

**ORAL  
LITERATURE  
NOTES  
AND  
MODEL QUESTION  
PAPERS**

**CHAPTER ONE  
A BRIEF INTRODUCTION**

Oral literature is one of the areas tested in Literature in English of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations. The other areas in this paper include The Novel, **Drama, Poetry** and the **Short Story**.

What is Oral literature?

Have you ever imagined what life was like in the days of our great –great grandfathers? How did they spend their leisure time? Certainly they did not spend their free time reading the works of their great writers. This is simply because they could not read. The civilization of reading and writing was still at its rudimentary stages and in some parts of the world this civilization was unheard of. Books as we know them today are a much recent invention.

But are we suggesting that simply because there were no novels or short stories as we know them today, there were no stories or poems or other artistic forms? Far from it! From time immemorial, man has always told stories. He has always recited poems. These stories and poems are a reflection of humanity at various stages of development. It is through stories and poems that people define themselves: who they are; what they believe in; what they value; their occupations; what they eat etc.

Since the art of writing was not as widespread as it is today, how were these stories, poems and

songs preserved and transmitted? They were preserved in people's memory and transmitted by word of mouth. In addition African societies for instance, the extended family would gather at the hearth (fire place) in the evening after supper and spend time telling stories and posing riddles.

Children would memorize these stories and riddles and would so on start retelling them and when they grew up, they would hand them down to their children and the cycle would continue. This situation still obtains in many societies today. This especially the case in many rural areas where one is likely to find communities those are largely homogenous. In these communities oral literature is very much alive

As mentioned above, oral literature is transmitted by word of mouth. For this reason it is called **oral**.

As you revise oral literature, therefore, you should bear in mind that Oral Literature is

**spoken, generally performed** and often **dramatized** by a skilled performer. That means that if you are reading a narrative for instance, you have to bear in mind that the narrative was actually performed to a live audience as opposed to a novel or a short story whose original format was the written form. You should also consider that the target audience for a particular piece of oral shares a common social, cultural and historical background. They could, for instance be members of a particular ethnic community or even members of the same village or clan.

**Oral literature: A misnomer?**

Much of the confusion surrounding the study of oral literature stems from the very nature of the name of the subject: Oral literature. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines the word "oral" as "spoken; not written: *an oral examination*,

*stories passed on by oral tradition (i.e. from one generation to the next without being written)...*

The same dictionary defines the word "literature" as "writings that are valued as works of art especially fiction, drama, and poetry..."

From the two definitions above we are quick to note that the term oral literature generates an obvious contradiction. That which is **oral** cannot also be **written** at the same time. It is because of the contradiction by this term that many scholars have suggested alternative terms to describe the subject. These include **verbal art, orature, performed art** etc. If you were asked to suggest a more suitable term to refer to the same subject, what would you use?

### **Features of oral Literature**

These are features that distinguish oral literature from other forms of literature such as the Novel and the Short Story.

### **The spoken word**

As opposed to the Novel, and the Short Story whose raw materials is the written word,

Oral Literature relies on the **spoken word**.

Narratives and songs are passed down from one generation to the next through the

**spoken word** preserved in people's **memory** as opposed to the written word preserved in books. It is only after the invention of writing that most of the oral literature pieces have been written down so that they can be readily available to people for study and analysis.

### **Occasion**

As opposed to the "written" forms of literature, some of the oral literature pieces call for

Specific **occasions** to be performed. For instance there will be songs performed during

marriage ceremonies, funerals, while soothing the baby to sleep, when working, before going

to war etc. In other forms literature for instance the novel, the short story or drama, the aspect of occasion is not important. For instance one can read a novel any time.

### **Performance**

Oral literature lives in **performance** One cannot for instance, fully appreciate a wedding song unless it is performed in order to understand and enjoy. When oral literature pieces are written down, the aspects of performance are lost.

### **Reasons for studying oral literature in school/importance of oral literature**

Oral literature forms an important part of informal education by teaching people to

improve their Self expression, Powers of observation and memory. It also sharpens their

Wits and Imagination, It teaches people Social values Behaviour and How to relate to the world and to others It also informs people on their collective history and culture, It is also a rich source of entertainment, It helps us appreciate the culture of other communities in our country leading to a better understanding of these cultures, which could lead to social cohesion (unity in diversity).

Some forms of oral literature could be used to mobilize the masses toward a certain goal. The fight against HIV/AIDS has been largely conducted through songs.

### **Types of oral literature**

These are also called **genres** or **forms** or even **classifications** of oral literature. They include:

1. Oral narratives
2. Songs/oral poetry
3. The Short Forms.
  - a) Proverbs
  - b) Tongue twisters
  - c) Riddles

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **ORAL NARRATIVES**

These are further categorized / classified

- a. Myths
- b. Legends
- c. Etiological/explanatory narratives
- d. Trickster narratives
- e. Monster narratives
- F Human narratives

### **MYTHS**

- a. A myth is a story that attempt to explain the origins of a particular phenomenon.
- b. It could account for the origins of a community, or other natural phenomena.

A

myth involves gods and other supernatural beings in their structure.

Communities treasure them because of their religious value and as their official account how they came into being.

### **Example of a Myth**

#### **THE ORIGIN OF DEATH (Kalenjin)**

According to the Kalenjin, the number of hunters in their land had increased so much that the wild animals Were been wiped out. These hunters decided to hunt all the animals of the plain. One day one of the hunters stopped to drink from a pool. As he was drinking from the pool, he noticed a reflection in the water. The reflection was very beautiful. It was a bird that looked like a cock. The feathers were very beautiful but

instead of having two legs this bird had four. The head was large and had a blue comb.

The hunter wondered what this bird was. He had never seen such a creature in all his life. He thought he was dreaming. He finished drinking water and rose to go, but then he realized that the creature was a reality. The creature moved and watched the hunter. The hunter in turn watched the creature. Certainly the creature was strange. The hunter decided to aim an arrow at it. "Perhaps the meat of the unknown creature was very sweet," he thought as he released the arrow.

After the strange creature fell dead, there followed rain that was heavier than had ever been known before. The rain was full of thunder and lightning. No body knows where the hunter went. All that is known is that he never returned to his family. And from that day of heavy rain, people began to sleep forever.

As the Kalenjin say, thunder got very angry at the shooting of his innocent son, and so he sent heavy rain and death as punishment to people. Before the heavy rain, people had slept and woken up as usual. Thus the long sleep known as death was caused by the hunter's curiosity.

### **Note**

This story attempts to explain the origin of death, an important phenomenon. It is delivered in a serious tone and involves powerful supernatural being, thunder.

### **LEGENDS**

These are narratives about memorable historical events and people. Events here may

include inter ethnic wars, famines, migration of people and so on. Some of the historically significant people who feature in legends include warriors and great chiefs such as Lwanda Magera (Luo), Wangombe Waihura (Gikuyu), Gor Mahia (LUO) etc.

In the process of being passed on from one generation to another, legend may acquire

elements of fantasy as exaggerations are added, perhaps as a way of emphasizing the

might of the subject of the legend. A good example of these elements of fantasy is to be found in the story of Lwanda Magera who is said to have had a body so hard that spears bounced off his body!

### **Example of legend**

#### **THE ARINKON (Maasai)**

There were once a people known as the *ilarinkon* who were owners of the land that the Maasai occupied after their ascent from the Kerio escarpment. These people had a leader who was a mighty giant. Since he was very much feared, it was deemed wise to avoid him for fear that upon the slightest provocation; he might decide to wipe out the whole Maasai population. But the Arinkon remained resentful of the Maasai occupation, spreading over their land. They sent messages telling them to leave.

But the Maasai were unwilling to leave the richly endowed country, having just

recovered from the formidable ascent of the escarpment. At the same time, they were reluctant to fight people whose might they were unsure of, especially having observed signs of great physical might in their leader. They instead played tricks on them. They started by bribing them with gifts of cattle, sheep and various other items, with the hope of being permitted to stay on. But these people developed a habit of pestering the Maasai with the intention of getting them fed up, hoping to make them leave, either to wherever they had come from or elsewhere. One day, the Arinkon chief sent a message to the Maasai saying, "We will let you stay if you bring warm frothing milk."

The Maasai said, "Very well, give us eight days and we will bring it." Since the Maasai lived a long way off, the milk would without doubt have cooled before they got to the Arinkon chief. As soon as they got home, the Maasai called a meeting. Close by the meeting place, there was a little boy who was herding calves. He heard what the elders were discussing and said to them, "Fathers, do not worry yourselves, go and drive away that cow whose calf is dead and when the enemies have assembled, milk quickly and take the milk while it is still frothing."

The Maasai waited until the enemy had assembled, waiting to kill them, not expecting them to produce the milk. They milked the cow and quickly took the milk. The Arinkon were staggered with shock. They immediately knew that they must have been tricked. The ruler said, "Very well, they have beaten us on this one." He then told them to go and return on a certain day. On the arranged day, they returned to the Arinkon.

When the Maasai returned the Arinkon ruler said to them, "I now want you to bring me a sandal with hair on both sides."

The Maasai were in a fix, for who had ever seen a hide which is hairy on both sides? As the saying goes, "Abilities and determination are no equal." The Maasai said, "Very well."

Back at the same meeting place, the young boy was briefed on what had transpired. He said quickly, "It is a simple matter, go and find a donkey and cut off one ear, make a sandal and take it to him."

The elders replied, "He has spoken the truth. The Arinkon ruler received the sandal with great consternation for he had not expected the Maasai to obtain it at all.

The ruler said to the Maasai, "You may now go back and when I need something else I shall send for you."

As soon as the Maasai departed the Arinkon held counsel to figure out the most difficult item to request the Maasai, so that failure to procure it would lead to a fight. When the Arinkon chief next sent for the Maasai, he said to them, "Go and fill up a gourd and bring them to me when they are still hopping about."

The elders went back to the clever boy, who had, by then been nicknamed 'clever one' and informed him of what they had been told. When he heard it, he said, "Oh! Fathers, this is difficult, but it is easy at the same time, but do not worry yourselves for we will find them fleas. Take hold of a donkey and cut off some hairs from the mane and crush in a buffalo horn container and put them in a gourd. When you hand the Arinkon the gourd you must make sure you face the windward side."

The elders did as they were directed and soon delivered the fleas'. As they were handing over the gourd, they tilted it so that the hairs were blown about by the wind, creating an impression that the fleas were dashing about. "There get hold of them!" the Arinkon shouted. But could they get hold of them when they had already dispersed? The Arinkon had never before been so flabbergasted! Another day passed, and still the Arinkon did not know what to do with a people that were proving too smart for them. They again held counsel and when they next summoned the Maasai, their leader said to them: "I want you to bring me only two more things. Bring me a metal toothbrush and find me a way that leads to heaven." The Maasai drew their hands to their mouths in amazement. They requested him to give them three months to find those items. When they returned home, they held a meeting that lasted the whole day. When the clever boy was informed of what had been requested, he said: "Go and bring me a club and I will show you how to make a metal toothbrush." They went in search of it.

Several clubs were taken to the boy, but each time he tried to use one it would break. Many clubs got broken. Eventually, he said to the elders: "Go to a place called Oletukat and get me a club from the *ologol-tim* tree, whose stem had been bitten off by the rhinoceros and the water has gone down to the roots." After a long search, the tree was found, uprooted and taken to the boy. When he tried it, it did not break. He said. "Now let us go to the Arinkon where I will tell you of the metal toothbrush."

At the first flicker of dawn, the people started off to the enemy country. The boy was among the rest with his club tucked under his armpit. They found the Arinkon having gathered to receive what was brought. The meeting was opened with the exchange of news. What the boy was going to do was by now obvious to the Maasai. The father of the clever boy stood up and said: There he is in a crouching position with the notorious one\*\*whose shaft is black and whose organs of sight detect us. If you are for the affirmative confirm so we can fold the knee\*\*\*and approach above the organs that is bent\*\*\*\*so that the brain may pop out through the nostrils. If you are for the negative confirm so that we beat a retreat."

The Arinkon did not understand what was said, and started asking themselves: "What are these people saying?" The elder answered: "We have simply said that we have brought the metal toothbrush...." the boy stood up as though he was going to hand over the toothbrush. He hit the Arinkon chief and the eyes popped out and the brain oozed out through the nostrils. While they were being beaten,

the Arinkon were being told "Arinkon, here, have what you have always sought." That was when the Arinkon race has always sought" originated.

*\*\*The spear\*\*\*One often half kneels down in preparation to spear an object. \*\*\*\*The ear.*

## **EXPLANATORY / AETIOLOGICAL NARRATIVES**

These are narratives that attempt to trace the origins of physical and cultural traits. They deal with less serious themes than myths.

Examples of these narratives include:

1. How the zebra acquired its stripes.
2. Why hens scratch the ground.
3. Why the ostrich's neck is long

As opposed to myths

- Aetiological narratives do not involve gods and the supernatural world.
- They deal with less important issues.
- Are generally told to children in an effort to quench their curiosity.

### **Examples of explanatory narratives**

#### **Why cats like to stay by the fire place (Bukusu)**

The cat was formerly a wild animal and lived in the forest. The forest was too dangerous for the cat so, seeking protection, it attached itself to an elephant (whom it thought was the most powerful animal). A lion came along and killed the elephant. The cat thought that the lion was after all, the most powerful animal. For its defence, it had to make friends with the lion.

Then the hunter came along with his bow and arrows and spear. He killed the lion, which had attempted to attack him. On his way home the hunter was followed followed by the cat. While at the hunter's home the cat remained hiding until an opportunity showed up the cat's desire for the hunter's friendship. One evening, a rat which was discovered eating the hunter's meat was chased past where the cat was hiding. The cat, having a natural hatred for rats, joined the chase and killed it. The hunter had no choice but to persuade the cat to remain in his house and kill rats, which were a threat to his food. This is not the end of the story. One cold evening, the hunter went round to a fire place whose manager was his wife. All the orders at the fireplace were given by the hunter's wife and the hunter had to obey. The cat, watching this relationship, was quick to notice that the hunter's wife was stronger than the hunter himself: she ordered him about. So the cat decided to stay around the fireplace under the protection of the hunter's wife. And up to this day, cats like to stay by the fireplace.

#### **THE VULTURE AND THE HEN**

Long ago the hen and the vulture used to live on excellent terms, helping each other at any time they needed a hand to procure their domestic necessities.

One day, the hen thought of borrowing a razor from the vulture to shave their little ones. The shaving was already much overdue, but it couldn't be helped, because she had no razor. And was depending on the kindness of her neighbours. So the hen went to see vulture and said,"

Dear vulture, I should like to borrow your razor; mine was lost months ago. My little ones are looking very ugly, and also very untidy, with their long, unkempt, overgrown hair."

The vulture listened to the hen with great concern, after a short silence, said, Dear hen I cannot refuse you this favour. Tomorrow perhaps I might need your help as well, and we must help each other. However, you must remember one thing. You know what the razor means to me. I have no other income except the rent of that razor; that is to say the razor is my field, whence



I get my daily food. I do not intend to ask you any fee as I do with others; but please be careful to return it to me as soon as you are finished with your shaving.”

“Thank you, brother vulture, I quite understand what you say, and I am very grateful to you. I’ll bring it back to you.”

The hen was very glad of the favour and as soon as she arrived home, made arrangements to be shaved by another woman. The following morning she shaved her little ones, so that the whole family was now shining like the moon. The work over, she put it in a leather purse, which was hanging in a corner of the hut.

The days passed and passed away like the water under a bridge, but then hen never thought again of returning the razor to the vulture. She forgot it completely. The vulture grew impatient, and deeply resented in his heart the unkindness, nay the ingratitude of the hen. Pressed by necessity, he decided to personally go to the hen and demand his razor.

“Oh dear vulture,” said then hen with confusion and great regret, “Forgive me; I am so sorry for my negligence really intend to return your razor very soon, but I put it my leather purse and forgot about it completely. Let me go and bring it; you will have it in a minute.”

“Yes, I know you are a forgetful creature; but look at the damage you have me. You have deprived me of my sustenance for many days. Mind you, if you have lost it, you will pay for it and very dearly”, said the vulture. The hen rushed into the house to fetch the razor. She plunged her hand into the leather bag, but alas! It was empty; there was no razor in it. She was very shocked at the unpleasant discovery. She started searching on the floor to see if by any chance it had dropped from the bag, but there was no finding it. She looked under the children’s bed, near the fire-stones, in the store; but there was no sign of it. Have mercy on me! I will search better; I am ready to demolish my hut altogether, and search for it diligently until I find it and return it to you.”

“I told you to be careful, and I repeat it again; I want my razor back! But mind you, I want the very razor I gave you, and so substitute.”

The poor hen spent all day searching and searching, but nothing came to. She demolished her hut, and started searching in the roof grass, among the rubble of the walls, between the poles, in the ashes and even in the rubbish pit; but no thing was found.

The following day the vulture came to see the results of the searching. He found the hen still scratching the ground among the heap of dry grass and ox dung; but no razor was yet discovered. “I am very sorry dear hen,” said the vulture, “but now I cannot wait any longer without compensation for my razor. For today you must give me a chick. Tomorrow I will return and see what has happened in the meantime.”

So the vulture flew away with a chick gripped within its talons under its breast. The following day he returned to the hen. She was still scratching the ground; but she couldn’t see the razor.

Another chick went away with the vulture. And the same thing happened in the following days until today. That is the reason why the hen is always scratching the ground, and the vulture swooping on chicks even in our days. The hen is always searching for the razor, and the vulture compensating himself for its loss.

## **TRICKSTER NARRATIVES**

1. These are narratives that usually feature a character (animal or human) that practices deceit on others.
2. These stories are often times aimed at proving that brain is mightier than brawn.
3. This is because the weaker character (for instance the hare) manages to trick a bigger animal (for instance the elephant) and get5s out of trouble.

### **Example of a trickster narrative**

#### **The monkey and the crocodile (Meru version)**

Once upon a time the monkey and the crocodile were good friends. The crocodile used to come to the river while the monkey sat on the branches of trees on the banks of the river, and there the two friends would spend the whole day chatting. The crocodile would take long hours telling the monkey interesting stories about the world of water, and the animals that lived in the river. The monkey would in turn tell the crocodile stories about the animals that lived on the dry land. The friendship continued for a long time. However, one day the ostrich warned the monkey that the crocodile was a cunning, dangerous animal. "You wait and see. It will not be long before the crocodile wants to eat you," the ostrich told the monkey as he went on his way. Though the monkey began to be careful with the crocodile their friendship continued. Soon after the crocodile told his friend that his wife had a new born baby. And the crocodile went on to tell the monkey: "My wife and I would be very happy if you would visit us and see our new-born baby. "The monkey without a second thought, agreed to visit the crocodile and his wife the next day. It was arranged that the crocodile would meet the monkey the next afternoon, and carry him on his back to the island on which the crocodile's home was. On the next day the monkey, full of excitement, went to meet his friend. And he found the crocodile waiting for him at the bank of the river. After exchanging greetings the monkey jumped on the crocodile's back and the crocodile began to swim onto the deep waters. They were in the middle of the river when the crocodile began to laugh loudly: "Haa....haaa....haaa....". The monkey was surprised for he could not understand why his friend was laughing. "Why are you laughing?" he asked.

In a warning voice the crocodile said, "At last I have caught you! For months I have longed to taste your heart and I will do so today."

The monkey was worried and he began to think how he would escape. After a short while the monkey told the crocodile: "Why didn't you tell me that you wanted to eat my heart? I would have given it to you, but you are unfortunate because my heart is at home. "And the monkey went on to explain to the crocodile that when monkeys go on a journey they leave their hearts with their grand mothers so that grand mothers spice and flavor the hearts. The monkey persuaded the crocodile that if he really wanted to eat his heart, he should take him back to the shores of the river. "Take me back to the banks of the river and I will ask my grand mother to give you my heart..."The monkey pleaded with the crocodile. The crocodile, without thinking, headed back to the banks of the river. He swam fast for he believed that the monkey would give him his heart. Within no

time they were at the bank of the river. The monkey jumped from the crocodile's back onto a tree and he began to jump from one tree to the other. When the monkey was well seated on a branch on a big tree, he spat at the crocodile and cursed, "May you and your wife and children perish! And as for my heart, you will never taste it. "And so saying the monkey threw a dead branch at the crocodile, which swam back into the deep waters. And that is how their friendship ended.

### **DILEMMA NARRATIVE**

These are stories which show a character or group faced with two or more choices,

usually of moral nature, none of which is easier to make. Such a story is meant to

initiate critical judgment and debate among the audience.

A classic example in Africa is the story of a great drought upon which the oracle

ordains human sacrifice be made. The victim is usually the most beautiful girl in the village. Her family is torn between heeding the oracle's word and declining, which would mean that the society perishes. There is a conflict between the love of the

parents for their daughter and loyalty to the society.

### **MONSTER/OGRE NARRATIVES**

These are stories that feature a fantastic, grotesque creature that is usually representative of evil. Monsters usually masquerade as beautiful women or handsome men and use their physical attractiveness to lure their unsuspecting preys into marriage.

Their preys so full of themselves are not able to see through the ogre's attractive façade.

Usually it is a person looked down upon by the community that manages to notice the evil

nature of the ogre. The ogre is usually killed and all the people and property that it had consumed recovered. Most ogre narratives teach the audience not to underestimate the abilities of those we think less endowed than we are. They teach us to look beyond the apparent; not all that glitters is gold.

### **Example of a monster narrative**

#### **THE GIRL AND HER MOTHER**

*Narrated by Wambui wa Waambugu*

Long time ago, there was a girl and her mother. The mother of this girl had been sick for a long time. When the old men went to a diviner to get a diagnosis, they would come back and say that they had been told to have a goat slaughtered. They would slaughter the goat, eat it but the mother would not have her wound healed. They would go, again and return to report that the goat should be slaughtered. They would slaughter the goat, eat it but the mother would not get her wound healed.

One time, the girl followed them and hid herself. She, therefore heard that her

mother would only be healed by the wool that is found between ogres, i.e, their wool that gets blown by the wind.

“No w,” she said” I will go. I had better die and have my mother healed.” The girl then traveled and traveled and climbed up a mugumo tree. When she climbed the mugumo tree, she climbed higher and higher until she got to the top most part. She then got the wool that was on the ogre’s mugumo tree.

When she got it, the ogre heard the girl climbing down the tree. He told her: “I will cut you ng’we ng’we and cut you again ng’we ng’we.” It is the ogre now telling the girl. And the girl started singing as follows: Kamau, our Kamau, meet me, meet me. I am coming from getting the wool, yes the wool Between the ogres, between the ogres And the mono-eyed ogre is still behind me He says he will bite me.

Now the girl is only racing. And the small ogre called mono-eyed was behind her saying: I will cut you ng’we ng’we

And cut you ng’we ng’we

The ogre would then throw his knife.

The knife would cut off tree branches because the girl is still racing. The girl would then sing.

Kamau, our Kamau meet me, meet me

I am coming from getting the wool, yes the wool

Between the ogres, between the ogres

And the mono-eyed ogre is still behind me

He says he will bite me.

The girl is still running and small ogre is still following her saying:

I will cut you ng’we ng’we

And again cut you ng’we ng’we.

Now it would throw the knife. The knife would cut off branches from a tree. The ogre wanted to slash the girl. And the girl would sing:

Kamau, our Kamau meet meet me, meet me

I am coming from getting the wool, between the ogres

And the mono-eyed ogre is still behind me

He says he will bite me.

The ogre would then sing:

I will cut you ng’we ng’we

And again cut you ng’we ng’we

The girl ran. She got near her home, Kamau began hearing echoes:

Kamau, our Kamau, meet, meet me, and meet me

I am coming from getting the wool, yes the wool

Between the ogres, between the ogres

And the mono-eyed ogre is still behind me

He says he will bite me.

The ogre would then sing:

I will cut, cut you ng’we ng’we

And cut you again ng’we ng’we

When Kamau heard, he ran and climbed up a tree. Now when the ogre running after the girl passed through, Kamau speared it from up the tree. The ogre would pull the spear out and throw it away. The girl’s brother would get hold of the spear and

spear the ogre again. When the ogre was speared and slashed with a sword it died. The girl went home and found her mother. She put wool in the fire. The mother gained her consciousness and asked for water to drink. The girl then put some of the wool in the wound and it healed. So the mother recovered and the ogre died. The girl stayed with her mother. The mother did not die and the girl did not die too.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **SONGS/ORAL POETRY**

In African societies almost all communal activities are accompanied by song and dance. In most societies there are songs for every stage and occasion of a person's life, from the cradle to the grave. There are songs at birth, naming ceremonies, songs, and lullabies, singing games, songs in stories, initiation songs, marriage songs, work songs, war songs, praise songs, worship or divination songs, and lastly funeral songs.

As opposed to narratives, which are prose, song and recitation are verse. They demand that the composer should arrange his words in such a way that they should sound perfect especially in terms of rhythm and melody. These together with the meaning of the words enable the poet or the singer to express his feelings with the strongest impact possible.

We distinguish between recitation and song mainly on the basis of musical complexity.

Normally, musical features will be more pronounced in song than in recitation.

#### **CLASSIFICATION OF SONGS/POETRY**

The classification used in this handbook is based on the functions served by songs in question

#### **RELIGIOUS POETRY**

These are songs and poems performed during religious occasion or for spiritual purposes (prayer, incantations, and invocations.)

#### **Example**

##### **Prayer by a Mulembwe woman after a child's birth, recorded in Congo**

God almighty creator,  
God Mbuuwa Muku ngu a Kinyama,  
Created trees, created people, created all countries,  
Created the Been'Ek iiye of Kalanda, created the Beena and Baa Milembe,  
Created the white with whitish,  
Created the Lomami, created the Luamba Kasseya (two rivers),  
Created the land where the sun rises,  
Created the fish at Maeng ye,  
Created the eldest and the youngest of the twin,  
Created the guide who leads (child that opens the womb),  
Created the eatable and the uneatable ants.  
God, thou art the Lord,

Who cometh in the roar of the whirlwind,  
Out of your dwelling place from where the sun rises.  
God creator, thou art father and though art mother.  
Oh God I should not offend you as if you were man;  
There is no gratitude for what God bestows upon thee  
Although he gives you a wife who grinds maize, a woman is a basket  
(I.e. she leaves her family in marriage),  
A man is a refuge, when rain falls I may enter (i.e. a man remains in the village and may  
be a consolation for his parents).  
God if he hasn't given you a gift, He'll remember when you praise him,  
Honour Him and you arrive at Musengye of the Mulobwe.  
Everyone isn't a welcome guest, only a child is a stranger who comes quite new in  
our  
midst.  
Oh eldest and youngest of a twin, only a child is welcome as a stranger.  
Friend good day, friend good day!

### **DIRGES**

These are songs sung during funeral ceremonies. They are sung during the actual burial and during remembrances or other post-burial ceremonies. Dirges reveal the community's attitude towards death. They also serve to console the bereaved, sing praises to the deceased and as a lamentation towards death for taking away loved ones.

#### **Example 1**

##### **Prayer before the dead body**

The gates of the underworld are closed.  
Closed are the gates.  
The spirits of the dead are thronging together  
Like swarming mosquitoes in the evening,  
Like swarming mosquitoes.  
Like swarms of mosquitoes dancing in the evening,  
When the night has turned black, entirely black,  
When the sun has sunk, has sunk below,  
When the night has turned black  
The mosquitoes are swarming  
Like whirling leaves  
Dead leaves in the wind.  
Dead leaves in the wind,  
They wait for him who will come  
For him who will come and will say:  
"Come" to the one and "go" to the other  
And God will be with his children.  
And God will be with his children.  
(Namibia)

*(Source:*

Ulli Beier ( Ed).

**Africa poetry**

, University press: Cambridge, 1966)

There is no needle without piecing point.

There is no razor witho ut trenchant blade.

Death comes to us in many fo rms.

With o ur feet we walk the go at's earth.

With o ur hands we touch God's sky.

Some future day in the heat of no on,

I shall be carried sho ulder high.

Through the village of the dead,

When I die, don't burry under forest trees,

I fear thorns.

Bury me under the great shade tree in the market,

I want to hear the drums beating

I want to feel the dancers' feet.

(Anonymous)

*(Source: Ulli Beier ( Ed), African Poetry, University press: Cambridge, 1966).*

**WAR POETRY**

There are poems performed by warriors during a war event. This could be sung as a

preparation to war, in order to boost the morale of the warriors. They could also be sung after a battle as the warriors come back home victorious. War songs could also be sung in the absence of war in order to reinforce the military might of a particular community. War poems also express the general values relating to war .

**Exa mple:**

Fight now! Come and fight now!

Slay them! We' ll brandish spears!

Straight fo rth doth speed yo ur arrow

Tremble! Yes! They tremble!

When we draw near,

And far they'll flee as we approach them!

Shar pen keen yo yo arrows!

Brave heads upr aised and shouting

Loudly your defiance

All they oppo se us.

Quickly our spears

Shall pierce their breasts. They will be scattered

**WORK POETRY**

There are poems that accompan y rhythmic wo rk. This wo uld include cho res such as

paddling. Threshing, digging or hau ling. In recent times work poems have also been observed among road workers, miners and boulders.

**Example:**

**Pounding song**

At Kitilis there are herdsmen, both boys and girls,  
There are goats and lambs and cattle:  
Mwesya, do I not call you in my poverty?  
I have no family, I have no mother,  
I have no relatives to call upon.  
Death, I will not give him food or water  
Seeing he has denied me my father and my family.  
E! Grinding!  
Musyoka,  
I have no family, I have no mother,  
The mother of my sister Vika, Lonza and Linda;  
How forlorn I am! Did I call you?  
I do not share the sleeping mat with Lonza.  
How forlorn I am, I have no thing of my own!

*(source: Jack Mapanje and Landeg White. Oral poetry from Africa, Longman: New York, 1983.)*

**LOVE POETRY**

These are poems addressed to a beloved man or woman in the hope of marriage. They could also be poems on frustrated love, or songs in praise of a loved one.

**Example**

When could thy praises be sung, Olo iltibili?  
For this scorching summer heat prevents it  
They cannot be sung at midday  
For the sun weakens the cattle.  
They cannot be sung at sunset  
O, when the sun gets to that point  
(Pointing to the position of the sun about 9 a.m)  
Praises of her with the scarlet one will be sung.  
I developed admiration for him  
Not at the drinking hall.  
I have stored the love of my love  
Since I was just a little girl.  
I have stored it at the gall bladder  
To nurture it day by day.  
I dared not store this precious love of my love



At the head, for the mind abounds with changes.  
It has edged between the fingers and the palm  
As well as the spleen and the liver.  
The love of my love has gone down  
To where the infants lie.  
I store it where the infants are carried  
To keep it growing day by day by day.  
He that detests my loving the warriors  
Find one to ugh loathing to do.  
Scrape the road with your buttocks  
Until you have reached Nairobi.  
Put the hyena at the sheep pen  
As well as the slim beast (cheetah)  
If by morning the sheep are safe  
I will give up the brother of Talash  
Then you can bleed the white nosed one (donkey)  
To purge me from the longhaired one.  
(Kenya)

(Source: Naomi Kupury, *Oral literature of the Maasai*, East African Education Publishers: Nairobi, 1983)

## LULLABIES

**These are songs sung principally to put the baby to sleep**

. They are sung in the soft tune  
That enhances their soporific effect. They employ simple language; one that  
children can  
easily identify with. Lullabies may also employ onomatopoeic words especially  
designed at  
ensuring rhythm. At times nurses may sing lullabies expressing their attitude  
towards to the mother of the children they have been left in charge of (see example  
below)

### **Bunyoro lullaby**

Ha! That mother who takes her food alone  
Ha! That mother before she has eaten  
Ha! That mother she says, "Lull the baby for me."  
Ha! That mother, when she has finished eating,  
Ha! That mother she says, "Give the child to me!"

## HUNTING POETRY

These are songs sung by hunters on their way to or from hunting. They could also be  
sung to  
express disappointment at having failed to catch any game. Below is an  
example of a  
hunting song performed after a hippopotamus has been killed:

Cho p it, cho p it,  
Do take it and cho p it;  
Do take it and cho p it yourself.  
Chipishya, bring the boat.  
Have you killed it hunter?  
Chishya bring the boat,  
Chipishya bring the boat,  
Have you killed it hunter?

### **CHAIN SONGS**

In chain songs every successive line is derived from the former.

#### **Example**

#### **Oh archer**

Oh Archer, Oh Archer,  
Let's shoot at each other, let's shoot at each other  
And if you shoot me and if you shoot me;  
I will have a goat slaughtered for you. I will have a goat slaughtered for you.  
And the meat and the meat,  
Will be given to the blacksmith, will be given to the blacksmith,  
And the blacksmith and the blacksmith,  
Will have knives will have knives.  
And the knives and the knives,  
Will pierce the heavens will pierce the heavens.  
And the heaven and the heavens,  
Will send down rain will send down rains.  
And the rains and the rains,  
Will make the grass grow will make the grass grow.  
And the grass and the grass.  
Will fatten the heifer will fatten the heifer,  
And the heifer and the heifer,  
Will buy a wife will buy a wife,  
And the wife and the wife,  
Will prepare gruel will prepare gruel  
And the gruel and the gruel,  
We will gulp it we will gulp it

### **WEDDING SONGS**

Though many wedding songs capture the joy associated with wedding ceremonies, many songs express sorrow at the thought of leaving the familiar home for an uncertain future.

Other wedding songs sing praises to the bride, the groom and their parents.

#### **Example**

#### **Wedding song (from**

### ***Iisuka* of western Kenya)**

It is hard,  
Aloo ,  
It's hard to leave your home  
To go to another.  
It's hard to call another  
Your mother.  
Father was educated, at Korotis  
And is a clerk  
I have seen the clerk.  
I have seen the clerk,  
Mama was educated at "Chipyesi" (GBS: Girls Boarding School)  
And is a nurse,  
Mama wanted her child to be a  
Nurse  
Weed the garden of fruits  
Weed mama's garden of fruits  
That they continue to yield.  
Aloo !  
Haa! Haa!

### **CHILDREN'S PLAY SONGS**

These are songs performed by children at play. The following song is sung by two groups of children (marked A and B respectively) in turns. The children join their hands to form the

circle and swing their hands as they sing.

A: Watata wa tiriri our house is excellent

B: Watata wa tiriri it cannot be better than ours

A: Watata wa Tiriri What is yours made of?

B: Watata wa tiriri ours is made of stone

A: Watata wa tiriri ours is made of timber

B: Watata wa tiriri give us one person

A: Watata wa tiriri whom do you like to have?

B: Watata wa tiriri we would like Kariuki

A: Watata wa tiriri Kariuki why don't you go?

At this point the boy named Kariuki moves from his group and joins the other group the other team begins the song again and by the end of the session the two groups would have exchanged many of their members.

### **SATIRICAL SONGS**

These are songs that criticize human folly. They aim at castigating those who do not live up

to the expectations of the society and also to discourage the rest from engaging in similar activities or behaviour. In most cases such songs make use of

hyperbole aimed at emphasizing on the wrongdoing.

### **Example 1**

Me-mrunde eeh she stole  
She stole a hen, she really stole eeh.

### **Refrain**

She stole a sheep, no doubt she stole  
She stole a walking stick, no doubt she stole  
She stole a pot, no doubt she stole.  
Me-mrunde eeh, she really stole eeh  
She stole clothes, she really stole eeh.

### **Refrain**

Me-mrunde, she really stole eeh.  
She stole a cat, she really stole eeh.

### **Example 2**

#### **THE LAZY MAN**

When the cock crows,  
The lazy man smacks his lips and says:  
So it is daylight again, is it?  
And before he even stretches himself,  
Before he even yawns  
The farmers have reached the farm,  
The water carriers have arrived at the river,  
The spinners are spinning their cotton,  
The weaver works on his cloth  
And the fire blazes in the blacksmith's hut  
The lazy one knows where the soup is sweet  
He goes from house to house.  
If there is no sacrifice today,  
His breastbone will stick out!  
But when he sees the yam,  
He starts to unbutton his shirt,  
He moves close to the celebrant.  
Yet his troubles are not few.  
When his wives reach puberty,  
Rich men will help him marry them.

(Nigeria) (*Source*: Ulli Beier (ed). *African poetry*, Cambridge University Press, 1966)

### **INITIATION/CIRCUMCISION SONGS**

These are sung during circumcision or other rites of passage.

### **Example**

### **A Kipsigis initiation song**

We tell you we are going,  
We men don't mock us women.  
We tell you circumcision is painful  
But you can't die.  
We tell you step on the grass  
While it falls down.  
So we tell you children  
Those go for circumcision like Europeans  
Who go to the 3<sup>rd</sup> wedding calmly prepared.  
We tell you  
Stay firm like a stone  
We shall be happy after your circumcision  
Even those who, are passing, even  
Brothers.  
We tell you  
I say thanks until we meet.  
See you father, see you mother and  
Relative  
Till we meet.

### **PANEGYRIC POETRY**

These are also referred to as praise songs/poetry. They are sung to praise a person a clan, or a community. Praise poetry makes use of imagery such as similes, metaphors, and symbolism. Hyperbole is also often employed.

#### **Example**

##### **The boast of the good farmer**

I have ploughed and I have sweated,  
And now I am enjoying my crops, my friends,  
Like the bushbuck which uses its tail to push rice-plants into its mouth  
As a sign of its contentment.  
Good farming wins respect, my friends.  
Where I drink beer now  
I drink to my heart's content:  
When I eat my food  
I eat with a settled heart,  
Like our little friend the fish  
This makes white soup for us,  
Which plays in its pool all day  
Without anything to trouble its heart.  
A farmer is a king:  
Even the wizard pays homage to you.  
Farming brings honour my friends:  
You need not toil your feet to beg at the homes of junior men.  
You see me in my prosperity today

Because during the rains I am the friend of the mud:  
Rather, I attack the soil with my special friend, the hoe.  
Fancy not cultivating!  
Fancy not hoeing!  
Fancy not cultivating!  
Take the little hoe and break the soil!  
The day when I killed the partridge,  
When the child's mother had gone to the field,  
The porridge ran into my mouth like lightning,  
Take the little hoe, weed the soil!

(Zimbabwe) (*Source*: Jack Mapanje and Landeg White, *Oral Poetry from Africa*, Longman: New York, 1983)

### **POLITICAL SONGS**

Oral literature plays a significant role in raising political awareness of people. It also acts as a vehicle for social protest. This is done especially through songs. Political songs can be divided into:

- (a) Songs of social protest.
- (b) Songs for creating political awareness
- © Songs for creating political conformity.

#### **Example**

Serikali ya Nyanyo  
Ni ya maendeleo  
Fuata Nyayo mwenzangu,  
Hatutaki matata  
Kama wewe wataka  
Kuleta matata Kenya,  
Tafuta Kenya yako  
Hatutaki porojo  
Rais amesema  
Atawalinda watoto,  
Jiunge nasii wenzangu  
Hatutaki porojo!

### **CHAPTER FOUR SHORT FORMS**

These are genres of oral literature characterized by their brevity and their compactness. They are uttered in one breath as opposed to narratives, songs or recitation, which may take several minutes to perform.

Short forms include:

- (a) Proverbs
- (b) riddles
- © Tongue twisters

#### **Characteristics of the short forms**

These are characteristics that distinguish short forms from oral literature. They include the following:

(a) Invariability: They appear in the fixed pattern and there is very little scope for improvisation.

(b) Compactness: They are brief and compressed.

(c) Word play; they heavily depend on word arrangement and word play, including use of figurative language including metaphors, similes personification and other images.

(d) Informality: unlike narratives and songs, which call for particular formal setting for their realization, the short forms (except riddles) are most frequently incorporated into

ordinary conversation and performed in intimate and informal situations.

## **PROVERBS**

### **What is a proverb?**

**A proverb can be defined as a terse, pithy statement containing folk wisdom**

Proverbs are considered to be the mark of adult wisdom and experience it is no wonder that the most profound discussions and pieces of advice in many communities are conducted and delivered in proverbs.

In most traditional societies, disputes and judicial decisions were carried out in proverbs.

Proverbs are a product of the experiences of the people, experiences some of which have been learned the hard way. Proverbs therefore reveal what people adore, and what they despise. A study of the proverbs of a certain community will therefore help us appreciate the community's beliefs, attitudes and points of view.

### **Characteristics of proverbs**

(a) Proverbs are short and to the point

(b) Proverbs reveal a people's wisdom, and philosophy of life. Proverbs call our attention to the general reality around us. The message or wisdom of the proverb is the collective

property of the society in which it is used. It is rare to know the maker of a particular proverb. Proverbs only make sense when they directly applied to specific situations or problems. The value of a proverb therefore lies in its applicability to a concrete situation, how it assesses it and possibly suggests a solution to it. Often we find proverbs that can be applied to different situations with different interpretations. This may explain the existence of proverbs which at first, appear to contradict each other.

E.g. Bell should be many to make a sound & A hoard of rats does not dig itself a hole.

Proverbs should therefore be interpreted in context. A scholar who deals with proverbs out of context should always try as a part of his interpretation, to r

reconstruct the situation in which the proverb would be applied. A proverb is a kind of conversation shorthand. **The meaning of a proverb is usually Hidden** and always has to be worked out.

(c) **Proverbs appear in fixed patterns** nearly all the time and there is limited scope on the part of the performer.

(d) Proverbs are sayings that **have been accepted by and therefore part of the society.**

(e) Proverbs draw their material and images from a particular environment or society. Hence proverbs from the Maasai for example, will differ in their use of images from those of the Luo even though they may be communicating the same message.

### **Classification of proverbs**

Proverbs may be classified into the following categories:

Proverbs on fate.

Cautionary proverbs

Proverbs on greed and selfishness

Proverbs warning on pride and arrogance

Proverbs on communal life

Proverbs as embellishment to speech/communication

Proverbs on authority

Proverbs on cooperation

Narrative proverbs: those that serve to reinforce what the community considers to be desirable pattern of behaviour.

Reflective proverbs: those that mirror the community's attitudes, thought processes and world-view.

Summative proverbs: those that are longer draw analogies between phenomena and consist of two parts.

### **FUNCTIONS OF PROVERBS**

Achebe in

*Things Fall Apart* says "Proverbs are the palm wine with which words are eaten." The Yoruba have a metaphor to the effect that proverbs are the horses of communication. These two sayings point out that proverbs are facilitators of verbal communication. Proverbs serve several social functions. These include:

#### **Reflective proverbs**

These are proverbs that express tested truths. These truths have been arrived at through reflections of man's thoughts.

*Dher ariemba wuongo nyiedho ta ngiyo oko* (Luo)

The custodian of a loaned cow milks it while looking out.

*Eiu oltung'a ni osuuj naa olanya* (Maasai)

A man's son may be a coward but he is still his son.



*Ogwang' thon e wadgi*(luo )

A mongoo se dies instead of his brother.

A chief is like dust heap wher e everyo ne comes with rubbish.

Wealth is dew. He is ripe inside like a watermelon.

### Caution

*Thingo cii matu*

(Giku yu)

Walls have ears

*Vutule vumanyi mwami dave*

(Luhya)

Slipperiness knows no king

*Ahuru ok koudh e iro*

(Luo)

The dove is never backbitten in smoke.

*Mpanda ngazi ushuka*

(Kiswahili)

He who goes up the ladder eventually comes down.

### Counsel

If you are patient you will see the eyes of the snail.

*Eitomisimisi iropeta iloweni*

(Maasai)

Corrupt gifts darken the hands of the wise.

*Ngirepe lakwa rotwa kechengji ket*

(Nandi)

If you take a knife from a child, give him a piece of stick instead.

*Kipod in epi kik iyany nyang!*

Do not abuse the crocodile while you are still in water.

### Warning

*Mugi ni mutaare*

He is wise who has listened to advice (never say you were not warned).

*Asiyefunzwa na mamaye ufunzwa na ulimwengu*

He who does not heed his mothers counsel will be taught by the world (the hard way)

One who excretes on the road will find flies when he comes back. (Every action has

consequences)

### Consolation

*Guturi muthenya u kiaga na ungi*

No day dawns with another; everyday has its joys and pains.

*Baada dhiki faraja*

After sorrow there is joy.

### Normative proverbs

These are proverbs that prescribe the mode of behaviour expected of a person

in a particular society.

- The satisfied child has burned the granary.
- Kinship is kinship.

### Summative proverbs

These are proverbs that are used to summarize a situation. While giving advice, instead of telling a person that if he continues in his belligerence he might end up being hurt. One can simply use the proverb: "A strong man's head is full of scars." To summarize the lesson.

### Proverbs used as embellishment to speech

Often times proverbs are used to make the art of conversation more beautiful.

### STYLE IN PROVERBS

Proverbs like other forms of oral literature can be analysed in terms of style.

#### Alliteration

*Jaberjaulo*

All that glitters is not gold.

*Hasira hasara*

Anger brings loss

*Liandikwalo ndilo liwalo*

What is written cannot be changed.

*Chema chajuza, kibaya chajitembeza*

Good quality goods need no advertising, bad merchandise does.

#### Assonance

*Kurri ukuu utatumwa tawa nyungu*

There are things like earthen pot which if broken cannot be repaired.

*Alidhaniye amesimama aangalie asianguke*

He who thinks is high up should be careful lest he falls over.

#### Idiophone

*Bandu bandu huisha gogo*

Chip chip! Finishes the log.

*Churururu- si ndo! ndo! ndo!*

A gush is not the same as a drip.

#### Repetition

*Wat en wat*

Kinship is kinship

*Haraka karaka haina baraka*

Hurry hurry has no blessings.

*Chovya chovya yamaliza buyu la asali*

Constant dipping will empty a gourd of honey.

### Allusion

*Ciakore wacu mugunda*

(The food found Wacu in the garden.

The proverb alludes to a story attributed to the oral tradition of the Agikuyu in which we find a character called Wacu. Wacu, is despised by her husband. Once, she is sent to the shamba so that the husband could hold a feast for his favored wife at home. The choice meat being roasted by the husband is snatched by a hawk. The hawk coincidentally drops the meat in Wacu's garden. Wacu benefits from what was denied her. This proverb is used to encourage hard work.

The meat did not find her at home but in the shamba. It also warns against mistreating others as God has a way of taking care of them.

### Metaphor

Wealth is dew.

*Kukamwo ni kura*

To be praised is to be lost. (One might allow the praises to get into his head and might eventually turn out worse)

*Mugeni ni Ruwi*

A guest is a river. (We should be hospitable to guests since they will be with us for only a while).

### Simile

He is ripe inside like a watermelon. (A watermelon looks raw from the outside but ripe from

the inside. At times just like watermelon, it is difficult to tell what is in the mind of a person.

A fool is like a beehive. (Potential for danger)

### Personification

*Kanua weire!*

Mouth you ate yourself!

The worm in the cattle Kraal says: I am an ox."

The mouth that ate the grain is the same one that asks, "What shall we eat?"

Eneke the bird says, "Since men have learned to shoot without missing their target, I have

learned to fly without perching on a twig"

### Hyperbole

-You will not see the elephant moving on your own head only the louse moving on another's.

-He who waits to see a crab blink will wait long along the shore. (Yo ruba)

-If you are patient you will see the eyes of a snail.

### Humour

*Uthuri wa Gitonga ndununganga*

-The fart of a rich man does not stink.

*Nyathi mioro ema chiethne duong*

-It is the child that runs errands that has bigger excrement.

-A person who never saw the mother in her youth might say the father wasted his dowry.

### Examples of proverbs

#### Luo proverbs

1. The hare might be small but it begets twins
2. It is with a light basket that the owner elides the rain. (You are to blame for self imposed burdens).
3. The drum is heavier on the return journey.
4. Now you are oil-shinny; may you one day be dry!
5. Even Fulu send Tilapia. (Fulu is a type of fish smaller than tilapia. The proverb stresses the necessity of co-existence between the mighty and the less mighty).
6. A mighty man is never greeted. (He may understand the greeting to be an invasion)
7. it's only a mad man who shaves his own hair.
8. The detractor has holes in the buttocks. (The reference to buttocks here is not literal. Rather it refers to trousers. The detractors spend long hours sitting to defame his victims. This over setting leaves its marks on the buttocks and the trousers.)
9. The beautiful one's garden is small.
10. The mediator has two mouths.
11. The gossip never ages.
12. Do not abuse the crocodile while still in water.
13. The elephant is backbitten once it has turned its back.
14. The fly that loves you is the one that perches on you.
15. It is he who eats with a blind man that knows the delicacy of the fat
16. He who has a child does not sleep in the wilderness.
17. Sleep is so strong that it even overcomes the lunatic.
18. The satisfied child has burned the granary.
19. The same plate you have served in is the same plate that will be used to serve you.
20. The beast stays in the sugar plantation but does not know the sweetness of the sugarcane
21. Even though the ant is tiny it cannot be robbed of its termites.

#### Gikuyu proverbs

1. A man is poor not because he scorns possessions but because he possesses nothing
2. Eating too much leaves you with a swollen stomach.
3. A slaughter house is not without a little blood.
4. On the way to one's beloved there are no hills.

5. A parent does not mind her child's mucous
6. The scent of roasted meat broke the hyena's leg.
7. He who steals with a boy will live in fear until the boy is circumcised.
8. He who steals with a woman will live in fear until the woman dies.
9. The woman who has a sore dances on the outskirts.
10. Both he that chases and he that is chased become tired.
11. You do not seek information from a hungry man.
12. Another man's ornament tires the neck.
13. From the same womb come a thief and a witch.
14. One who cannot jump claims that the field is stony
15. The tooth laughs at the sight of a spear.
16. One who never travels thinks that it is only his mother who is a good cook.
17. There is no difference between growing old and living.
18. The potter may use pieces of a pot for her cooking.
19. The restless mongoose misses the slaughtering ceremony
20. A fool's staff is used by the wise man to support his own walk.
21. The warrior may be tripped by a maize comb.
22. A disunited battalion is beaten with one club.
23. He is clever who has listened to advice.
24. Too much sharpness cuts the sharpener.
25. No barber shaves himself

**Yoruba proverbs**

1. One who wants to drink porridge will play with the child whose mother is preparing it.
2. The strong man's head is full of scars.
3. Let me taste, let me taste finishes the seeds.
4. Not all eggs laid in the dry season hatch out.
5. The monkey laughs at the long tail of the one in front of it.

6. The sweetness of stolen things shouts.
7. He who comes last drinks muddy water.
8. He who has diarrhea knows the direction of the door without being told.
9. By stumbling on it, the stump has pushed forward the runner.
10. A rat bites and so do others you at the same time.

### **Kalenjin proverbs**

1. While waiting to eat the head of a bull, we continue eating the head of a grasshopper.
2. We do not look after our crops until they have been eaten by monkeys.
3. A hyena cannot smell its own stench.
4. An elephant is big yet it does not give birth to twins.
5. We blindfold a cow when milking it.
6. A cow's horns do not kill its calf.
7. We do not annoy the midwives when we are still bearing children.
8. Nobody can use another's teeth to smile.

### **Luhya proverbs**

1. Where you are guest, breakfast is not right.
2. Whatever ate the dogs ate the bell too.
3. Whatever you deny and old man he may well have eaten it before.
4. Whatever you deny a child he may grow to eat it.
5. What you hide, you may eat with rats.
6. A person who is feeling cold does not need to be shown the fire.
7. That which runs alone claims to be a good runner.
8. The hen that scratches the ground may find something to eat.
9. If you eat mushrooms, you are sure to eat maggots.
10. When a clean person breaks the wind, people often blame the dirty person.  
In their  
midst.
11. He who waits for his dish to cool shares it with visitors.
12. A bride's eyes pretend not to have seen.
13. The person who cannot climb a tree eats the raw fruits nearer the ground.

### **Additional proverbs**

1. Wealth is dew.
2. Kingship is dew.
3. To marry is to put a snake into one's handbag.
4. Family names are like flowers: they blossom in clusters.
5. A wife is like a blanket; when you cover yourself with it; it irritates you, when you cast it aside you feel cold.
6. He is ripe inside like a watermelon. (Describes a person who has come to a resolution without making it public).
7. The worm in the kraal says, "I am an ox".
8. No fly catches for another.
9. The maker of a song does not spoil it.

10. Metal that is already welded together, how one can unweld it.
11. The man with the deepest eyes cannot see the moon until it is fifteen days old.
12. He ate food and it killed him.
13. The won't – be – old man sees by the bloodstain.
14. You will not see the elephant moving on your head, only the louse moving on another's.
15. The want for work to do makes a man get up early to salute the enemy.
16. Little by little the tortoise arrived at the Indian Ocean.
17. One who excretes on the road will find flies when he comes back.
18. No one teaches the leopard's cubs how to spring.
19. The eye crosses a big river.

## **RIDDLES**

**A riddle is a short saying intended to make one use his wits in unraveling the hidden meaning**

In A riddle, the listener is faced with a question or an allusive sentence referring to something else which they must try to figure out. Riddles are told as a prelude to the telling of stories. They can also be told in between stories. Riddles are also used in conversations to issue veiled threats, convey secret information and as a vehicle of humor.

## **Performance of riddles**

Different communities' different ways of performing riddles.

Kikamba:

Challenge: Kwata ndai (take a riddle)

Acceptance: (A) Nakwata (I take it)

Riddle: Kaveti kanini kanaa nesa kwi mwenyu (A small one who cooks better than your mother)

Solution: Ni nzuki (It's bees)

Kiswahili

Kitendawili (a riddle)

A; tega (pose it)

R: Kaa huku nikae kule tumvue nguo mshenzi. (Stay on this side and me on the other side so that we can strip this fool).

Guesses: By the competitor to decipher the riddle. If he is successful he wins; if not, he proceeds with next step.

Prize: to the challenger (mji or itija) who solves or reveals the riddle in the next step.

Solution: Ni hindi. (It's a maize cob).

## **FUNCTIONS OF RIDDLES**

(A) Environmental education

Riddles stem from observation and comprehension of the environment. Each community uses the objects within its environment in its art.

1. My camel is the shortest but it eats the tree at the top-*Bird*.
2. When I slaughter my cow I don't throw away anything. I eat everything including the bones. -coconut.
3. My house has no door.-*egg*
4. Little things that defeat us. – *mosquitoes*.
5. Water standing up. – *sugarcane*.

### (a) Language Training

1. How many wheels does a car have? *Five*
2. A question you cannot answer "yes" *Are you asleep*
3. The two-legged sitting on the four-legged waiting for the four-legged.- *A bird on a cow waiting for a tick*

### (a) Cultural norms

- (b) 1. I have a wife everybody she has a beard. - *The maize plant*
- (c) 2. The dirty Fatuma. - *Broom*
- (d) 3. My daughter who leaves hungry and return full. - *The water pot.*
- (e) 4. My daughter has an eye on the head - *the needle*
5. The colourful Agnes. *The chameleon*

### (d) Entertainment

1. The bald-headed man has entered. *Ugali*
2. The white lady is in the office – *the jigger*
3. My father's little hill which is easily destroyed -*porridge*
4. Magiregede walks as if he were proud *Wagon*
5. Shiligili shigi. – *the wind*.

### (e) Record of change

**These are riddles the record the changes that have taken place in the society.**

1. My train is running in the field.– *the centipede*.
2. On arrival at the station I was shouted at - *train*.
3. A little chap who plays the type-writer.– *the tongue*

### CLASSIFICATION OF RIDDLES

#### 1. Riddles on people

**The white lady is in the office-jigger**

I passed when Mumia's wives were quarrelling -*Weaverbirds*

#### 2. Cultural objects

A small gourd full of blood - *a tick*

When I beat my child people dance -*drum*.

#### 3. Natural phenomena

What tree has only one thorn? –*sisal*

A meeting under a rock-*The beard*

#### 4. Domestic animals

Why have they taken a few for grazing and left so many resting? -because they



the sheep's droppings My white mouthed cow is shared by all -toothbrush

### 5. Parts of the body

A small bush inhabited by animals -the head.

Go round one side of the mountain while I go round the other but we shall never meet

.- *the ears.*

### 6. Plants

What tree has only one thorn?

- *sisal*

I passed when Mumia's wives were pregnant.

- *Millet heads.*

7. Modern Technology The saloon car carrying whites only.

*Charcoal iron.*

8. How many wheels does a car have? -*five*

### Birds

I passed when Mumia's wives were quarrelling.

-

*weaverbirds.*

My camel is the shortest but it eats the tree at the top.

-

*a bird.*

### 9. Waste products

I cut a tree and left it steaming.

-

*human waste.*

It steams but it is not lit.

-

*fresh cow dung*

### 10. Interrogative riddles

: These are riddles that are in the form of questions.

What tree has why have they taken a few for grazing and left so many resting?

*Because they are sheep's droppings.*

### 11. Declarative riddles:

These are riddles in the form of a statement. Most of the riddles given below are declarative riddles

### 12. Epigrammatic riddles

: These are riddles that are presented in a series of puzzles.

Oh these ones *ripe bananas*

.Oh those other ones. *Water in a cave.*

### 13. Idiophonic riddles

: These are riddles based on sounds.

Ci and ci. Cindano "a needle" (in reference to the sound made when a needle is going

in and out of a garment).

Mag iregede walks as though he is proud. - *wagon*

### Examples of riddles

1. Njoroge the carpenter.

- *A beetle.*

2. You hold I hold. —  
*Cutting of meat into pieces.*
3. Ci and ci. (Quiet noise made by a needle passing through cloth). —  
*A needle*
4. It came from Kambaland in a tie.  
*The crow,*
5. One side of the gourd is white. —  
*Chicken droppings.*
6. I have gone round the forest with a red motorcycle.  
*Rain bow.*
7. It went hungry and came back full.  
*The small bag for greens (vegetables.)*
8. A winnowing tray in the plain.  
*An elephant's foot print.*
9. It is upside down but it does not leak.  
*A cow's udder.*
10. They face up as though they are about to lead a song.  
*The horns of cattle.*
11. I have a person who lives between two swords but they never get cut.  
*The tongue.*
12. I cut a tree and left it smoking.  
*Human excreta.*
13. I have a home where only two men dwell.  
*A banana plantation.*
14. My house has only one pole.  
*The mushroom*
15. Those things in the cave have one hundred eyes  
*Honeycombs.*
16. An elephant with one ear  
*A cup.*
17. Abundo is busy, Abundo is harvesting.  
*The louse.*
18. Adundo dances and she is rewarded.  
*Fire.*
19. I passed when Mumia's wives were quarrelling.  
*Weaverbirds.*
20. I passed when Mumia's wives were pregnant  
*Millet heads*
21. I walk, run and run perpetually.  
*Water*
22. The rat family's gun.  
*Matchsticks.*
23. A meeting under a rock.  
*The beard.*  
 The old man who croaks at night

*A frog*

24. The old man who cannot climb a hill.

*The hippo.*

25. The old man who never leaves behind the overcoat.

*The tortoise.*

26. The saloon car carrying whites only. The charcoal iron.

27. The maiden whom dies after giving birth only once.

*The banana tree.*

28. My daughter who works without resting.

*The heart*

29. The two-legged sitting on the four-legged waiting for the eight-legged.

*A bird sitting on a cow waiting for a tick*

30. It steams but it is not lit. *Fresh cow dung*

31. Why have you taken a few for grazing and left behind so many resting?  
*Because they are sheep's droppings.*

32. My white-mouthed cow is shared by all.

*The toothbrush.*

33. Go round in side of the mountain and I go round the other side, but we shall never meet. *The ears.*

34. There is a bare place where no one ever settles if one did so there would be crying. *The eyes.*

35. What tree has only one thorn?

36. *Sisal*

**36.**

The rocky one with eight holes

*The head of an elephant*

37. When I beat my child people dance.

*A drum.*

38. My house is small but it has many holes.

*A fish trap.*

39. A tree has fallen far away but its branches have breached here.

*News of death.*

40. It can neither be held nor caught.

*Smoke.*

41. I always hear but cannot see him.

*Wind.*

42. Here is a rock and there is a rock.

*The grave.*

43. Little things that defeat us.

*Mosquitoes*

**44.** Water standing up.

*Sugarcane.*

44. The house in which one does not turn around.

*The grave*

45. The little chap who plays the typewriter.

*The tongue.*

### **Similarities between Proverbs**

1. They are brief.
2. They employ figurative language.
3. They appear in fixed form.
4. They express some observation of phenomena.

### **Differences**

1. Riddles are performed in a formal structure and pattern with at least two parties, where one is a challenger and the other one the respondent. Proverbs on the other hand are infused in speech.
2. The basic function of riddles is socialization and entertainment. Proverbs, on the other hand express community's wisdom and world view.
3. Due to the functions mentioned in (2) above, riddles are common among children while proverbs are used mainly by adults.

### **Tongue twisters**

Tongue twisters are intended to test the speaker's fluency. They require the speaker to utter without hesitation or faltering, a sequence of words with particular problems of articulation.

These words themselves usually have basic meaning usually of a jocular nature, and part of 'fun' of performing tongue twisters consists in the likelihood that distortion of utterance, due to articulation problem will result in distortion or confusion of meaning.

Tongue twisters tease our ears and our brains. One has to be a very good listener in order to get the sounds of a tongue twister correctly. One must also have a good memory to repeat it accurately. Tongue twisters also require a lot of concentration. This is because one of the main problems in performing them is that what they say need not make simple, logical sense. The emphasis is mainly on the rattle of sounds.

Tongue twisters hinge mainly on both alliteration and assonance. Some however, may be based on tonal variations.

### **Functions of Tongue Twisters**

#### **1. Language training**

They help in training children to be fluent in language. They also help in language therapy for children with speech impairment.

#### **2. Entertainment**

Tongue twisters offer entertainment as performers struggle to articulate the syllable correctly.

#### **3. Education**

Tongue twisters help in enhancing listening and memory skills in children. Some tongue

twisters also make reference to people, animals or objects found in the environment. This helps in environmental conservation.

### Examples of Tongue Twisters.

1. *Aka wala akaawa kaawa kua wa akaa wa ka wa ? (Luganda)*

The girls who gave Kaawa biter coffee; where is she from?

2. *Wale watu wa liwali wala wali wa liwali wao. (Kiswahili)*

Those very people of the headman eat the rice of the headman.

3. *Kana ka Nikoro kona kora mako kora kona kana ka nikora kora. (Gikuyu)*

Nicholas' child fled after spotting a tadpole. The tadpole also fled after spotting Nichols' child.

4. *Ugoka gututuguta tugututhira ri?*

(Gikuyu) When will you come to help us slash?

5. *Kana kaa koki a kaluki kookia kaki kaa kooka kuu kwaku na koko kako ke kaka ku?* (Kikamba) Koki, Kalo ki's child, do you fear this small fly that has come to your place with very dirty hands?

6. *Shirika la reli la Rwanda. (Kiswahili)*

Rwanda Railway Corporation.

7. Peter please pause for proper applause.

8. The red lorry rolled along the limuru road.

9. She sells sea-shells at the sea-shore

10. The short soldier shot the tall soldier on the shoulder.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FIELD WORK IN ORAL LITERATURE

Every student of oral literature must remember that oral literature is actualized in **Performance**. This means that all the songs, riddles, Proverbs, tongue twisters, narratives etc studied in oral literature course must have been collected from a specific community perhaps at specific times e.g. a funeral, wedding a family get-together or even in the evening as part of recreation. If no scholar or researcher ever went out to collect oral literature materials then we would not have a pool of information on which to base our studies. We study different genres of oral literature because someone went out into the community and collected a narrative, a song, or a riddle. This process of going out into the community **to collect oral literature materials** and related information for **study** and **analysis** is referred to as **fieldwork**

### IMPORTANCE OF FIELD WORK

1. We have noted above that oral literature 'lives' in performance. When it is written down various aspects are lost. Let us take a song for instance. When you watch a live performance of a song you enjoy and appreciate the song more because apart from the words of the song, you get to hear the melody of the song, the singer's beauty of voice and musical accompaniments e.g. drums. You also get to see the costumes worn by the singers, the movements that go with the music and the interaction between the singers and the audience. One is also able

to assess the relevance of the song to the occasion. When the same song is put down in writing, one can analyze the words. All other aspects are lost.

**Fieldwork enables one to capture the aspects.**

2. In order for someone to fully appreciate the oral literature of a particular community, he or she has to get in touch with that community and observe their culture. This is because **some of their cultural aspects could explain the nature of the forms of oral literature of various communities.**

For instance one could appreciate why the Maasai oral literature draws heavily from the

pastoral world by observing the close connection that exists between the Maasai and their animals.

3. Forms of oral literature have been passed on from one generation to the next through the word of mouth. This was especially so in the past (especially in traditional communities) when oral literature was much more alive. With changes in lifestyles of people and with the advent of urbanization and the emergence of cosmopolitan communities, **there is need to record oral literature from past generations for posterity.** This can only be achieved through field work.

4. Through fieldwork **new areas in oral literature are discovered.**

One may set out to collect materials on a certain genre and end up discovering new areas or some nature of a certain genre of oral literature hitherto unknown.

5. Fieldwork **facilitates the creation of wide information base forms a foundation for a more extensive comparative study of oral literature** of certain communities. By comparing the forms of oral literature of different communities we are able to better appreciate the cultural diversity of our country and learn from one another.

6. Fieldwork in oral literature **equips the student with skills that will be useful in other subjects like geography.**

### **Stages in fieldwork**

#### **Preparation stage:**

This is the initial stage before going out to the field.

This stage involves:

1. Stating the purpose and scope of research when determining the Purpose and scope of fieldwork, the following questions should be considered: What is to be collected? (All or some of the forms of oral literature?) and why is material being collected?(For

comparative analysis or for class discussion?)

2. Identifying the location of fieldwork. Is it an urban or rural area?

Is it easily accessible by means of transport readily available to the student?

3. Finding out and familiarizing oneself with whatever earlier research that has been carried out on the same subject from the same community.

4. Specifying the time ( season) when to carry out the research.
5. Establishing contact with useful people in the intended community of research in order to be able to access informants and artistes, and also for logistical arrangements. This requires that the student visits the area to talk to prospective assistants and informants and gauge their expectations, competence and attitude before deciding on whom to rely on for assistance.
6. Deciding on the key methods to be used in carrying out the fieldwork. The method chosen will determine the prior arrangements have to be made. For instance, if a questionnaire has to be used, there will be need to prepare a list of questions, type them out and make enough copies.
7. Securing official administrative permission to conduct research in the chosen area from the relevant officials, e.g. District Officer and Chief.
8. Budgeting for the fieldwork to indicate expected expenditure on transport, accommodation, recording materials etc.
9. Acquiring and getting ready recording materials e.g. pen and paper, tape recorder, camera or video equipment as necessary.

## 2. Material collection

This is done systematically using specific techniques such as observation, questionnaires, interviews and participation.

## 3 Recording information

This is done by writing, taping or filming.

## 4. Processing

This is the scrutiny of information collected in preparation for interpretation, documentation and dissemination. Processing includes transcription (putting down the recorded material in writing word for word) and translation (writing the material out in the language in which it will be shared out and offering the nearest equivalence of meaning and sense, using the idiom of language of translation.

## 5. Analysis and interpretation

This involves.

1. Classifying the collected material into genres and sub-genres using specific criteria.
2. Identifying themes, stylistic devices, functions etc.
3. Interpreting the information.
4. Drawing conclusions.

## **KEY METHODS OF COLLECTING ORAL LITERATURE MATERIALS**

It is important that we distinguish the difference between collecting and recording. Collecting refers to the methods used by the researcher to elicit information from the informants or artistes while recording refers to the measures taken by the researcher in ensuring that the material collected is preserved for future reference.

Some of the methods used in collecting oral literature materials include:

**The questionnaire** This refers to a list of questions that will lead to gathering important pieces of information from various sources. The questionnaire is useful in, for

instance, in getting the informant's biographical background. It can be administered in either of two ways:

-The informant fills it out personally.

-The student fills it in as he/she interviews the informant.

The questionnaire is useful in gathering information on genres that do not call for specific occasions to be performed. These include proverbs and tongue twisters. The only disadvantage with the questionnaire is that it cannot be used to collect songs since it cannot capture the visual and audio effects of songs.

### **The interview**

This involves meeting the source of the information face to face and verbally seeking the required information. An interview can follow a structured pattern (the student moving systematically through a list of questions) or be unstructured and informal (the student conducts a general conversation to probe for specific information while recording the information on tape or by writing.)

Interviews are important especially if one wants to seek details about the personal life of an artist or in collecting proverbs and riddles one could also use interview to collect narratives.

### **Participation**

Taking part in the performance is much favoured method of collecting information because it gives the student a chance to experience the spirit of the actual performance. It also enhances the rapport between the student and the community. By joining the performance, the student bridges relational gaps and finds it easier to seek and get information in a freer atmosphere. But the student must ensure that participation does not distract him/her from making a recording of material.

### **Observation**

Unlike participation, observation is a method by which the student stands aloof and records what is going on in the performance and in the community in at large. It is necessary to reinforce this method by conducting follow up interviews on observations made to deepen insights and clarify issues.

## **KEY METHODS IN RECORDING ORAL LITERATURE MATERIALS**

There are a variety of methods for recording the material collected. The choice of method depends on a number of factors including the purpose of research, time available to the student and to the informants, funds available, student's technical competence, etc.

The most common of these recording methods are:

Writing the material down as it comes from the performers and informants.

Recording information on audio, tape.

Filming or video recording the performance and interviews

Memorizing the material.



### **Problems encountered during fieldwork**

1. **Communication barrier.** This happens when the student does not share the same language with his/her informants. This problem could be solved by getting someone who understands the local language to accompany you during fieldwork.
2. **Transport problems.** This is especially common in rural areas where means of transport are not readily available or are not regular. Poor weather could also inhibit movement. A prior visit to the place in order to familiarize oneself with the transport system and the state of the road will help the researcher to take appropriate measures to counter the problem.
3. **Suspicion by members of the public especially in areas where people are not used to hosting researchers.** This problem could be solved by getting one of the locals especially a respectable member of the community to accompany you. This will inspire confidence in you and also reduce risk of suspicion.
4. Informants demanding cash or material rewards from the researcher. One should explain before hand that this is an academic exercise. And that there will be no material benefits that will accrue from volunteering information.
5. Loss of recording material through theft or otherwise. You could ask someone to accompany you. This person will act as your security detail.
6. Lack of credible informants. To solve this problem one ought to have informants on standby in case the one you chose disappoints you. This can be organized during the preparation stage of the fieldwork.
7. Disease of discomfort caused by change of climate. One should be ready for this. He should carry with him the necessary preventive or curative medicine and appropriate clothing to suit the climatic conditions of the research area.
8. The administration may deny the researcher permission to undertake fieldwork in a certain area. One could always try another area that would produce the desired effects.

### **CHAPTER SIX**

#### **COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS IN ORAL LITERATURE**

##### **Character Analysis**

- (a) Discuss the character of M'Bo tt-the-road. Support your answer with illustrations from the story)
- (b) Describe the character of Chameleon

- (c) From your Oral Literature fieldwork give names of three animal characters that you have come across and mention the main character traits of each animal.
  - (d) Why do you think animal characters are given human characteristics?
  - (e) Compare and contrast the two characters in this narrative
  - (f) Describe the character of the third wife and show how it affects the events of the story.
  - (g) Identify any two character traits of the girl in this story. Illustrate your answer.
  - (h) What do you learn about Shakas character from this Poem?
  - (I) Identify and illustrate three character traits of Karia.
- When answering questions on characterization, you must always provide

### **TRAITS and ILLUSTRATIONS.**

Ordinarily you should expect a set of one of the trait and accompanying illustrations to earn you marks. This is not always the case hence you need to give as many traits as you can get. When the number of traits you are supposed to give has been specified for instance in (g) above, you should stick to the number of traits given.

NB

Always give at least two illustrations for each trait that you give.

Describe each trait on its own. Do not lump them together e.g. Chameleon is patient, wise and generous. You should instead start with the trait "patient" and then offer

illustrations for it, then move on to 'Wise' and do the same thing and then "generous," again following the same process. Write full sentences.

Use short paragraphs; one trait should occupy one paragraph. This makes it easy for the

person marking your work to follow your argument. It is advisable to underline the trait.

This again assists the person marking to quickly point out the important parts of your

answer. Use the present tense. "Chameleon is wise...." not "Chameleon was wise...."

It is advisable (Perhaps even logical) to start by giving the trait and not the illustrations.

### **Features of oral narratives/poetry**

- (a) Identify and comment on any three oral features of this tale
- (b) What features of oral narratives are evident in this story?
- (c) Identify four features in this story that are characteristic of oral narratives
- (d) Identify any three characteristics of oral narratives in this story.
- (e) Identify and illustrate any three literary devices which make this narrative an oral poem.
- (f) What features of this story show that it is a traditional oral narrative?
- (g) Identify and illustrate the oral features of this poem.
- (h) What evidence is there that this is an oral poem? Identify and illustrate any

two such features.

The following are the common features of oral narratives:

**The opening Formulae:** A long time ago, once upon a time, Long ago”, etc. The opening formulae is effective

- Arresting the attention of the audience
- Introducing the audience to the world of make belief
- Identifying the narrator
- Introducing the narrative.

**The closing formulae**

- Marks the end of the narrative
- Releases the audience from the world of make belief
- Gives a chance to the next narrator.

The use of animal characters (you must mention which animal characters have been used)

-Most characters represent certain members of society. The elephant may represent the mighty; the hare may represent the small/insignificant members of society who survive by using their cunning.

-It is easier to pass the message to the audience without offending them by presenting animals instead of human characters.

People can easily identify with animals since animals are readily available to them. (They coexist with animals.)

The use of song. Song is said to be a multi-purpose aspect of style in oral narratives.

This is because it.

- Links episodes in a narrative
- Reveals the character traits of the singers or those mentioned in songs.
- Involves the audience in the story.
- Helps to relieve the audience of the tension accumulated during the narration.
- At times could be used to create suspense by heightening the intensity of certain parts of the narrative.
- Breaks the monotony of the narration.

Elements of fantasy/Use of the supernatural

-In narratives there may be certain things that the characters may do that appear to be in the realm of fantasy. For instance a snake may be seen crying, or a stone talking to people. One may raven find trees in the forest singing. In oral literature, anything is possible.

Presence of moral lesson

-In every story you will find a lesson that the audience are supposed to learn from it. The lesson could be directly given or implied in the story. See the next section for the presentation of the lesson.

## **The following are the common features of oral poetry.**

### **Repetition**

-In oral poetry certain parts of the poem are repeated to form the chorus or to emphasize their importance. Repetition could also be used to ensure rhythm in the poem.

### **Hyperbole.**

-Some aspects found in oral poetry may appear exaggerated or even fantastic. For instance in praising a person images such as "he is thunder" or "the lion of the village" may be used. In satirical songs someone may cast in the extreme.

### **Direct address**

-One may encounter phrases that imply the presence of a living audience. E.g. Kamau son of Wambui were we not together at Manyani (detention)?

### **Moral lesson.**

-Like oral narratives oral poetry usually contain a moral lesson. Some of them are marked anonymous as they are not product of an individual but the collective property of the community.

### **Free translation**

-Some poems may contain phrases or words that are in Standard English. This is because while translating the pieces in question from the source language into English, an artist may choose to translate word for word resulting in phrases that may not be readily accessible to English e.g. "when the sun stood in the middle of the village" i.e. at noon or "she was measured a dress at Chogoria"

### **Reference to local places and names of people.**

-Most oral poems were meant for a particular audience. This could for instance be members of the same village or people of the same age group. For this reason one may encounter names of people and places that he may not be familiar.

## **Moral lessons**

(a) Mention two lessons that we learn from this tale.

(b) With illustrations, identify three lessons that can be learnt from this narrative.

©In not more than five sentences, state what the main message of the story you heard was.

(d) What moral lesson do you learn from this story?

(e) State and illustrate two moral lessons you can learn from this oral poem.

(f) Mention any two moral lessons learned from this oral story.

(g) State one theme of this narrative.

When asked to state the moral lessons, you should ask yourself the following questions:

What is the audience supposed to learn from this story OR

Why did the narrator choose this story?

You may use a proverb to summarise the lesson or use a plain statement to present

it.

After that you are supposed to support the lesson stated with

## **ILLUSTRATIONS**

FROM THE TEXT.

Do Not state lessons that are too specific as not to be universal, E.g.

-We should be obedient so as not to be punished by our parents.

-We should not steal because if we are caught we will be killed.

-We should obey God because if we do not, then God will punish us.

In the examples above: it does not follow that every time we obey our parents we are

punished or every time someone is caught stealing he is killed.

Examples of lessons learnt include:

- We should respect God

- -We should be dutiful

- -One should not cry over spilt milk

- Wisdom is strength

- You reap what you sow

- We should be grateful

When illustrating the lessons, you should follow three steps:

-State the lesson

-State who did not act according to the lesson learned.

-Explain the repercussions of not acting according to the lesson learnt.

For Example:

**“From the story we learn that we should be grateful. In this story, the animals showed ingratitude to their god Cheptailé by not giving part of their harvest as a sign of gratitude. Because of their ingratitude they were punished with a severe drought**

### **Citing proverbs that summarise the lessons learned**

(a) Give one proverb from your field work and explain how it applies in any lesson you have identified in (c) above

(b) State and explain a proverb that could be used to warn the people of Ranisi.

(c) Give one proverb that accurately summarises this theme.

### **When asked to summarise the lesson learnt using a proverb, you have to:**

-State the lesson in plain language.

-State the proverb

-Explain the meaning of the proverb.

-Explain how it could be used to summarize the message that you have identified.

### **For example**

*-The lesson learnt in this narrative is that those who have certain weaknesses should not*

*castigate others who seem to have the same weakness. A proverb that could be*

used to

summarize this lesson is "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones." In

this narrative, we see the hyena castigating the hare for his greed. He even wants him

killed. Later on we see the hyena being vilified for being greedy. The hyena can thus be

compared to a person in the proverb who lives in a glass-house and is busy throwing

stones. He will only succeed in harming himself.

- You must always explain how the proverb summarizes the message learnt even when you have not been asked to.

### Aspects of performance

(a) With reference to a performance of a narrator you have watched, state ways in which she or

he made his or her narrative lively.

(b) Try to picture yourself as the story-teller charged with the responsibility of narrating this

particular story. What story-telling devices would you employ?

(c) If you were to do a solo performance of this oral poem, what would you emphasize?

### Some aspects of performance include

-Change of voice to imitate the different characters (mimicry)

-Use of facial expressions to capture different emotions

-Dramatization or use of gestures to capture the action in the story

-Use of tonal variation to capture different moods in the narrative.

-Involvement of the audience through asking of questions or inviting them to join in the singing (if there is a song in the narrative)

- When giving these types of aspects of performance, you must point out exactly which parts of the text the aspects would be employed in. If you fail to do this, then you won't get any marks.

*-For example one can say "I would use my hands and legs to **dramatize** the ogre running after the boy. I would use my hands to enact the killing of the ogre by the warrior. I would also **vary tone of my voice** to capture the panic of the boy as he was being chased by the ogre. I would use **facial expressions** to express the joy that the boy felt at having being rescued from the ogre"*

### CLASSIFICATION OF ORAL LITERATURE

(a) What type of oral narrative is this? Give reason for your answer.

(b) Explain why this narrative could be classified as legend

(c) What do you understand by the word genre in oral literature?

(d) Identify two types of oral narratives.

(e) Give an example and a short explanation of each type you have identified.

(f) What type of oral poem do you think this is? Give a reason for your answer.

(g) What kind of oral poem is this?

-You are expected to demonstrate a mastery of the various classes that are there in oral literature

-Apart from merely stating them; you should also be able to give reasons justifying your choice of classification.

### **Economic activities**

(a) List the economic activities of the community depicted in this oral narrative.

(b) Describe the economic activities of the community in this story.

(c) Identify two socio-economic activities of the community in this narrative.

- When asked to state the economic activities of the community from which a narrative or poem is taken you are supposed to go through the poem or narrative and look for pointers.

For instance, if cows are mentioned in the narrative, then the economic activity could be livestock keeping. If maize is mentioned, then perhaps this community practices arable farming.

- You must show how you arrived at your conclusions about the economic activities even when you have not been asked to. Most candidates lose marks for assuming that the examiner has read the narrative and therefore must know how they arrived at the answer.

- You have to assume that the examiner has not read the narrative and is solely relying on the information that you are giving him.

### **The audience**

(a) What kind of audience would this narrative be suited for and why?

- When answering this question you have to ask yourself the following question: What class of people in society would benefit from the lessons learnt in this narrative or poem?

**OR** given the language used, which members of society are likely to draw most benefits from the text?

- The narrative or poem could be suitable for children, the youth, elders, girls, boys, young men or women etc.

- The most important thing here is that you are able to identify the correct group

and support your choice of audience with evidence from the text. Most candidates lose marks for merely stating the group that they think would best benefit from the text without giving the reasons why. This is treated as mere speculation.

### **Reasons for studying oral literature**

(a) State two reasons why you think it is important to study oral literature in school.

-teaching about culture

-making us gain confidence in our culture

- Teach cultural values or morals
- Teaching good neighbourliness
- Provide heroes for us to emulate
- Teaches about history of the past
- Teaches us about the world of our ancestors
- Teaches us about ourselves
- Entertains
- Sharpens wit/speech/creativity/listening and language skills.
- After stating any of the points above, you should offer a short explanation for the points stated.
- For instance:
  - Oral literature teaches us about our culture. By listening to narratives we get to know the different economic activities practiced by the community. Some of the cultural practices for instance wedding ceremonies and some of the values that the communities approved of. All these are important aspects of culture that gets to us via the study of oral literature.*

### General advice to candidates

1. Please be neat. Neat work gives a good impression. Untidy work may easily put off the examiner. Remember yours is not the only script being marked.
2. Plan your answers before writing them down. This ensures that you are logical and that you write exactly what you intend to say. Do not be in a hurry to finish. Usually there will be enough time to finish the paper at a comfortable pace.
3. Where possible underline the important points in your answer. This will help in drawing the attention of the examiner to the answer and may simplify his work.
4. If you do not immediately get the answers to a certain question **DONT PANIC!** You are not the only one in the room faced by the problem. Instead of panicking **THINK** through the problem it is by far the most profitable way of going about the problem.
5. Remember that in literature, marks lie in **ILLUSTRATION!** Should you forget everything else in the handbook, keep this point in mind.

## ORAL LITERATURE MODEL PAPERS

### EXERCISE ONE

Read the following narrative and then answer the questions that follow.

#### THE FALL OF THE DOG

In the beginning, the dog used to be one of God's favourite creatures. He was not called



dog as he is called now, but was called Lenanu, for he was very *much pampered*. And since heaven and earth were not as far apart as they now are, Lenanu used to pay frequent visits to Man, after which he would return to heaven where he *resided*. One day, God called Lenanu to him and said, "My favourite one, you may talk to Man as you please, but don't you ever tell him of the gentle-one, for I do not want to part with her." Lenanu said: "Very well, I will never tell him." But as soon as he was in the company of his friend, Man, Lenanu could not keep God's secret. He said to him, "Man, shall I tell you something? God has one thing that he did not give you, and which he calls the gentle-one. This creature is very fat and humble but if ever you manage *to procure* it, all your problems will go away. Go and ask for it, for He will not deny

Thereupon Man went to request God for the gentle-one. "Oh God," he pleaded, "I have come to ask you to give me the gentle-one." God was *startled* by this request and asked Man, "Who told you of that gentle creature?"

"It is Lenanu who told me," Man answered. God then sent Man to go and call Lenanu, and he spoke to him thus: "Lenanu, you have indeed let out the secret of my gentle-one which I bid you never to tell!" Lenanu *kept mum* out of shame as though he was not the one who was being spoken to. "Because of what you have done," God continued, "I will make you a dog. From this very day you will not reside in my home, but you will go to earth and be a servant to Man, and for your food you will feed on excrement." On hearing this, Lenanu regretted his actions very much, but was it not too late?

Lenanu then said to God, "Oh father, now that you have indeed cursed me, I have four things to request of you, so that I can at least survive. Grant me a nose that can withstand the distasteful smell of excrement now that you fate it to be my food grant me a nose that can detect the scent of food from long distances, so that I do not die from starvation grant me, too, hairs that face one direction so that if I am delayed at the hunt I can *maneuver* through the thorn fences without my hairs getting caught between thorns, for, as you know, no one wishes to let servants in at night. And the last thing that I shall ask of you is an *agile* and light body that can go across waters and squeeze through narrow spaces now that you have disowned me."

God then said to dog, "I have granted you all that you have asked for, but blame no one, for you have removed yourself from a house that was already built." That was how Lenana fell *out of favour* with God and earned the name 'dog', and was thrown down to earth to serve Man. "The reason why the dog ate excrement is not for lack of sound advice, it is because he ate the deaf ear." This was also the time when Man procured the gentle-one, which he later *renamed* 'sheep'.

### **Questions**

1. How was the relationship between God and Man, and between God? and Lenanu?
2. What stylistic device has the author used?
3. How has the writer used personification?
4. How would you describe Leanne s character?
5. What do you t h i n k t h e writer meant when he used the following

Sentences:

- (i) "You removed yourself from a house that was already built"  
(ii) "The reason why the dog ate excrement is not for lack of sound advice, it is because he ate the deaf ear" The following sentences in the narrative are in direct speech. Change them into indirect speech.
- a) Man said, 'I have come to ask you to give me the gentle-one'  
b) "Lenana, you have indeed let out the secret of my gentle-one which I bid you never to tell!" God said.  
c) "Because of what you have done," God continued, "I will make you a dog."  
d) Lenanu said, "Now that you have indeed cursed me, I have four things to request of you, so that I can at least survive."  
c) God declared, "From this very day you will not reside in my home, but you will go to earth and be servant to man."

Give the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the

narrative' pampered kept mum bid renamed  
reside manoeuvre procure agile startled fell out of  
favour

1. The relationship between God and man was not very firm because there is a secret God did not want man to know But the relationship between God and Lenanu was intimate for Lenanu was God's favourite creature to whom He told everything.

2. The following are examples of stylistic devices used by the writer

Use of direct speech, e.g., "Very well, I will never tell him."

Use of figurative language, e.g., "... a house that was already built."

"... he ate the deaf ear".

Use of personification, e.g., The dog pays visits and talks like a man

Use of fantasy, e.g., Lenanu pays visit to man on earth and returns to heaven.

3 The writer has used personification by giving the dog human qualities. e.g., The dog can talk to man and God.

4. - Lenanu was friendly; he used to visit man frequently

- He was a liar, he cheated God that he would keep their secret.

- He was unfaithful; he revealed God's secret despite the promise he had made not to do so.

- He was remorseful/repentant; he regretted and was ashamed of his actions

- He was polite; he pleaded with God and requested Him to grant

him a few things in order to survive.

5. "You have removed yourself from a house that was already built." . This sentence is used to show Lenanu his

foolish action for he used to live in comfort in God's house where he was the favourite creature. His actions

have caused him problems for he would, from then on, fend for himself and serve man.

"The reason why the dog ate excrement is not for lack of sound advice, it is because he ate the deaf ear."

This sentence means that the dog suffered for he did not heed God's advice.

6. a) Man said that he had gone to ask Him to give him (man) the gentle-one.

b) God told Lenanu that he had indeed let out the secret of His gentle-one which He bid never to tell.

c) God continued and said that because of what he (Lenanu) had done, He would make him a dog.

d) Lenanu said that now He (God) had indeed cursed him, he (Lenanu) had four things to request of Him so that he could at least survive.

e) God declared that from that very day, he (Lenanu) would not reside in His home but he would go to earth and be servant to man.

7. pampered - overprotected/spoilt by cuddling

reside - live

procure - obtain/acquire

startled - surprised

reprimanded

rebuked sharply

Kept mum

kept quiet

Withstand

resist

Maneuver

move skilfully

agile

nimble/active/ quick

fell out of favour

no longer treated with partiality/no longer friends.

## **EXERCISE 2**

Look at the following proverbs from various language communities and write down their application.

For example:

### 1. Guthimba li kuura (**Gikuyu**)

*Having clouds is not the same as having rain*

Application: This proverb is used to warn people against making major plans for things that have not happened. The English equivalent of this proverb is "Don't count your chickens before they hatch."

### 2. Weksei urwomboket (**Nandi**)

*What you do to me today might be done to you tomorrow.*

Application: This proverb is used to advise people to treat others well. A Biblical equivalent of this proverb is "Do unto others as you

would want them to do unto you"

3 Mumerata Olaiyioni oota menve. **(Maasai)**

*A boy is never really circumcised while his father is still alive.*

4 Meeta emotonyi nerneiro ekenyua. (Maasai)

*There is no bird that does not talk at dawn.*

5. Medung'u noyu en'u d i t i o i t o i. (Maasai)

*One does not make a walking stick while on the way.*

6. Unyinyi no ta unmu **(Gikuyu)**

*YOUTH is like foolishness.*

7Hatiri kiega kiurnaga hega. **(Gikuyu)**

*Nothing good comes easily.*

8. Rurigirwetagiririamukwa. **(Gikuyu)**

*A string could do while you wait for the rope*

9. Binto mbia mochi kare. **(Gusii)**

*Things are for those who live*

*long.*

10. Mwana abande maniria makendu. **(Gusii)**

*Another person's child is*

*cold mucus.*

11. Nyumba njema si mlango. **(Kiswahili)**

*A good house cannot be judged by its door.*

12. Umjani Nguvu. **(Kiswahili)**

*Unity is strength.*

13. Chema chajiiza, kibaya chajitembeza. **(Kiswahili)**

*A good thing sells itself, a bad thing persuades people to buy it*

14. Nandaulila kalikushila ekombe. **(Luhya)**

*One who does not listen will have his ears opened in the afterworld.*

15. Nandakaywa yatsia nako ebukhwe. **(Luhya)**

*He who cannot be advised will go visiting his in-laws in a mess.*

16. Nzuyukhane yayia ameno. **(Luhya)**

*He who hurries up gets his teeth burned.*

17. Kwa mwikathi ikuyaa ngunguni. **(Kamba)**

*You cannot miss lice in the house of a braggart.*

8. Ndukatumie mwana utemusyae ngoi **(Kamba)**

*Do not make a baby-carrier before the baby is born.*

19. Syalisya itina itilea unywa muluu **(Kamba)**

*The last ones are bound to drink the muddy water.*

20. Chosei tany agobo kelyen ang'wan. **(Nandi)**

*To err is human.*

21. Makibelchindos korokon aeng. **(Nandi)**

*No one can serve two masters at a time.*

22. Kirigi kiri njaga gitiagaga gia kwooga. **(Meru)**

*A rope lying outside may be useful.*

23. Nzoru karemazwa ni pebeze. **(Giriama)**

*An elephant always carries its tusks.*

24. Mvi Iwanje nao niomoni mfwanya. **(Taita)**

The one you are born with is the one you die with.

25. *Looking at a king's mouth, one would think he never sucked at his 'mother's breast.*(Ibo)

26.

*Those whose palm-kernels were cracked/or them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be*

*humble.*(Ibo)

27. A bird in hand is worth two in the bush.(English)

28. A stitch in time saves nine.

(English)

**c) Look for ten more proverbs from various language communities. Give their direct translation into English and their applications**

### ***Answers***

1. This proverb is used to emphasize the authority of the elders in the community. It also warns against conflict between old people and the youth.

2. This proverb cautions people who speak too much but in actual fact say nothing worthwhile. It is used to discourage idle talk.

3. Proper arrangements for a trip should be made before one starts off but not on the way. The proverb is used to encourage people to plan things before doing them.

4. This proverb is used to show the little wisdom the youth have in the eyes of the elders. Most of the things that the youth do are done from lack of wisdom. You therefore cannot punish a person for doing something out of foolishness/ignorance.

5. This proverb advises people to work hard for unless one is ready to work hard and dirty his hands, he will not acquire what he desires in life.

6. This proverb means that you should utilize the little help that you get and ;that you should not reject help even when it seems to be insignificant.

7. This proverb is used to emphasize and encourage the quality of patience. People with patience always benefit in the end.

8. This proverb is used to show that you cannot treat another person's child exactly as your own. It reminds people that it is natural to consider one's child first.

9. This proverb is used to warn people not to judge others or things merely by their outward appearance. What might look good or attractive on the outside might not be the same on the inside.

10. This proverb is used to advise people to be united in order to overcome problems. When people are united, it becomes difficult to destroy them.

11. This proverb cautions people against talking too much about themselves. A good person will be judged from his or her good actions and behaviour.

12. In this proverb, one is advised to listen to advice or else it will be very embarrassing when he finds himself in a situation that requires him to behave in a special way.

13. This proverb too warns a person against disobedience. If one does not listen to advice, he will discover the truth when he is in a total mess.

14. This proverb cautions one to do things slowly but carefully in order to do them well. Work done in a hurry ends up being shoddy.

15. The proverb is used to caution people against praising themselves for they have

weaknesses which they do not point out.

16. The proverb cautions people about making too elaborate preparations in regard to an anticipated happening. This is to avoid embarrassment in case there is failure.

17. This proverb is used to caution people against arriving late at a function or appointment. Such people should not complain if they miss the function or if they get the dregs/leftovers.

18. This proverb may be used to console someone who has done something wrong unintentionally. It may also be used to caution those who laugh at others' mistakes.

19. The proverb is used to advise people to do one thing at a time in order to succeed.

20. People use this proverb to advise people not to discard things that they are not using for such things may be handy in future. It also emphasizes the importance of each member of the family regardless of his age, sex or size.

21. The proverb is used to encourage others to accept what may happen to them. It is also used to encourage people to do their work well no matter how hard the job might be.

22. This proverb is used to remind people that people with blood relations are close and will always side with each other. An English equivalent of this proverb is, "Blood is thicker than water".

23. This proverb is used to encourage people to work hard in order to rise from poverty. This proverb is used in a society where every individual is given a chance to become important through hard work.

24. This proverb cautions those that are lucky and have become rich not to look down upon the poor people. The poor people are just unfortunate.

25. This proverb is used to advise people to make use of what they have, no matter how little, and not to stay idle waiting for better things that might never come at all.

26. The proverb is used to caution people against leaving things undone: it advises people to correct errors when they happen. This is because if work is left undone for long, it will be difficult to do. Again, if an error is not corrected when it happens, it will grow out of hand thereby making it more difficult to correct.

### ***EXERCISE 3***

**Read the narrative below and then answer the questions that follow.**

#### **KONYEKI AND HIS FATHER**

Once upon a time there was an ogre who used to turn himself into a handsome young man. One day he attended a traditional dance in a neighbouring village. He was smartly dressed and he danced so well that he became the centre of attraction for most of the girls present. One girl was so attracted to him that she danced with him throughout. She even became furious if he approached another girl for a dance. When they were dancing the last dance, he requested her to accompany him to his house to see his house and greet his mother, with a promise that he would take her back home after the visit. The ogre was so courteous that the girl believed him. Apart from this, he was so attractive that he had conquered her heart.

After the last dance, they set off towards the ogre's home. They walked and *walked pa... pa... pa...* kilometre after kilometre, across rivers, hills and valleys. The girl was getting tired and she stopped and asked him how far his house was from where she stood. He told her that his home was a short distance away. It was true.

because after a short distance, she saw a lonely house in the middle of a forest. He pointed at the house and told her that that was his home. The house was locked from the outside and there was no sign of life. He said that his mother had locked the house and gone to the farm. He asked her to wait outside and excused himself. He went into the house, saying that he was going to warm the house for her. She waited outside and at the time she began to shiver. Something inside her told her all was not well and she became suspicious of the young man. He came out of the house and invited her in side. When she was settled, he excused himself to go out for more firewood for t h e room was still cold. He made sure he locked the house from outside. After he left, the girl got

curious and started looking around. To her horror, she found human skulls and limbs tucked under the bed. She became so scared that she fainted. When she came to, she found herself on a bed. The ogre had removed the artificial h a i r he had put on during the dance, thereby exposing his other mouth at the back of his head. She started crying and saying to herself that she wished she had heeded her mother's advice and that all that glitters is not gold. It was too late now and there was no point crying over split milk.

She stopped crying and pleaded with the ogre not to harm her and to let her go home. The ogre told her to save her tears for she was his wife from then on. She could not leave because he threatened to kill her and her family if she ran away from him She dreaded her's t a y there day by day but she had no alternative but to stay.

She stayed in the ogre's house and after some time, she gave birth to a baby boy whom she called Konyeki When Konyeki grew up, he took after the father. He had his father's characteris tics but was much more inquisitive and greedy. He and his father used to go to the forest to hunt for all sorts of creatures which they used to bring home for the m other to cook. The mother detested the th ings they ate and she never tas t ed any of them She used to cook her own foodm One day, Konyeki's maternal aunt came to visit her sister after a long search for her She met Konyeki' s mother outside t he house drying some animal skins. When they met, they cried on each ot her's shoulders wit h happiness. After exchanging greetings and enquiring about the other members of the family, Konyeki' s mother told her how she cam e to the ogre's hous e and how she had another younger ogre, worse than the fat her.

They stayed happily together until late afternoon when Konyeki's mother told her sister t o leave for the ogres were about to return home. She told t he sister to rest half-way the journey on a thick tree and wait there until the ogres had passed. She told her that sometimes they

used to rest under the tree. In cas e they di d, she was not to make the sli ghtest noise under any circumstance she asked her whether that was clear and the sister nodded her head in agreement. She then left her sister, Konyeki's mother, wit h tears in her eyes.

When she reached the thick tree, she decided to rest as she was asked to do by her sister. S he climbed the tree and made herself comfortable by sitting on a thick branch. The tree's thick foliage concealed her presence.

When Konyeki and his father came, they decided to rest a bit under the tree when the woman saw their ugly facial features and especially their mouths, she started

urinating and the urine fell on Konyeki's head. He wondered whether it had started raining hot rain and he looked up the tree. He saw a leg dangling up the tree.

His father had a stiff neck and he therefore was not interested in looking up. He felt excruciating pain any time he moved it Konyeki. Ignoring his father's indifference climbed the tree, a slow, shy smile creeping around the corners of his mouth. The woman held tightly on to the tree trunk but Konyeki was cunning. He whispered that if she let him eat her fingers only, he would leave her alone and not tell the father about her presence there. The woman gave in and when her fingers were eaten, she could not hold onto the tree any longer. She was pulled down still screaming. Her stomach was opened and they found twin babies. They were both boys and Konyeki took them home to his mother to cook them for him. When his mother saw the two babies, she realized what had happened to her sister. She took the babies, wrapped them up and took care of them. In place of them, she caught two moles, cut off their tails and cooked them for Konyeki. Konyeki ate them although he complained that his kidneys (as he called them) seemed to have shrivelled and that they were not tasty. His mother retorted that she would never eat the strange things that they ate. Her husband trusted her and stopped Konyeki from accusing his mother. Konyeki was not satisfied with the explanation but he kept quiet.

Days, months and years passed and the boys grew taller and stronger. They were well hidden at night but they were allowed to go out during the day when the ogres went out hunting. One day on a rainy day,

Konyeki returned in the evening from their usual hunting trips and he found many small footprints near the door of the house. He became suspicious and asked his mother who had made so many footprints. His mother told him that the marks were made by her as she went out to get water, firewood, food and when she did other household chores. He said the footprints were too small to be hers. The mother then said they must be his for there was no other child in their home. The father did not doubt his wife and told Konyeki the footprints were his (Konyeki's). The children had been warned never to make noise and they obeyed. They also never cried. When Konyeki's mother thought the boys were big enough, she called them out one morning and told them about their mother, who she was, and that her life and theirs were in danger. If they thought of escaping, then they had to practise how to fight so that they could kill the ogres. They agreed with their aunt and she bought them swords, spears, bows and arrows. They spent most of their time training how to fight the ogres.

After they were sure of themselves, and confident that they could kill them, they asked their aunt to allow them to go ahead and kill the ogres.

One day when Konyeki and his father returned home exhausted, they went straight to sleep and after a few minutes they were sound asleep and snoring loudly as usual. The twins came out of their hiding place and attacked the ogres. Konyeki was the first one to wake up and defend himself. As he was fighting back, he shouted at his father, blaming him for ignoring his warning when he reported he had seen other footsteps. His head was hacked off and he died instantly. His father woke up with a start and he too got a fatal blow before he could defend himself. The twins and their aunt took all that they could carry, burnt down the house in which the dead ogres were and left the place to go back to their home.



## Questions

1. What is the theme of the story?
2. Why do you think the twins are necessary to the plot?
3. What qualities are brought out in these stories that make Konyeki and his father objects of fear?
4. What moral teaching do you get from the proverb, "All the glitters is not gold?"
5. Identify an idiophone in this narrative and say why it is used.
6. What do you understand by the proverb, "Don't cry over split milk"
- 7.

What type of story is this?

## Answers

1. The theme of the story is *greed and ruthlessness* of the ogres that destroy them in the end.
2. Twins are necessary to the plot because it is through their actions that the story ends; they kill the ogres and, together with their aunt go back to the other human beings.
3. Qualities brought out in this narrative that make Konyeki and his father objects of fear are:
  - they can change into human beings and trick real human beings;
  - they kill and eat human beings;
  - they are greedy and ferocious;
  - they are neither humans nor animals;
  - they are cunning
4. The moral teaching from the proverb "All that glitters is not gold" is that we should not judge people by their looks. The girl went with an ogre thinking that it was an attractive young man. This brought her problems later.
5. The idiophone is pa...pa...pa...it is used to show the sound made by the feet as they walked.
6. This proverb means that one should not blame himself/herself over an action that happens when one knows that he/she cannot reverse the action. All one should do is try to do something better next time
7. This is an ogre or monster story.

## EXERCISE 4

READ THE ORAL NARRATIVE BELOW AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS THAT FOLLOW.

### HAWK AND HEN

A long time ago Hen and her friend Hawk. The two friends were good friends and lived near each other. They shared whatever they possessed and the children

too were good friends. Every morning after the planting season, one called upon the other to go out to the woods and to rubbish Dumps to look for worms and other types of food. One day, as they prepared themselves to go out to look for food, Hare called on them and told

them, "My friends, as you know a friend in need is a friend in deed, I've called you this morning to invite you to my daughter's wedding. I cannot forget," she continued, "how you, especially you Hen, fed my children when I was sick and bed-ridden. Please, come and enjoy with us," she concluded. Hen and Hawk looked at each other and nodded their heads. They promised Hare they would go to the ceremony. Hare thanked them and ran off towards her home.

After Hare had left, they looked at each other and burst out in laughter. As far as they were concerned, they did not consider Hare a real friend but just one of them. They however, decided to attend the wedding party out of curiosity. Hawk's son had married a very beautiful girl the previous year and there was a lot of eating and drinking. Hawk could remember vividly how Hyena drank and drank beer until his four legs could not carry him. He had to be taken home completely unaware of what was happening. Could Hare's party match hers? Hawk wondered. She became curious and wanted to find out.

On the wedding day, Hen and Hawk dressed themselves in their best party costumes. They warned their children not to leave their home compounds during their mothers' absence. They then left home and walked happily towards Hare's compound. Hare saw them in a distance and hurried to meet them. "Oh! How are you my friends? Welcome home. The party is going to start in an hour's time!" They went home while Hare was holding Hen's hand. Hawk noted this with displeasure but she said nothing.

When they reached home, Hare said: "Sit down and have a drink while I prepare myself"

She asked one of her young sons to serve them with drinks. When the drinks were brought, again Hawk noted that Hen was served the drink in a glass but Hawk was served in a cup with cracked edges. This killed Hawk's spirits. She may not have been as beautiful as Hen but that was no reason why she should be discriminated against. After all, hadn't she gone out of her way to dress in her best clothes, just for the party? Hawk thought bitterly.

After an hour, Hare emerged from an inner room, dressed magnificently with matching shoes and necklace. They all proceeded to the party. Hare made sure she sat next to Hen but Hawk sat a little bit farther away. She wondered what was happening. Hen seemed very happy during the party and she laughed all the time with Hare, ignoring Hawk's presence. Hawk became moody and decided not to talk to any of them from then on.

After the party was over, Hare bid the two goodbye and they left for home. It was getting dark as they walked home. Hen tried to involve Hawk in conversation. "How did you find the party?" "I think it was wonderful." Hawk did not answer Hen and she wondered why Hawk was behaving in that manner. Hen wanted to discuss the matter but Hawk said she was not interested. They went home without talking to each other until they reached their respective compounds. Hen, as usual in her high spirits, bid Hawk goodbye but Hawk looked at her sneeringly, swung her hips more

than usual and shut her gate without a word. Hen closed her gate too and went to cook for her children. Very early the following morning Hawk's child knocked at Hen's door and after Hen opened the door, she said, "Mummy sent me to you to tell you to give back all the things that belong to us. Here are all your things that were in our house." Hen was dumbfounded. She could not imagine ending the friendship with Hawk. They had been friends for such a long time. Nevertheless, she gave the child all the things that were not hers to take to her mother. The child left but after a short while she returned. "Mummy told me you did not give her all the things. She needs our hoe *and panga*

which you borrowed last week to cultivate your farm. She also needs the razor which you borrowed yesterday to shave your children." Hen went back to the house and came out with the

*panga* and the hoe but without the razor. She could not find the razor at all. She told Hawk's child, "Go and tell your mother that I have searched for the razor blade everywhere but I cannot get it. Tell her I shall look for it later on and I will send one of my children with it." Hen called out all her children to look for the missing razor blade and they scratched all around their compound without any success. That evening, Hen sent one of her children to report that the razor blade was lost and they could not get it.

Hen's child knocked at Hawk's door and when the door was opened, she was pulled in by Hawk and killed. Hawk insisted that she had to have back her razor blade and she swore to eat all Hen's children unless she got it back. The following morning, Hawk and her children hovered over Hen's compound trying to get a chance to snatch one of Hen's children. Hen clucked loudly

*cluck.. cluck..* running all over her compound frightened and frantically calling her children to come to her for protection. They all ran Hen was dumbfounded. She could not imagine ending the friendship with Hawk. They had been friends for such a long time. Nevertheless, she gave the child all the things that were not hers to take to her mother. The child left but after a short while she returned. "Mummy told me you did not give her all the things. She needs our hoe

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cultivate your farm. She also needs the razor which you borrowed yesterday to shave your children." Hen went back to the house and came out with the panga and the hoe but without the razor. She could not find the razor at all. She told Hawk's child, "Go and tell your mother that I have searched for the razor blade everywhere but I cannot get it. Tell her I shall look for it later on and I will send one of my children with it." Hen called out all her children to look for the missing razor blade and they scratched all around their compound without any success. That evening, Hen sent one of her children to report that the razor blade was lost and they could not get it. Hen's child knocked at Hawk's door and when the door was opened, she was pulled in by Hawk and killed. Hawk insisted that she had to have back her razor blade and she swore to eat all Hen's children unless she got it back. The following morning, Hawk and her children hovered over Hen's compound trying to get a chance to snatch one of Hen's children. Hen clucked loudly

*cluck.. cluck..* running all over her compound frightened and frantically calling her children to come to her for protection. They all ran to her and she protected them, and Hawk fled

away disappointed. From that time until today, hens get frightened and hide their children anytime they see Hawk nearby. Hawk on the other hand is still angry and she looks for Hen's children to kill. She said she will never stop until she gets her razor blade back. Hen still looks for the razor blade everywhere and that is why Hens are always seen scratching here and there looking for Hawk's razor blade. They wonder whether they will ever restore peace with Hawk and family.

### ***QUESTIONS***

1. - What is the main occupation of the characters in this narrative? Support your answer with two different phrases from the narrative.
2. What do you understand by the proverb: "A friend in need is a friend in deed"?
3. How do you think Hen hid her children from Hawk?
4. Narratives usually have three main parts: a beginning, a middle and an ending. Write out the three sentences that signal the beginning of each section in this narrative.
5. What incidents forced Hawk to break her friendship with Hen?
6. The writer uses an idiophone in this narrative. Identify it.
7. Identify five words that show that the story was narrated in a modern setting.
8. What Hawk's character aspects can you identify in this narrative?
9. In one sentence, summarize the conflict in this narrative.
10. What main features and style of oral literature has the writer used?
11. The story ends in a certain mood. What mood is this?
12. What do you call this type of narrative?

## ***ANSWERS***

1. The characters in this narrative are farmers. The evidence from the narrative is: our hoe and panga - to cultivate your farm - after the planting season.
2. "A friend in need is a friend in deed" - Your real friend is the one who comes to your aid when you need it most.
3. Hen hid her children from Hawk by covering them with her wings.
4. The three main parts in this narrative are signaled by the following three sentences.  
Beginning - "A long time ago, there lived Hen and her friend Hawk"  
Middle - "Very early the next morning, Hawk's child knocked at Hen's door..."  
Ending - "From that time until today, Kens get frightened and hide their children any time they see hawks nearby."
5. Hawk broke her friendship with Hen because she became jealous when:
  - Hare held Hen's hand to welcome them to her house and not Hawk's hand.
  - Hawk was served a drink in a cup with rough edges while Hen was served the drink in a glass.
  - In the party, Hare and Hen ignored Hawk and left her out of their conversation.. They even sat near each other while Hawk sat a bit farther.
6. The ideophone that the writer uses is 'cluck-cluck-cluck' to describe the sound Hen made.
7. Five words that show that the story was narrated in a modern setting are: cut, glass, party, dress, shoes, panga.
8. Hawk's character aspects in the narrative are;

jealous	revengeful	insistent
adamant	moody .....	observant
curious	untrustworthy	Heartless /
ruthless		
9. The conflict in the narrative is between Hen and Hawk who needs back her razor blade which Hen has lost.
10. The writer has used dialogue, narrative is given by the third person, animals have been given human characteristics and the writer has used suspense.
11. The mood the story ends in is that of fear, anger, vengeance, desperation and hopelessness.
12. This type of narrative is called explanatory or aetiological.

### **EXERCISE 5**

Read the following oral narrative and answer the questions that follow.

#### **LWANDA MAGERE**

Magere was like a mystery, for he was immensely strong and in armed combat quite invincible. Thus he was a hero among his people. Often under cover of night the Lang' o made cattle raids into Luo territory; but whenever Magere appeared, they suffered heavy losses and those able to escape alive soon showed a clean pair of heels. Then, after Magere had won countless battles against them, the Lang'o elders assembled to discuss ways of ending the glorious career

of this all-' conquering hero. "How best can we destroy him?" they asked themselves "How is it that Magere seems to have a body of stone when, like the rest of us, he has a wife and children? Surely he has blood somewhere." They debated the problem at length, until they decided to give Magere a Lang'o girl who might discover the secret of his strength. And so word went out that the most beautiful girl known among the Lang'o should be found and sent to the elders' assembly. A girl was found, a lovely maiden as brown as a ripe *osaye* fruit: no other girl could match her for grace and beauty. They sent her to Magere and he fell in love with her at once. When Magere's *mikayi* or first wife, saw that he was about to marry a stranger, she upbraided him. "Husband," she said, "I don't like you marrying this daughter of the Lang'o. Why

didn't you find a beautiful Luo girl instead of *this jambetre* who has been sent to spy on you?" Magere refused to listen. Women, he thought, are the same the world over: spiteful and full of jealousy. Magere lived happily with his new wife. Time went by and though she went to report to her people moon after moon, she had no news for them. One day, however, Magere fell ill while his first wife was out working in her garden. It was customary then for the first wife to do the farming or at least to sow the seeds for the harvest. Thus the junior wife nursed Magere. Next day his illness was worse and in the late morning, when the sun reached its height and people

in the gardens had to leave their work to shelter from its heat, Magere told his young wife to bring a blade cut his body with it, and then rub some potent ash into the wounds. The medicine was made from burnt herbs which he had stuffed into dried sealed reeds. He had stored it in a skin bag in his own *duol*

away from the eyes of his wives. Magere asked his young wife to make the incisions. She replied, "Husband, why do you demand the impossible? A thin blade cannot cut through rock and you're all rock." Then Magere pointed to his shadow. "Cut there," he ordered. Now she went half-heartedly to Magere's shadow, and with the blade cut the part of his shadow cast by his forehead. In the same way she made another three cuts on the cheeks and then applied the medicine. As she watched the blade sink into the shadow it seemed to her time it was sinking into the earth. She was astonished, therefore, to look up and see blood trickling from the 'rock'. The deeper the blade sank, the more torrentially the blood flowed. She knew now that Magere's strength lay in his shadow, and not in his body. Her treacherous heart was warmed by it all. Besides nursing Magere, she had to fetch vegetables from the fields and water from the river. So, shortly after her discovery, she told Magere to sit in the shadow of his *duol* while she went to perform these

tasks. Meanwhile, of course, she went to her house, packed her belongings, and fled to her people. When Mikayi arrived from the fields, she asked how Magere was feeling. He said his illness had advanced so far that he had asked his Lang'o wife to cut him and apply some medicine. "Oh, my husband," she cried, "you've stepped on hot ash! You've stepped on hot ash with both feet! Where is this girl?" She searched everywhere but without success. Aware of what the discovery meant, she now begged her husband not to go to war again.

But Magere replied, "I was born a hero and I'll die a hero! I'll never hesitate to defend my people!" The young wife soon arrived in the Lang'o heartland. Word quickly spread to all parts of the country that she had returned with exciting news from Luoland. The leaders gathered at once. Some, who had doubted the wisdom of the plan, asked, "Has she really come back?" and the reply, "Yes!!" was given so firmly that it pierced the innermost depth of their ears.

People poured in from the countryside. Question and answer were constantly repeated among swelling crowds. Soon, with the home tightly packed, the girl rose to speak, and told the story of Magere's sickness. "If you want to kill him," she announced, "look for his shadow and aim at it with whatever weapon you're carrying. Shoot nowhere else, for the upright parts of his body are solid rock that will blunt, curl, or break all your spears and arrows." Her words sank into their ears. They rose and returned to their homes. The elders, however, now planned a series of battles against Luo, battles that would begin at night and last until well after dawn on the morrow.

A few days later, therefore, they launched a fierce night attack on the Luo and the battle continued until well into the following day with many lives lost on both sides. Seeing that the struggle was dragging on unnecessarily, the sick Magere, who normally entered the field only when his junior warriors seemed especially hard pressed, now calmly handed his tobacco pipe to his *misumba*. "Prepare my arms!" he ordered. Nor would he listen to his wife, who begged him ceaselessly not to join the battle. "I'm going to defend my people. One dead

hero does not prevent the world from bearing more." So he rushed into the field, and all afternoon victory hung in the balance. With his clubs and spears, with his bows, arrows, and shield, Magere hurled himself against the foe, taking them unawares and slaughtering countless numbers of them. The lightly injured fled; the gravely wounded lay

bleeding beneath the sun. Still clinging to life they sweated in the heat without water to quench their thirst. They saw death approaching like an arrow shot from the bow, winging its way to hit the eye of its target?

The Lang'o resisted stubbornly. They strove to stem Magere's attack, but he dispersed the hard core of their troops and drove them into the hills. Racing along in pursuit, he slaughtered everyone within reach. Then, feeling weary, he decided to break off a battle that was won already. He asked his people to let the Lang'o escape. Cowards, they say, are heroes once a war is over, perpetually boasting of their scars. The Lang'o who escaped no doubt boasted of their wounds, and the Luo, victorious, would retell a hundred times the story of their brilliant strategy. The glory due to a single hero would be shared by all.

And now, returning from battle, the Luo chanted war songs. Warriors praised their fellows, slam or living, and the air was filled with the blaring of horns, the booming of drums, and the clanging of spears and *gain*.

After his hard fight Magere was weak and he came down slowly from the mountains where he had driven the Lang'o. It was late evening, when the long shadows announced that soon the sun must fall behind the mountains. Magere, unable to am, was picking his way along the homeward path. And at this time, too, a Lang'o warrior remembered the advice of the girl. He upbraided his comrades, "Are we going to let this man escape," he asked, "after killing so many of our brothers and sons. Come, let's find him. Today he must die." With the cunning of which his people were famous, the Lang'o warrior set off to search for Magere. Like a snake, he slid from bush to bush, carefully concealed from the eyes of the returning Luo. When, finally, he caught up with Magere, he dodged about, this way and that; and then with a mighty thrust, he drove his spear deep into Magere's shadow. The last great hero of the Luo crashed dead to the earth. Lang'o warriors who saw him fall shrieked at the top of their voices. A great *sigalagala* went up.

"Their hero is dead! Their hero is dead!" But, wonder of wonders, when Magere fell before the Lang'o, he became a mighty rock and, awe-struck by his mysterious disappearance, the Lang'o trembled with fear, thinking that the Luo hero had assumed another body and was about to rise again and slay them. Now, unlike the Lang'o, who were as happy as swallows catching worms, or flies blown far, the Luo people (Luo) went weeping homewards. For those who knew that mighty warrior, this was the saddest day of their lives. This and many days that followed were grey and gloomy. To make matters worse, the Lang'o, still doubtful whether they had killed Magere, launched three more heavy attacks on the Luo to make sure. They swept through Luo villages, wreaking slaughter on even side. But no man like

Magere appeared and they went home convinced he was dead. From that day to this, all who sharpen their weapons on Magere's rock before setting off to go hunting never fail to kill or capture their quarry. Even when their spear only lightly scratches the beast, it sinks to the ground in its death throes. To honour Magere as a great defender of his people, his memory is enshrined forever in one of our most popular sayings. When a man exceeds another in cruelty he is asked, proverbially, "Are you Lwanda Magere that can't be trifled with" Though Magere has now been long dead, the Luo have never forgotten him: he is part and parcel of their history. When they love someone dearly, the Luo compose songs of praise about him, and this they have done for Lwanda Magere.

## QUESTIONS

1. What type of oral narrative is this'?
2. Quote one phrase that shows that the narrative is told in a modern setting.
- j. What do you understand by the following proverb as it is used in the narrative: "Cowards are heroes once a war is over, perpetually boasting of their scars.?" Explain your answer with an example from the narrative.
4. What four character aspects of Lwanda Magere can you get from this narrative?
5. What type of communities were the Luo and the Lang'o in this narrative?



6. Identify three sentences where simile is used.

### **ANSWERS**

- 1 This oral narrative is a 'legend',
2. The following phrase shows that the narrative is told in a modern setting: 'the glorious career of this all conquering hero'.
- 3 The proverb means that people who have not achieved much keep on boasting with the little they have done. For example, Lwanda Magere who was a hero did not boast of all the battles he had won unlike the other warriors who kept on re-telling of their victories.
4. Any of the following characteristic aspects of Lwanda Magere can be given: he was brave, humble, patriotic, too trusting/ unsuspecting, adamant, stubborn, commanding.
5. They were warring communities.
6. a) Magere was like a mystery.  
b) They saw death approaching like an arrow.  
c) ... who were as happy as swallows.

### **EXERCISE 6**

Read the following oral narrative and answer the questions that follow

#### **WHY THE**

#### **DOG IS THE FRIEND OF MAN**

Long, long ago the jackal and the dog were brothers and lived together in the wild bush. Each day they would go hunting together, and when evening fell they would return to the valley which was their only home, and share their food.

One night they both came back empty-handed and ravenously hungry, and to make matters worse, a cold wind was blowing across the bush and the animals could not find any protection from the gale, "Alas" said the dog. "It is a very bad thing to feel hungry, but much worse to feel hungry and cold at the same time."

"Lie down and go to sleep," suggested the jackal. "Then when the morning comes we can go hunting again and perhaps catch that young deer we so nearly caught today." "Jackal" he exclaimed. "What is that light over there?" "That's a village, and the red is a man's fire," explained the jackal. "Fire is warm," said the dog longingly "Won't you go and fetch me some fire, Jackal. You are braver than I." "Certainly not!" growled the jackal, "You fetch it yourself if you want it. It was your idea." But the dog was afraid of man and he curled up even smaller on the bare ground to try to keep himself warm. As he lay there, he thought that perhaps the people in the village were eating and he wondered whether they might leave some bones lying on the ground after their meal, which he could creep in and steal. The thought made him hungrier and hungrier, so that presently he forgot his fear and said boldly to the jackal: "I can't stay here in the cold any longer. I am going to the village and will try to get some fire. Perhaps I may even bring back some bones for you too. If I don't get back soon, call me, in case I cannot find my way to you." So off ran the dog towards the red glow in the village, and when he was nearly there he slowed down and crept in on his stomach, hoping that no one would hear him. Nearer and nearer he got to the fire, sniffing eagerly as he smelt the odour of a past meal still lingering in the air. Just as he

reached the dying embers of the fire outside the door of a hut, some fowls roosting in a nearby tree gave the alarm. A man rushed out and caught him, lifting high his spear and saying: "What are you doing in my compound?" "Oh, please don't kill me," begged the dog. "I have not come to harm anybody here, but only to get a little warmth from your dying fire. I beg you, let me lie down here and rest and warm myself, and later I will go back to the bush and never trouble you again."

The dog looked so cold and miserable that the man, who was kind at heart, felt sorry for him. He put down his spear and said: "Very well. If you promise not to harm anyone in this village you may lie down by the fire. But when you are warm, you must go back to the bush again."

The dog thanked him profusely and lay down beside the fire, on which the man piled some more sticks and blew them into a blaze. Now the dog was happy indeed, for under his very nose lay a bone, which someone had thrown down at the end of their meal. He gnawed away happily for some time, while the heat from the fire warmed his shivering limbs. Never had he been so contented or so comfortable. Suddenly the man called from inside his hut: "Aren't you warm yet?" "Not quite," answered the dog, who had just seen another bone nearby that he wanted to chew. "Well, I'll give you a little longer," said the man, and all was quiet again except for the cracking of bones under the dog's strong teeth. "Aren't you warm yet?" asked the man presently. But the dog thought unhappily of the cold wind blowing across the bush, and creeping even closer to the fire he begged: "Let me stay a little longer." It was some time before the man called out again, for both he and the dog at his door had been fast asleep.

"You must have finished warming yourself by now," said the man, rising to his feet and coming out of his hut. The dog, deciding that honesty was the best policy, looked into the man's eyes and pleaded: "Yes, I am warm, but I do not want to go back to the bush where I am so often cold and hungry. Will you not let me stay in the house with you? I will help you hunt the birds that fly in the forest. I will teach you the

cunning ways of the wild animals so that you can kill them for food and I promise you that unlike my brother the jackal I will never rob you of our goats and chickens. All I ask in return is a place by your fire and the remains of your meals.

The man now looked closely into the dog's eyes and saw that he was speaking the truth. "Very well," he replied. "If you promise to serve and obey me I will give you warmth and food."

Ever since that day, the dog has lived with man. But when at night you hear the jackal calling

'Bo-aa!' from the bush you will know that he is calling for his brother the dog to return to him with the fire and the bones that he went to fetch.

But the dog never answers the call and the jackal wanders the bushes

*alone*

### ***Questions***

1. The plot of the narrative has the three main parts of a narrative. State what these three parts are and give a sentence from the narrative that starts each part.
2. Through what actions does the dog try to solve his problem?

3. Why did the dog desert his brother the jackal?

4.

State three character aspects of the dog as presented in the narrative.

5. Give the theme of this narrative-

6. What type of story is this? Explain briefly.

7. The writer uses direct speech in this narrative. Change the following conversation between the jackal and the dog from direct speech to reported speech.

“Fire is warm,” said the dog longingly. “Won’t you go and fetch me some fire jackal? You are braver than

I”

“Certainly!” growled the jackal. “You fetch it yourself if you want it. It was your idea.”

### ***ANSWERS***

1. The three main parts of the narrative are a beginning, a middle and an ending.

- a beginning: "Long, long ago the jackal and the dog were brothers and lived together in the wild bush."

- Middle: "So off ran the dog towards the red glow in the village, and when he was nearly there he

slowed down and crept in on his stomach, hoping that no one would hear him."

- And ending: "Ever since that day, the dog has lived with Man."

2. The dog tried to solve his problems by:

- going to Man's compound to warm himself

- requesting Man to let him stay a while to warm himself

- eating the leftover bones that Man had thrown away

-

prolonging his stay by the fireside by saying that he was not yet warm

- requesting Man to let him stay for good to serve him

3. The dog deserted his brother the jackal because it was too cold in the forest and he found warmth and

satisfaction by staying with Man in the village.

4. The following are character aspects of the dog that one can choose

**The dog is greedy, a coward, unreliable, determined, polite, cunning, and selfish.**

5. The theme of the narrative is the dog's selfishness and his desertion of his brother the jackal.

6. This is an aetiological or explanatory narrative. It explains why the dog became a domestic animal.

7. - The dog said that fire was warm and requested Jackal to get him some because Jackal was braver than him.

- Growlingly, Jackal said he certainly could not and asked the dog to fetch it himself if he wanted it because it was his idea.

**EXERCISE 7**

**Read the following oral song and answer the questions that follow.**

I my husband rejects me

Because he says

That I am a mere pagan

And I believe in the devil.

He says

I do not know

The rules of health,

And I mix up

Matters of health and superstition

Ocol troubles my head.

10

He talks too much

And he heaps insults on me

As well as my relatives.

But most of his words are senseless,

They are like the songs.

15

Of children's plays.

And he treats his clansmen

As if they are enemies.

Ocol behaves

As if he is a witch!

20

IV It is true

White man's medicines are strong,

But Acoli medicines

Are also strong.

V The sick get cured

Because his time has not yet come:

But when the day has dawned

For the journey to Pagak

No one can stop you

White man's medicines 30

Acoli medicines

Crucifixes, rosaries,

Toes of edible rats,

The horn of the rhinoceros

None of them can block the path 35

That goes to Pagak!

VI When death comes

To fetch you

She comes unannounced,

She comes suddenly

40

Like the vomit of dogs,

And when she comes

The wind keeps blowing

The birds go on singing  
And the flowers 45  
Do not hang their heads  
The agoya bird is silent  
The agoya comes afterwards,  
He sings to tell ,  
That death has been that way! 50  
VII When Mother Death comes  
She whispers  
Come,  
And you stand up  
And follow You get up immediately,  
And you start walking  
Without brushing the dust  
On your buttocks.

68

VII I You may be behind

60

A new buffalo-hide shield,  
And at the mock-fight  
Or in battle  
You may be matchless  
IX You may be hiding  
In the hole  
Of the smallest black insect,  
Or in the darkest place  
Where rats breast-feed their puppies,  
Or behind the Agoro hills.

*Okoth P'Bitek*

### **Questions**

1. Why does Ocol reject Lawino? Give examples.

2.

Give reasons why Lawino blames Ocol.

3. What do you understand by this line: "For the journey to Pagak"?

*(line 28)*

4. What things do people use to ward off death? Are these things effective?

5. What do you understand by the following lines:

"The wind keeps blowing

The birds go on singing

And the flowers

Do not hang their heads."?

*(lines 43 to 46)*

6. The writer starts with one theme which leads to another. What are the two themes?

7

.

In two sentences, state what the writer says about death.

### **ANSWERS**

1. Ocol rejects Lawino because she says that she is superstitious. For example, in his opinion, she is a pagan, and she is not clean.
2. Lawino blames Ocol because: he talks too much he abuses Lawino and her relatives he mistreats his clansmen he behaves like a witch
3. Pagak means the land of no return. Therefore, the lines mean when one dies.
4. People use modern and traditional medicines, crucifixes, rosaries, toes of edible rats and the horn of the rhinoceros as charms to ward off death. None of these things is effective.
5. The lines mean that even when death comes to some, life still goes on.
6. The two themes are:  
superstitious beliefs death
7. The writer says that when death strikes, there is nothing one can do about it. No matter where you hide or the medicines you take or the charms you use, death will still come.

### **EXERCISE 8**

Read the following narrative and answer the questions that follow.

#### **ORIGIN OF THE AGIKUYU**

At the beginning of creation, *Mwene Nyaga, Ngai*, the creator and provider for all mankind, called on his servant Gikuyu. He said to him, "My son Gikuyu, I am going to give you your share of land. The land I am going to give you is full of ravines, rivers, valleys, forests and plenty of game for you to hunt for your food. The land is fertile and your children and your children's children will never go hungry if you till it well." Gikuyu stood still with disbelief. Mwene Nyaga saw Gikuyu's hesitation. He took him to his residence on top of the mountain of mystery, "Kirinyaga", where He resided. From here, He commanded a good view of all His lands. He therefore wanted Gikuyu to see for himself all the land he had been given. He showed him all the land and its beauty. He said, "My son, all this is yours." Then He sat back and watched Gikuyu's happiness as he moved from place to place, trying to locate the boundaries to his land. But no matter how hard he looked, his land seemed to roll for miles and miles. Having inspected the panorama of his land, he quickly composed himself and ran to Mwene Nyaga's feet and cried with happiness thanking Him for the great gift. He was sure that he would be happy ever after. But then, he felt a kind of loneliness and his happiness subsided. What would he do with all that land all by himself? Mwene Nyaga knew what was going on in Gikuyu's mind. As he was leaving, Mwene Nyaga

called him back and pointed to him a spot far off in the middle of the country, where a fig tree, *Mnkuyu*, grew. He ordered Gikuyu to settle there and call this place "Mukurwe wa Nyagathanga." Whenever Gikuyu was in need of Mwene Nyaga's help in whatever way, he should offer a sacrifice to Him at the fig tree. He should raise his hands towards Kirinyaga, Mwene Nyaga's residence, and state all his problems. Mwene Nyaga would definitely see him and come to his rescue. He also told him that He had given him a present, the most precious present in his life, and that he would get the present on his arrival at his new home. Gikuyu thanked Mwene Nyaga and, being unable to contain his curiosity any longer, he hurried straight to Mukurwe wa Nyagathanga. To his surprise, seated there was a young beautiful woman whom he called Mumbi (moulder or creator). They lived together as man and wife and were blessed with nine daughters but no sons. The daughters were Wachera, Wanjiku, Wairimu, Wambui, Wangari, Wanjiru, Wangui, Mwithaga and Waithera. Gikuyun needed an heir, and not having a son disturbed him. He then remembered Mwene Nyaga's advice, "I'll come to

your rescue." o He organized a sacrifice at the Mukuyu tree. He slaughtered a ram and a kid from his flock and poured their blood and fat on the trunk of the sacred tree. He went to his house and called Mumbi and their daughters. They roasted some meat and offered it to Mwene Nyaga. They raised their hands towards Kirinyaga and prayed, "*Thaai thathaiya Ngai thaai.*" He later left and went home.

Mwene Nyaga quickly answered Gikuyu's prayers. On the following morning, Gikuyu went to the sacred tree and he couldn't believe his eyes when he found, seated near the tree, nine strong young men. He was overcome with joy and he looked up to the mountain and thanked Mwene Nyaga, his benefactor. He welcomed the nine young men and took them to his home where he introduced them to his wife and daughters. Food was cooked for them and after bathing and eating, they went to sleep. The next morning, the nine men woke up early in the morning, having had a good night's sleep. After the morning meal, Gikuyu called them outside to discuss marriage. He told them they would marry his daughters on one condition; they had to live with them on his land. By this time, the men had already made their choices. They were so fascinated by the daughters' beauty and the father's kindness that they agreed to his proposal. Gikuyu and Mumbi were overjoyed for they now had sons to inherit their vast lands. The daughters on the other hand had already started to show their preference of the men. They were also happy when the men agreed to their father's wish for they knew they now had men to protect them and give them company. Gikuyu did not wait long before making arrangements for his daughters' weddings according to the Gikuyu customary laws. He did not ask for bride wealth from the young men for he knew they did not have any and in actual fact they were a blessing to him. The daughters got married to the young men and they started nine different families. They were, however, united under one name, 'Mbari ya Mumbi', which means 'Mumbi's family group'. This was in honour of their mother Mumbi. Gikuyu and Mumbi were the heads of 'Mbari ya Mumbi' and the nine families remained under them. They are the mother and father of the Gikuyu people. As the years passed, Gikuyu and Mumbi became older and older and eventually they died. Before they died, Gikuyu called his daughters and their husbands. He told them, "My children, as you can see your mother and I are about to leave you but before we go, we would like to leave you with these words. All the land and whatever else we

possess is yours. Divide it equally among yourselves. Remember that one finger cannot kill a louse."

With these words, Gikuyu and Mumbi breathed their last breath. The nine families continued to live together and the number of their children and grandchildren was increasing. They became so many that it was impossible for the families to live together any more. They called a meeting where they resolved that each family should take all its children and grandchildren and live together as one clan, *Muhiriga*. The clans were to be called after the nine daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi. This decision is the basis of the nine principal Gikuyu clans. They are Acheera, Agachiko, Airimo (or Agathigia), Ambui, Angari, Anjiru, Angui, Ethaga and Aitherando. The nine clans lived in Gikuyu's land and occupied different parts of it.

### ***Questions***

1. What do you call this type of story?
2. The creator wanted Gikuyu to take up a kind of occupation. What is it? Support your answer with a sentence from the narrative.
3. Why is the fig tree significant in Gikuyu's life?
4. What do you understand by the following proverb: "One finger cannot kill a louse."? Give one English proverb equivalent to this one.
5. Briefly explain how the nine Gikuyu clans were started.
6. Who do you think are told this type of story and why

### ***ANSWERS***

1. This type of story is called a myth.
2. The creator wanted Gikuyu to be a farmer/hunter. "The land is fertile" (farmer) "Your children's children will never go hungry if you till it well." (farmer) "Plenty of game for you to hunt for your food." (hunter)
3. It is under the fig tree that Gikuyu prays to God and offers sacrifices, it is under the same tree that his prayers are answered. E.g., Mumbi and the nine young men were found at the fig tree. '
4. "One finger cannot kill a louse" means that you need cooperation from other people for you to perform certain tasks successfully. "Unity is strength."
5. The nine Gikuyu clans were started after the nine families increased in number in a way that they could not live together under one roof any more. The families divided and each family took the name of the mother of the family to start a clan.
6. This type of story is told to the young people to teach them about the origin of their ethnic group. It also serves to perpetuate the culture of a particular group of people.



### ***EXERCISE 9***

**Read the following narrative and answer the questions that follow.**

#### **HARE AND ANTELOPE**

There once lived a Hare who, one day, as she was sauntering about in the bush, found an arrow which she picked up. On her way back home, she came upon a group of hunters who were skinning an animal they had killed, and she said to them: "If you give me a fat piece of meat, I will give you something nice in exchange." The hunters asked: "And what could that be?"

Hare replied: "It is an arrow head given to me by god." Hare was given a fat piece of meat in exchange for the arrow head. She bid the hunters goodbye and went on her way.

Next she came upon warriors who were applying ochre to their bodies, and realising they had no fat, she said to them: "Hey you warriors, if you give me a necklace, I will give you a fat piece of meat that you could use as fat." The warriors consented and gave her a necklace in exchange for the fat piece of meat. When the exchange was finalised, Hare took leave of the warriors and continued on her way. Next she came upon Antelope to whom she said: "Look at my necklace." On enquiring where she had got it, Hare replied: "It is my friends the warriors who gave it to me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat, the meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow which my god gave me." Antelope looked at Hare's necklace admiringly, and said to her: "May I please try it on?"

On wearing the necklace Antelope sought the opinion of her friend by asking: "Does it suit me?" To this Hare innocently replied. "It suits you perfectly well." Thereupon Antelope ran as fast as her legs could carry her, running away with Hare's beads. After trying to pursue Antelope, Hare soon realised that she would never catch up with her, and so gave up the chase.

Walking away sorrowfully, Hare soon came upon another group of hunters and said to them: "Hey you hunters, please shoot that antelope for me." To this the hunters asked: "What is she guilty of?" Hare replied: "She took away my necklace, my necklace that the warriors gave me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat, my meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow that my god gave me." After hearing of Hare's complaint, the hunters declined to shoot Antelope. Taking leave of the hunters, Hare came across a burning fire, to whom she said: "Hey you fire, could you please eat those hunters?"

Fire asked, "What have they done?" Hare replied. "They refused to shoot Antelope, Antelope who took my necklace, my necklace that the warriors gave me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat, my meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow that my god gave me." Again, on hearing Hare's complaint, Fire too said: "I will not eat the hunters."

Hare next came upon Water and said to it: "Hey you water, could you please put out that fire?" Water asked, "What has Fire done" Hare repeated to Water all that she had told Fire.

Water on listening to

Hare's complaint declined to do as she was bid. Hare left Water, feeling disappointed. Soon she found a herd of elephants, to whom she spoke thus: "Hey you elephants, could you please drink that water." On enquiring why Water had to be drunk, Hare replied:

"Water refused to put out Fire, Fire who refused to eat the hunters, the hunters that declined to shoot Antelope, Antelope who took away my necklace, my necklace that the warriors gave me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat, my meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow that my god gave me." On hearing Hare's story the elephants, too, declined to carry out Hare's request as all the others had done.

Undaunted by her inability to convince anyone to take action on her behalf so far, Hare moved on, next coming upon trees to whom she spoke saying: "Hey you trees, could you please fall on those elephants?" On enquiring the wrong committed by the elephants, Hare replied: "They refused to drink Water, Water that refused to put out Fire, Fire that refused to eat the hunters, the hunters that declined to shoot Antelope, Antelope who took away my necklace, my necklace that the warriors gave me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat, my meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow that my god gave me." When the trees had heard Hare's story, they too said, "We will not fall on the elephants/' Hare then left the trees and came upon termites whom she asked to fell the trees. The termites demanded to know the wrong committed by the trees. Hare told termites of how the trees had refused to fall on the elephants and went on enumerating what everyone else had done or refused to do in the same way she had told the others. The refusal by btermites to fell the trees upset Hare, but she was by no means daunted. Moving on with persistence, Hare soon came upon some donkeys whom she asked to trample on the termites. On hear ing what the termites had done, the donkeys too declined to trample on them.

By this time Hare was beginning to feel exasperated and weary, having walked all day with no

success. It was not long before she came upon a group of hyenas, to whom she said: "Hey you

hyenas, could you please eat those donkeys?" The hyenas asked: "What have the donkeys done?" Hare replied, "They refused to trample on the termites, the termites which refused to fell the trees, the trees that refused to fall on the elephants, elephants who refused to drink Water, Water who refused to put out Fire, Fire who refused to eat the hunters, the hunters that declined to shoot Antelope, Antelope who took away my necklace, my necklace that the warriors gave me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat, my meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow that my god gave me."

Agreeing to carry out Hare's request, the hyenas said: "Very well, we will eat the donkeys." On the realisation that they were about to be eaten, the donkeys said: "We will trample on the termites. The termites said: "We will fell the trees." The trees said: "We will fall on the elephants." The elephants said: "We will drink Water." Water said: "I will put out Fire." Fire said: "I will eat the hunters." The hunters said: We will shoot Antelope." Antelope said: "I will return Hare's necklace." So Hare was given back her necklace and she was very happy.

### *Questions*

1. Give two examples of personification used by the narrator.

2. "To this Hare innocently replied." Why does the narrator use the word *innocently here!*
3. What is the mood in this narrative?
4. Give, with illustrations, three character aspects of Hare.
5. "Hyena's presence in this narrative is indispensable." Briefly state how " true or false this statement is.
6. What major narrative technique does the narrator use in this story? What effect does this have on the development of the story?
7. What type of narrative is this? Support your answer.

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75

### **ANSWERS**

1. Examples of personification are:
  - Hare is referred to as "she"/"her".
  - "Antelope" "Hare" "Fire" "Water" begin with capital letters as if they are personal nouns. They also talk like humans.
  - Antelope wears a necklace like a human being.
  - Fire is referred to as "whom", a relative pronoun that is used with humans only.
2. The narrator uses the word "innocently" because Hare did not know that Antelope admired her necklace and she would run away with it after being told by Hare that it suited her well.
3. The mood in this narrative is one of disappointment, sadness and anger.
4. Examples of Hare's character are:
  - She is polite (she uses the word 'please').
  - She is persistent (she doesn't give up easily even after being turned down).
  - She is optimistic (she hopes to get some justice).
  - She is persuasive (she repeats the chain of events that lead to the loss of her necklace). She requests to be got back her necklace. ! - She is vengeful (she wants those who refuse to help to be punished).
5. It is true that "Hyena's presence in this narrative is indispensable" because he is the only one who accepts to help Hare thereby seeing justice attained.
6. The narrator uses repetition as a major narrative technique to create a chain of events which makes the narrating interesting.
7. This is a trickster story. Antelope tricks Hare to be given Hare's necklace to try on, which she later runs away with.

## ***EXERCISE 12***

**Read the following oral narrative and then answer the questions that follow.**

### **THE WICKED CHIEF**

There once lived a wicked chief. Nobody liked him because of his wickedness. He was wicked to old men and women. By pretending to be kind, he tried to be popular with all the young men who lived in that country. When the chief won over the young men, they all liked him. One day, the chief called all the young men and told them: "My friends, don't you see?" They asked, "What?" "You should kill all of them. Everybody should kill his father" Ah! (That they should kill their fathers!) As a result, everybody whose father was old brought him to be killed. This one went and brought him to be killed, the other went and brought his father to be killed. They killed all the old men, leaving only one. He was the father of a man who said "No. Why should the chief kill all the old men and why should I send my old father to be killed?" He got down and went and dug a large hole and concealed it nicely. He sent his father there, where he had dug. He fetched wood and put it across and covered it with soil, making a small hole for air to pass through. At that time, they had finished killing all the old men. When the chief finished executing them, he then called all the young men. "My friends, we have

now finished killing all our old men. This is a cow I am giving to you. I am so happy we have got rid of all our old men, so go and kill the cow. When you have killed the cow, cut the best part of its meat and bring it to me. If you don't bring it, you yourselves are not safe." (That is all right!) Eh! The young men rushed out and slaughtered the cow. Which is the best part of the meat of a cow? They were worried. They went and cut the liver and sent it to him. He asked whether or not that was the best part of the meat. They answered "yes". They added part of the bile. He said that wasn't the best part of the meat and that they should go and find it quickly.

The people became more worried. Every night the young man secretly took food to his father. One day he took food to his father, who asked about the news of the town. He said: "My father, now we are suffering. When we killed all the old men, the chief gave us a cow to go and kill. When we killed the cow, he said we must find both the sweetest and bitterest part of the meat and bring them to him. The if we do not bring them, we are not safe ourselves. This is what is worrying us." The old man laughed, but again asked if he did not know the sweetest part of the meat. He said, "No". He again asked if he did not know the bitterest part. He said "No". "Then the sweetest and bitterest part is the tongue. When you go, cut the tongue and send it to him and say that the sweetest part of the meat is also the bitterest."

The man rushed home while all the people sat down, undecided about what to do. If

something had not happened they might have thrown the whole meat away and run away. When the boy arrived, he said: "My friends, take the tongue of the cow in." They cut the tongue for him, and he took it to the chiefs palace. He went and threw it down and said, "Chief, see the sweetest part of the meat and the bitterest part also."

The chief sat down quietly and finally said: "You did not kill your father. Speak the truth. You have not killed your father." He said: "It is the truth, I didn't kill him. When all the

other young men were killing their fathers I went and hid mine." The chief said: "You are the son of a wise old man. The sweetest and bitterest part of meat is the tongue As for that, all these young men are big fools. Why should someone send his father to be killed? But if you want the sweetest part of the meat, find the tongue. Were it not for the tongue, you would not have an enemy; and it is also because of your tongue that you will not have a friend."

### **Questions**

1. What type of story is this? Support your answer
2. How would you describe the young man who did not kill his father?
3. State three character aspects of the chief
4. What moral lesson do you learn from this narrative?
5. Name two things that are characteristic to oral narratives that appear in -this narrative.
6. Explain what you understand by the following statement. "The sweetest and bitterest part of the meat is the tongue."

### **ANSWERS**

1. This is a trickster story. The young men are tricked by the chief to kill their fathers and they do it.
2. The young man is sensible, cunning and outspoken.
3. Any of the following characteristics of the chief are acceptable:
  - Pretender
  - Persuasive
  - Wicked/ ruthless
  - Clever/ wise
4. People should think twice before they make major decisions. They should also not do anything they are told without questions, especially if such acts affect them personally.
5. Any of the following characteristics of oral narratives are correct.
  - The beginning of the story e.g., "There lived..."
  - Use of past simple.
  - Repetition of sentences or phrases.
  - Use of the third person.
6. The tongue is capable of pleasing by uttering praises and is also capable of causing anger by uttering abuses and curses.

### **EXERCISE 15**

#### **HARE AND ANTELOPE**

There once lived a Hare who, one day, as she was sauntering about in the bush, found an arrow which she picked up. On her way back home, she came upon a group of hunters who were skinning an animal they had killed, and she said to them: "If you give me a fat piece of meat, I will give you something nice in exchange." The hunters asked: "And what could that be?" Hare replied: "It is an arrow head given to me by god." Hare

was given a fat piece of meat in exchange for the arrow head. She bid the hunters goodbye and went on her way. Next she came upon warriors who were applying ochre to their bodies, and realising they had no fat, she said to them: "Hey you warriors, if you give me a necklace, I will give you a fat piece of meat that you could use as fat." The warriors consented and gave her a necklace in exchange for the fat piece of meat. When the exchange was finalised, Hare took leave of the warriors and continued on her way.

Next she came upon Antelope to whom she said: "Look at my necklace." On enquiring where she had got it, Hare replied: "It is my friends the warriors who gave it to me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat, the meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow which my god gave me." Antelope looked at Hare's necklace admiringly, and said to her: "May I please try it on?" On wearing the necklace Antelope sought the opinion of her friend by asking: "Does it suit me?" To this Hare innocently replied: "It suits you perfectly well." Thereupon Antelope ran as fast as her legs could carry her, running away with Hare's beads. After trying to pursue Antelope, Hare soon realised that she would never catch up with her, and so gave up the chase. Walking away sorrowfully, Hare soon came upon another group of hunters and said to them: "Hey you hunters, please shoot that antelope for me." To this the hunters asked: "What is she guilty of?" Hare replied: "She took away my necklace, my necklace that the warriors gave me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat, my meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow that my god gave me." After hearing of Hare's complaint, the hunters declined to shoot Antelope. Taking leave

of the hunters, Hare came across a burning fire, to whom she said: "Hey you fire, could you please eat those hunters?"

Fire asked, "What have they done" Hare replied: "They refused to shoot Antelope, Antelope who took my necklace, my necklace that the warriors gave me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat, my meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow that my god gave me." Again, on hearing Hare's complaint, Fire too said: "I will not eat the hunters."

Hare next came upon Water and said to it: "Hey you water, could you please put out that fire?" Water asked, "What has Fire done" Hare repeated to Water all that she had told Fire.

-Water on listening to Hare's complaint declined to do as she was bid. Hare left Water, feeling disappointed. Soon she found a herd of elephants, to whom she spoke thus: "Hey you elephants, could you please drink that water." On enquiring

why Water had to be drunk, Hare replied: "Water refused to put out Fire, Fire who refused to eat the hunters, the hunters that declined to shoot Antelope, Antelope who took away my necklace, my necklace that the warriors gave me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat, my meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow that my god gave me." On hearing Hare's story the elephants, too, declined to carry out Hare's request as all the others had done. Undaunted by her inability to convince anyone to take action on her behalf so far, Hare moved on, next coming upon trees to whom she spoke saying: "Hey you trees, could you please fall on those elephants?" On enquiring the wrong committed by the elephants, Hare replied: "They refused to drink Water, Water that refused to put out Fire, Fire that refused to eat the hunters, the hunters that declined to shoot Antelope, Antelope who took away my necklace, my necklace that the warriors gave me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat,

my meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow that my god gave me." When the trees had heard Hare's story, they too said, "We will not fall on the elephants." Hare then left the trees and came upon "termites whom she asked to fell the trees. The termites demanded to know the wrong committed by the trees. Hare told termites of how the trees had refused to fall on the elephants and went on enumerating what everyone else had done or refused to do in the same way she had told the others. The refusal by termites to fell the trees upset Hare, but she was by no means daunted.

Moving on with persistence, Hare soon came upon some donkeys whom she asked to trample on the termites. On hearing what the termites had done, the donkeys too declined to trample on them.

By this time Hare was beginning to feel exasperated and weary, having walked all day with no success. It was not long before she came upon a group of hyenas, to whom she said: "Hey you hyenas, could you please eat those donkeys?" The hyenas asked: "What have the donkeys done?" Hare replied, "They refused to trample on the termites, the termites which refused to fell the trees, the trees that refused to fall on the elephants, elephants who refused to drink Water, Water who refused to put out Fire, Fire who refused to eat the hunters, the hunters that declined to shoot Antelope, Antelope who took away my necklace, my necklace that the warriors gave me, the warriors to whom I gave my meat, my meat that the hunters gave me, the hunters to whom I gave my arrow, my arrow that my god gave me." Agreeing to carry out Hare's request, the hyenas said: "Very well, we will eat the donkeys." On the realisation that they were about to be eaten, the donkeys said: "We will trample on the termites." The termites said: "We will fell the trees." The trees said: "We will fall on the elephants." The elephants said: "We will drink Water." Water said: "I will put out Fire." Fire said: "I will eat the hunters." The hunters said: "We will shoot Antelope." Antelope said: "I will return Hare's necklace." So Hare was given back her necklace and she was very happy.

### Questions

1. Give two examples of personification used by the narrator.
2. "To this Hare innocently replied." Why does the narrator use the word *innocently* here?
3. What is the mood in this narrative?
4. Give, with illustrations, three character aspects of Hare.
5. "Hyena's presence in this narrative is indispensable." Briefly state how true or false this statement is.
6. What major narrative technique does the narrator use in this story? What effect does this have on the development of the story?
7. What type of narrative is this? Support your answer.

### ANSWERS

1. Examples of personification are:  
- Hare is referred to as "she"/"her"

-  
"Antelope" "Hare" "Fire" "Water" begin with capital letters as if they are personal nouns. They also talk like humans.

- Antelope wears a necklace like a human being.

- Fire is referred to as "whom", a relative pronoun that is used with humans only.

2. The narrator uses the word "innocently" because Hare did not know that Antelope admired her

necklace and she would run away with it after being told by Hare that it suited her well.

3. The mood in this narrative is one of disappointment, sadness and anger

4. Examples of Hare's character are:

- She is polite (she uses the word please).

- She is persistent (she doesn't give up easily even after being turned down).

- She is optimistic (she hopes to get some justice).

- She is persuasive (she repeats the chain of events that lead to the loss of her necklace). She requests to be got back her necklace.

- She is vengeful (she wants those who refuse to help to be punished).

5. It is true that "Hyena"

s presence in this narrative is indispensable" because he is the only one who accepts to help Hare

thereby seeing justice attained.

6. The narrator uses repetition as a major narrative technique to create a chain of events which makes the narrating interesting.

7. This is a trickster story. Antelope tricks Hare to be given Hare's necklace to try on, which she later runs away with.

### ***EXERCISE 16***

***Read the following Oral song and answer the questions which follow.***

Sleep, sleep

Sweet, gentle one sleep

Your mother is coming, sleep

Sleep, sleep, gentle one sleep.

Sleep, sleep

Sweet gentle one sleep

Your guard is coming sleep

Sleep, sleep gentle one sleep

Sleep, sleep

Sweet, gentle one sleep

Your heart is coming, sleep

Sleep, sleep gentle one sleep

Sleep, sleep

Sweet, gentle one sleep

The selfish one is coming sleep

Sleep, gentle one sleep.



### **Questions**

- a) Using three illustrations from the song classify it-
  - b) What is the singer's attitude towards the subject of the song"
  - c) Compare the tone in the first three stanzas and the one in the last stanza of the song
  - d) What two aspects of style are commonly used in this song
  - e) What is the character trait of the person being described in the song
  - f) What is the relationship between the singer and the person being described
- What is the moral lesson in this song?

### **SAMPLE ANSWER**

- a) This is a lullaby, due to
  - i) Repetition of words like 'sleep, sleep'
  - ii) Mention of mother is coming
  - iii) Mention of guard is coming.
- b) The singer is contemptuous of the baby's mother she says: "The selfish one is coming"
- c) The tone is happy at first then changes to a bitter one in the last stanza. "Your is coming/ The selfish one is coming."
- d) The aspects of style used in the song are:
  - i) Repetition - sleep/ sleep
  - ii) Satire - the baby's mother arrival is satirized. The speaker knows her arrival is of no use to her - she says, "the selfish one is coming"
  - iii) Irony - the arrival of the baby is a blessing to the speaker
- e) The person being described is selfish.
- f) The singer is a **nurse** while the person being described is a mother. The baby's mother is selfish to the singer and that is why the singer expresses this in a song. The selfish one is coming.
- g) The moral lesson is that nurses need to be treated fairly **in** order for them to nurse babies with devotion and without **fear**.