to the person the letter is addressed to. That is the case here. However, unlike in letters, some of the incidents are recounted so vividly that some conversations between major participants are included. The events, characters, and incidents are presented in detailed and vivid descriptions. One prominent feature that aids this vivid and graphic presentation of events is the use of short sentences and this imposes a sense of urgency on specific incidents. For instance, her description of her reaction to the telephone call from the doctor when her husband died is presented in this way:

A taxi quickly hailed! Fast! Fast! Faster still! My throat is dry. There is a rigid lump in my chest. Fast: Faster still. At last, the hospital: the mixed smell of suppurations and ether. The hospital- distorted faces, a train of tearful people, known and unknown, witness to this awful tragedy. A long corridor, which seems to stretch out endlessly. At the end, a room. In the room, a bed. On the bed, Modou stretched out, cut off from the world of the living by a white sheet in which he is completely enveloped (2).

The feminist position of the author is not in doubt as she comments freely on the relationship between man and woman in the society. She shows that not only men are important in this world so women should strive to live their lives independently without undue attachment to traditional values that seek to subordinate them. She highlights the importance of women, their role in bringing up families and keeping them together in time of calamity. The book is seen as "... a powerful expression of the unheeded voice of the previously silent woman in Africa. Ba is actually calling on women to take responsibility for their lives throughout the novel" (Azodo, 21).

Ramatoulaye expresses Ba's point of view in the novel. She speaks strongly on several occasions in support of women's education. Her question "When will education be decided for the children on the basis not of sex but of talent?" (p.16), is fortified by her comment to Daouda: "We have a right, just as you have, to education, which we ought to be able to pursue to the farthest limits of our intellectual capacities. We have a right to equal well paid employment, to equal opportunities" (16).

Ramatoulaye sees the situation where there are only four women out of a hundred deputies in the National Assembly as very unhealthy for national development. The need to have more women representation cannot be over emphasized as only then can women's views be aired and propagated. She also cries out against the injustice in the cabinet where women are completely marginalised.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

One of the earliest forms of the novel was the epistolary novel. This means that the entire action of the narrative is conveyed through letters. In the case of *So Long a Letter*, the narrative is told through just one very long letter from Ramatoulaye to her friend Aissatou. Here the letter works almost as a diary. Ramatoulaye records both her feelings and the events that take place around her. She reflects on the past and looks forward to the future. She also transcribes letters within her one long letter. The reader hears her dead husband Moudou's voice through snippets of the letters he wrote to Ramatoulaye before they were married. The reader learns of Aissatou's indignation at her husband's betrayal through the letter she wrote to him.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit we have discussed a novella in which we encounter a woman who, even while railing against her fate, takes solace in many traditional values. She hopes for a world where the best of old customs and new freedom can be combined. The text reflects a world where women are pitted against each other. Ba accurately describes the social, religious, and gender differences that can divide a people even as they strive to forge a strong new nation. She is sympathetic to all women, even the perceived enemies in the novel especially the youthful new wives who displace the middle-aged women. In letting one woman eloquently tell the anguish of her heartbreak, Ba suggests that all women have important stories to tell and their plight should be given a voice.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

List the elements that qualify this work as a novella in an epistolary style.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Ba, Mariama (1981). *So Long a Letter*. Trans. By Modupe Bode-Thomas. Ibadan: New Horn Press.

Ezeigbo, A. T.(1994). “Women Empowerment and National Integration: Mariama Ba’s *So Long a Letter* and Warner-Vieyra’s *Juletane*”. In Ernest Emenyonu and Charles Nnolim, eds. *Current Trends in Literature and Language Studies in West Africa*. Ibadan: Kraft Books

Azodo, Ada Uzoamaka (ed.)(2003). *Emerging Perspectives on Mariama Ba: Postcolonialism, Feminism, and Postmodernism*. Trenton: Africa World Press.

Femi (2006). Center for Cross Cultural Studies Dakar. Retrieved on June 30 2006 from <http://www.litency.com>

## **UNIT 4: ENGLISH NOVEL – JANE AUSTEN’S *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE***

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Background of the Author/Work
  - 3.2 Theme/Subject Matter
  - 3.3 Plot
  - 3.4 Setting
  - 3.5 Characterization
  - 3.6 Language
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

*Pride and Prejudice* is a novel by Jane Austen. You can see from the date that it was written centuries ago having been first published in 1813, as her second novel. You will recall our discussion on characterization in the early novels where we said that a story could be centred around the major character. That is what we have here. The story follows the main character Elizabeth Bennet as she deals with issues of manners, upbringing, moral uprightness, education and marriage in her aristocratic society of early 19th century England. Elizabeth is the second eldest of five daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet a country gentleman living in the fictional town of Meryton in Hertfordshire, not far from London.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- Identify theme of the novel
- Present the plot of the novel
- State the setting of the novel
- Present an analysis of some of the characters.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**



### 3.1 Background Of The Author/Work

Jane Austen (1775 – 1817) was an English novelist. She was born in Steventon, Hampshire, where her father was a rector. She was the second daughter and the seventh child in the close-knit family where she lived her entire life. She was educated primarily by her father and older brothers as well as through her own reading. The steadfast support of her family contributed immensely to her development as a professional writer. Her novels are set mainly among the landed gentry and her plots, though fundamentally comic, highlight the dependence of women on marriage to secure social standing and economic security. Her novels are highly prized not only for their light irony, humor, and depiction of the English country life of her time, but also for their underlying serious qualities. Her realism and biting social commentary cements her historical importance among scholars and critics.

Her writing career started at the age of 35 with the release *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). Her other novels are *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1816). She wrote two additional novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, both published posthumously in 1818, and began a third, which was eventually titled *Sanditon*, but she died before completing it.

Her work brought her little personal fame and only a few positive reviews during her lifetime, but her nephew's publication of *A Memoir of Jane Austen* in 1869 introduced her to a wider public, and by the 1940s she had become widely accepted in academia as a great English writer.

### 3.2 Theme/Subject Matter

#### Subject Matter

The subject matter of the novel is the marriages of the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet which could have been prevented by their environment and family. With the exceptions of Elizabeth and Jane, the entire Bennet family is woefully lacking in the kind of self-respect which magnifies their various forms of excesses or laxities. In the words of Gail Cunningham in the Introduction to the novel “ Mrs. Bennet’s irredeemable vulgarity and garrulous silliness expose her daughter to repeated social ridicule; Mary’s pomposity leads her to inappropriate displays of learning or accomplishment; Kitty, and even Lydia, display a shameless self-advertisement which sends Lydia to the brink of social ruin”(ix) in the novel. Also, Darcy in his letter to Elizabeth sums this up as ‘total want of propriety’. They lack proper pride and self-esteem. Consequently, they humiliate themselves and others most of the time. Finally, pride and prejudice on the part of the protagonists, Elizabeth and Darcy would have contributed most in the near-abortive marriage of Jane and Elizabeth.

#### Themes

Many critics take the novel's title as a starting point when analysing the major themes of *Pride and Prejudice*; The antithesis and alliteration in the title is remarkable and could be seen as the major theme of the novel. However, some of the themes discernable in the novel are presented below:

- **The importance of environment and upbringing on the development of young people's character and morality.** This is the major theme in this novel and in most of her works. Social standing and wealth are not necessarily advantages in her world.
- **Ineffectual parents.** In *Pride and Prejudice*, the failure of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet (particularly the latter) as parents is blamed for Lydia's lack of moral judgment; Darcy, on the other hand, has been taught to be principled and scrupulously honourable, but is also proud and overbearing. Kitty, rescued from Lydia's bad influence and spending more time with her older sisters after they marry, is said to improve greatly in their superior society.
- **Pride and Prejudice** is another prominent theme in the novel. If you have read the novel, you will notice that the qualities of the title (pride and prejudice) are not exclusively assigned to one or the other of the protagonists; both Elizabeth and Darcy display elements of pride and prejudice. Pride and prejudice run through the novel. Pride can have connotations of proper self-respect but is usually used pejoratively to represent "inordinate and unreasonable self-esteem" (Miles 42). Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy begins from the moment of his snobbish refusal to dance with her at the ball and remains almost to the end of the novel. Consequently this prepares her prejudice in favour of Wickham when he appears. In the case of Darcy, his instant prejudice against the society of Meryton is a consequence of his class and upbringing. Read the novel to get more of the conflicts and complications caused by pride and prejudice.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

Read chapter 35 of the novel and:

- State the subject matter of that chapter
- List at least five speeches that highlight pride and prejudice

### **3.3 Point of View**

The novel is presented in the third person point of view or the omniscient narrative technique. Jane Austen makes an extensive and effective use of dialogue. In addition, she employs the narrative technique of free indirect speech that has been defined as "the free representation of a character's speech, by which one means, not words actually spoken by a character, but the words that typify the character's thoughts, or the way the character would think or speak, if she thought or spoke" (Palmer 52). In this case, while reporting in the third person, she uses a peculiar narrative which adopts the tone and vocabulary of a particular character especially in the case of Elizabeth. In this way, Austen invites the reader to follow events from Elizabeth's viewpoint, sharing her prejudices and misapprehensions. In this way, the reader gets most of the information solely through Elizabeth's point of view

### **3.4 Plot**

The novel revolves around the Bennet family. Mr. Bennet has five marriageable daughters and a mother who will be left without a home and income once Mr. Bennet dies. This is the terms on which Mr. Bennet inherited Longbourn. There was a statute then in England that prohibited women from inheriting property. Instead, one of Mr. Bennet's male relations will inherit the estate on his demise. This is still happening in many Nigerian cultures whereby when a man dies without a son, his daughters and wife are disinherited and his brothers will take over his property. Naturally, the women concerned will be worried. In this novel, Mrs. Bennet worries about this predicament, and is desperate in her bid to find husbands for her daughters as quickly as possible. This need for the marriage of young ladies and gentlemen in the society then is captured in the first sentence of the novel: "IT IS A TRUTH universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (3). The plot of the novel revolves around this first sentence and is justified by the end of the novel/work.

Mr. Bennet does not seem to be worried at all, and Elizabeth, the heroine, has decided to only marry for love, though she has no concrete ideas on how she will survive financially. She feels that her sister's beauty, kindness and good nature would fetch her a wealthy husband. The novel opens with the great news that Mr. Bingley, a wealthy young gentleman, has rented a country estate in Netherfield near the Bennets. He arrives in town accompanied by his fashionable sisters and his good friend, Mr. Darcy. While Bingley is well-received in the community, Darcy begins his acquaintance with smug condescension and proud distaste for all the 'country' people. Bingley and Jane, Elizabeth Bennet's older sister, get acquainted. Unfortunately the relationship was prevented from blossoming by Darcy who also slights Elizabeth at a ball. Elizabeth is stung by Darcy's haughty rejection of her at the local dance and decides to match his coldness with her own wit and carries it till certain revelations were made and she discovers his true nature. Ironically, unknown to her, Darcy finds himself gradually drawn to Elizabeth. Just as Bingley appears to be at the point of proposing marriage to Jane Bennet, he quits Netherfield, leaving Jane confused and upset. Elizabeth is convinced that Bingley's sister has conspired with Darcy to separate Jane and Bingley.

Before Bingley leaves, Mr. Collins, the male relative who is to inherit Longbourn, makes a sudden appearance and stays with the Bennets and proposes marriage first to Jane and later to Elizabeth. Both of them reject the offer, much to her mother's distress. Collins quickly recovers and proposes to Elizabeth's close friend, Charlotte Lucas, who immediately accepts him. Once the marriage is arranged, Charlotte asks Elizabeth to come for an extended visit.

In the spring, Elizabeth joins Charlotte and her cousin at his parish in Kent. The parish is adjacent to Rosings Park, the grand manor of Mr. Darcy's aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, where Elizabeth is frequently invited. While calling on Lady Catherine, Mr. Darcy encounters Elizabeth. She discovers from a cousin of Darcy that it was he who separated Bingley and Jane. Soon after, Darcy admits his love of Elizabeth and proposes to her. Insulted by his high-handed and insulting manner of proposing, Elizabeth refuses him. When he asks why she should refuse him, she confronts him with his sabotage of Bingley's relationship with Jane and Wickham's account of their dealings.

Deeply shaken by Elizabeth's vehemence and accusations, Darcy writes her a letter justifying his actions. The letter reveals that Wickham soon dissipated his legacy-settlement (from Darcy's father's estate), then came back to Darcy requesting permanent patronage; and that he became angry when rejected, accusing Darcy of cheating him. To exact revenge and to make off with part of the Darcy family fortune, he attempted to seduce Darcy's young sister Georgiana—to gain her hand and fortune, almost persuading her to elope with him—before he was found out and stopped. Towards Bingley and Jane, Darcy justifies his actions based on his observations that Jane did not show any reciprocal interest in his friend; thus his aim in separating them was mainly to protect Bingley from heartache. Darcy admits that he was concerned about the disadvantageous connection with Elizabeth's family, especially her embarrassing mother and wild younger sisters. The letter opens her eyes more to her family's behaviour and Wickham's credibility.

Some months later, during a tour of Derbyshire with her aunt and uncle, Elizabeth visits Pemberley, Darcy's estate and unexpectedly, Darcy arrives at Pemberley and makes an effort to be gracious and welcoming to them, thus strengthening Elizabeth's newly favourable impression of him. Darcy then introduces Elizabeth to his sister Georgiana. He treats her uncle and aunt very well, and finds them to be of more sound character than her other relatives, whom he previously dismissed as socially inferior.

Elizabeth and Darcy's renewed acquaintance is cut short when news arrives that Elizabeth's younger sister Lydia has run away with Wickham. This exposes Wickham's behaviour more to Elizabeth. It is discovered that he has no intention of marrying her. Darcy intervenes and forces the marriage. Soon after, Bingley and Darcy return to the area. Bingley proposes marriage to Jane, and this news starts rumors that Darcy will propose to Elizabeth. Lady Catherine travels to Longbourn with the sole aim of forcing Elizabeth to never accept such a proposal. Elizabeth is adamant in her refusal to concede to Lady Catherine's demands. Darcy hears of Elizabeth's obstinacy and it convinces him that her opinion of him has changed. Consequently, he proposes again to Elizabeth who accepts, and the two become engaged.

In the resolution, Bingley and Jane get married and later settle in Derbyshire, closer to Pemberley where Darcy and Elizabeth settle after their marriage. Elizabeth and Jane manage to teach Kitty greater social grace, and Mary learns to accept the difference between herself and her sisters' beauty and mixes more with the outside world. Lydia and Wickham continue to move often, leaving their debts for Jane and Elizabeth to pay off. At Pemberley, Elizabeth and Georgiana grow close.

From the synopsis of the novel which I have deliberately presented above, you can see that the plot runs chronologically and causally from the beginning to the end.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise.**

List five incidents that occur chronologically and causally in the novel.

### **3.4 Setting.**

The story is set uniquely in the turn of the 19th century. However, it retains a fascination for modern readers as the events and action remain relevant in the contemporary society. The physical setting is England as some known landmarks like London, Kent and other known towns are mentioned in the novel.

### 3.5 Characterization

In this novel, we credit Jane Austen with a presentation of a deep insight into human affairs. Her treatment of all the characters in the novel especially the major ones shows that she is a master craftsman in the art of characterization. She assembles an array of characters, each playing his or her role in the unfolding of the plot. The round characters grow with the novel as they learn from interpersonal relationships. For instance, Elizabeth's straightforward attitude gives her a leeway to deliver some home-truths to Darcy, Lady Catherine and the Collins. There is a steady line of development, perfectly consistent with the framework Jane Austen establishes at the beginning of the novel. The conversion of the major characters is carefully planned, proceeding through logical and clearly defined stages from the beginning to the end. The characters are settled appropriately at the end of the novel. Jane's sweet nature is rewarded with Bingley's four or five thousand a year; Darcy's ten thousand a year and magnificent Pemberley estate becomes a befitting material match for Elizabeth's superiority of wit and insight; and Lydia and Wickham are consigned deservedly to a life of nomadic penury as social outcasts; Mrs. Bennet is not allowed to visit Pemberley; and the haughty Miss Bingley is 'deeply mortified' by Darcy's marriage to Elizabeth. Let us study a brief analysis of some of the characters presented below.

**Elizabeth Bennet** is the main character and protagonist. The reader sees the unfolding plot and the other characters mostly from her experiences and interpersonal relationship with the other characters. She is the second of the Bennet daughters at twenty years old; she is intelligent, lively, attractive, and witty, but has a tendency to judge on first impressions and perhaps to be a little selective of the evidence upon which she bases her judgments. She exemplifies pride and prejudice in the novel.

**Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy** is the main male character. Twenty-eight years old and unmarried, Darcy is the wealthy owner of the famous family estate of Pemberley in Derbyshire. He is handsome, intelligent, but haughty and seems to possess an excessive pride and concern for social status. He makes a poor impression on strangers with his aloof and arrogant attitude. However he is valued by those who know him well.

**Charles Bingley** is a young gentleman who made his wealth recently but without an estate and seeks a permanent home. He rents the Netherfield estate near Longbourn when the novel opens. By the end of the novel he moves to Derbyshire. He is Darcy's friend but is more amiable with his good nature. He is handsome, kind and charming. He is easily influenced by others.

**Jane Bennet**, the eldest Bennet sister is considered the most beautiful young lady in the neighbourhood. Her character is contrasted with Elizabeth's as sweeter, shyer, and equally sensible, but not as clever. Her most notable trait is a desire to see only the good in others.

**Mr. Bennet** has a wife and five daughters, and seems to have resigned himself to his fate of not having a male child. He does not approve of the indecorous behaviours of his wife and three younger daughters but seems incapacitated in correcting them. He only mocks and laughs at them. He is closer to his two elder daughters, Jane and Elizabeth. He relates very well with them and shows them undisguised love and respect.

**Mrs. Bennet** is the wife of Mr. Bennet and mother of Elizabeth and her sisters. She is frivolous, excitable, and narrow-minded. She is susceptible to attacks of tremors and palpitations; her public manners and social climbing are embarrassing to Jane and Elizabeth. Her favourite daughter is the youngest, Lydia.

**George Wickham** is an old acquaintance of Darcy from childhood, and an officer in the militia unit stationed near Meryton. He is superficially charming so make friends easily. He wants to marry Elizabeth and later runs off with Lydia. He spreads malicious tales about Darcy thereby distorting Darcy's personality and image in the community. It is eventually revealed that these tales are distortions, and that Darcy was the wronged man in their acquaintance.

**Lady Catherine de Bourgh** is a wealthy, haughty, domineering and condescending woman who is very class conscious. She is related to Darcy and tries to foil the marriage between Elizabeth and Darcy. Elizabeth shows her that she is respectful but cannot be intimidated. Darcy, whilst respectful of their shared family connection, is offended by her lack of manners, especially towards Elizabeth.

**William Collins** is Mr. Bennet's clergyman cousin and, as Mr. Bennet has no son, heir to his estate. He is not sensible, always eager to please his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh and boasts of his acquaintance with and advantageous patronage from her. Mr. Bennet, Jane, and Elizabeth consider him pompous and lacking in common sense. Elizabeth's rejection of Collins' marriage proposal is welcomed by her father, irrespective of the financial benefit of the proposed marriage to their family. Elizabeth is later somewhat distressed, when her closest friend Charlotte Lucas consents to marry Collins. However she appreciates her friend's need for a settled position and to avoid the low status and lack of autonomy of an old maid.

Other characters in the novel include:

**Mary Bennet** is the only plain Bennet sister.

**Catherine "Kitty" Bennet** is the fourth Bennet sister.

**Lydia Bennet** is the youngest Bennet sister

**Caroline Bingley** is the snobbish sister of Charles Bingley.

**Mr Gardiner** is Mrs. Bennet's brother. He is a sensible gentleman and a businessman.

**Georgiana Darcy** is Mr. Darcy's quiet and amiable younger sister.

### 3.6 Language

The language of the novel is simple, direct and interesting. The dialogues are true to life. Jane Austen uses language to advance her themes appropriately and for vivid descriptions of environment, events and characters. The prejudices of characters are rightly relayed with appropriate exchanges. Let us look at the language in this remark by Miss Bingley about Elizabeth:

How very ill Eliza Bennet looks this morning, Mr Darcy,' she cried; 'I never in my life saw anyone so much alerted as she is since the winter. She is grown so brown and coarse! Louisa and I were agreeing that we should not have known her again'...

For my own part,' she rejoined, 'I must confess that I never could see any beauty in her. Her face is too thin; her complexion has no brilliancy; and her features are not at all handsome. Her nose wants character; there is nothing marked in its lines. Her teeth are tolerable, but not out of the common way; and as for her eyes, which have sometimes been called so fine, I never could perceive anything extraordinary in them. They have a sharp, shrewish look, which I do not like at all; and in her air altogether, there is a self-sufficiency without fashion, which is intolerable' (181).

Another hallmark of language in this novel is the use of witty, comic and ironic voice. You can find either one of these or a combination of two or more in almost every other page of the novel. Let us recall Mr. Bennet's reaction to Mr. Collins first letter to the family. He declares in an answer to Elizabeth's question if Mr. Collins is a sensible man for writing the way he did: "No, my dear; I think not. I have great hopes of finding him quite the reverse. There is a mixture of self-importance in his letter, which promises well"(44). In another reaction to the same subject matter, he cuts through his wife's hysterical demands that he should force Elizabeth to marry Collins within this comic and ironical tone:

An unhappy alternative before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a Stranger to one of your parents- Your mother will never see you again if you *do not* marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you if you again if you *do*. (78)

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is one of the early novels in English Literature and stands out as one of the most loved novels. I choose it deliberately because of the simplicity yet rich narrative techniques. The characterization in the novel is handled appropriately for the explication of the themes and the advancement of the plot. Darcy and Elizabeth fall from an initial pride to just humiliation and self-knowledge. The learning process is painful but ultimately successful. They are led through "crises which test their understanding, judgment and feelings against earlier pride and prejudice" (Le Faye 67).

### 5.0 SUMMARY

We have read Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and analysed it in terms of the theme and style. We are concluding that it is a masterpiece that though written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is still relevant in the cotemporary times because of the way the issues raised are treated and characters presented.

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

Present ananalysis of the six characters listed above- from Mary Bennet to Georgiana Darcy.

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

Austen, J. (1992). *Pride and Prejudice*. Wordsworth edition. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics.

Le Faye, D. (2002). *Jane Austen: The World of Her Novels*. New York: Harry N. Adams.

Miles, R. (2003). *Jane Austen: Writers and their Work*. New York:Northcote House

Palmer, E. (1986). *Studies on the English Novel*.Ibadan: African University Press.



## **UNIT 4: AFRICAN NOVEL – AYI KWEI ARMA’S *THE BEAUTYFUL ONES ARE NOT YET BORN***

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Background of the Author/Work
  - 3.2 Theme/Subject Matter
  - 3.3 Style/Narrative Technique
  - 3.4 Plot
  - 3.5 Setting
  - 3.6 Characterization
  - 3.7 Language
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Ghanaian novelist, AyiKweiArmah, in this novel, *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born* presents an obvious reaction to the perceived hopelessness he found in his nation. He did not seem to see the beautiful ones who would help to steer the ship of socio-political and cultural development of his country to a safe haven. He presents the state of corruption and social decadence in a graphic, symbolic and figurative manner. He illustrates these vices as vomit, decay and farting in private and public places.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- Discuss the plot of the novel
- Identify the characters in the novel
- Determine the themes discernable in the novel
- List some of the symbols in the novel

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Background of the Author/Work**

Ayi Kwei Armah was born in Takoradi, Ghana, in 1939 and was educated at Achimota High School, Groton School and Harvard University. He has worked as translator, editor, television script-writer and lecturer at the National University of Lesotho. His published novels include: *Fragments*, *Why are we so Blessed*, *Two Thousand Seasons*, *The Healers* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.

In his first novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), Armah showed his deep concern about greed and political corruption in a newly independent African nation. In his second novel, *Fragments* (1970), a young Ghanaian returns home after living in the United States and is disillusioned by the Western-inspired materialism and moral decay that he sees around him.

### **3.2 Theme/Subject Matter**

The main theme of this novel is corruption. The novelist presents the struggles and frustrations of a man who determines to live an honest life in a society that is engulfed in corruption. We see the level of corruption and moral decadence in the society through the eyes of this man who is the protagonist in the novel. He is simply referred to as Man. The subject matter is the story of a Man who struggles to remain clean when everyone else around him has succumbed to 'rot'. In the end he could not change the system instead he aids one of the corrupt government officials to escape. This further amplifies the title of the novel which states that the beautiful ones are not yet born. It means that there are no honest citizens with firm characters who can change the system.

Another theme discernable in the novel is that of bad leadership and the negative effects of capitalism. The capitalist system encourages individual acquisition of excessive wealth. The leaders who are in the minority amass wealth for their personal aggrandizement while the citizens who are in the majority wallow in abject poverty. They therefore explore every opportunity to make quick money in fraudulent ways. The bus conductor is ready to cheat and the worker in the office does not blink an eye as he accepts bribe from the merchant and the merchant does not see anything wrong with that. On the contrary, he is spiteful of Man who refuses to accept bribe from him. The societal ill of corruption which the leaders profess to wipe out ends up swallowing the leaders as they get tainted with greed and corruption, in most cases, more than ever.

### **3.3. Style/Narrative Technique**

Ayi Kwei Armah has used his contemporary locale of Ghana, to paint a sordid picture of the unspeakable rot and decadence that has eaten deep into the political and social landscape of Africa as a whole. The entire story presents a mental graphic picture of an intractable decay and corruption, in Ghana in particular and Africa in general, to the reader. The author in presenting his theme however does not utilize the writing style of the chronological plot. Most part of the narration is presented in incidents that are manipulated to present gory pictures of the decadence, corruption, rot, dishonesty in the system. These are reflected in decay in various forms like the dirt on the banister, the phlegm and the dirt in the streets.

The novelist adopts the multiple point of view though the greater part of the narration is in the omniscient point of view. He uses the first person point of view to present the incidents that are recalled in flashbacks. You can see this in chapter six. Armah also uses dialogue in a peculiar way to provide important information. The dialogue here is not the conventional interjections we find in prose work but the presentation of almost a chapter in dialogue. A good example is the conversation between Teacher and Man in chapter five which is presented in ten pages out of sixteen pages of that chapter

### **3.4 Plot**

*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is a novel by Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah. It was published in 1968. It tells the story of a nameless man who struggles to reconcile himself with the reality of post-independence Ghana. The unnamed protagonist, referred to as "the man" works at a railway station and is approached with a bribe; when he refuses, his wife is furious and he cannot help feeling guilty despite his innocence. The novel expresses the frustration many citizens of the newly-independent states in Africa felt after attaining political independence. Many African states like Ghana followed similar paths in which corruption and the greed of African elites became rampant. Corruption in turn filtered down to the rest of society and the 'rot' that characterized post-independent Ghana in the last years of Nkrumah is a dominant theme in the book.

### **3.5 Setting**

The locale is Ghana, though the message of societal decadence is a universal one so we may not pin down the setting to any particular physical environment. The novel's time-frame is the post-independent Ghana. The societal ill of corruption which African leaders profess to wipe out, as for instance in Nigeria's anti-corruption "war", ends up swallowing the leaders as they become more and more corrupt and wallow in senseless self-indulgences.

### **3.6 Characterization**

The main characters are The Man, Oyo, Teacher, Joseph Koomson, Estella Komsoon. These characters are not fully developed. The fifteen-chapter novel does not have developed characters, rather vague and imaginary nomenclatures are utilized through the text. For instance, the hero of the novel is known as the man, also known as (a.k.a), 'the Watcher', 'The Silent One "The Giver," and his family is called "The Loved Ones". Furthermore there is no way somebody's name, real or imagined, literal or figurative, could be 'teacher' unless stressed or raised to the level antonomasia or metaphor, and this is a semi - hero' in the novel. Symbol, therefore rather than clarity of presentation and development of character, engages Armah's attention in this beautiful literary work on corruption and bribery.

### **3.7 Language**

Again, though the language is simple, it is raw and unrefined in the sense that he presents a very graphic picture of the decay. You can read the opening scene of the novel as the novelist describes the man who is sleeping in an old choking commuter bus arriving at a bus stand. The conductor is careless and uses abusive language to both the passengers on board and the driver.

Another stylistic feature of the author is the use of the story of **Chichidodo**, to illustrate a point. Chichidodo is a bird that hates excrements yet survives on maggot, whose life is sustained in the lavatory. Storytelling, therefore and rich proverbs abound in the novel. The novel is rich in graphic details and this is enhanced by the following literary techniques.

### **3.8 Imagery/Symbolism**

This literary device is the wheel upon which the entire work rotates. The writer uses the bus to symbolise the state of Ghana soon after independence and presents corruption and disorderly and immorality especially of the leaders. As the writer builds up the plot of the novel, he carries corruption as the main theme of the book. Poverty is also shown by the writer to be the main problem facing the Ghanaian people despite their freedom from colonialism. The writer affirms that after independence the people are poorer and the filthy state symbolizes the level of decadence and that it runs through from the richest to the poorest. Man and Teacher symbolize the conscience of the nation but they are overwhelmed. The novel ends with a coup d'état, a revolution as a solution to increased socio-economic problems. However, that may not present the desired solution as a policeman is seen taking bribe soon after the revolution.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The novel treats the subjects of the 1960 concerning Africa or Africans, power play at public and personal levels, the evils of capitalism, revolutions, and leadership, but these issues are still contemporary in many African societies. The events of the novel take place between Passion Week in 1965 and February 25, 1966, the day after the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president. On the political level, they describe the failure of a purportedly socialistic government, which is, in fact, as capitalistic as the white colonial regime it replaced. The new black leaders with white souls have, according to Ayi Kwei Armah, used their positions of power for personal gain. The corruption has filtered down to all levels of society and economic relationships are based on intimidation and bribery.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have presented an African novel that treats socio-political issues that face many African states. The author insists that there is no hope yet for the amelioration of these issues and the entrenchment of social justice because the beautiful ones are not yet born.

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

Read the novel and list all the characters. Analyse the characters of Man and Koomsom.

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

Armah, Ayi Kwei (1969). *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. London: Heinemann.

Palmer, E. (1972). *An Introduction to the African Novel*. London: Heinemann.