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**Literature of the Language Lecture 1**

**First Year Classes**

**Semester One, 2022/2023**

**Introduction to Literature and Literary Appreciation**

**What is literature?**

Literature is a broad field that refers to anything written. However, the kind of literature we’re concerned with is more specific than what that broad term implies. We’re rather concerned with “imaginative literature” or “creative writing”. This kind of literature is not “real” and can be defined as verbal art. It’s verbal, and it’s an art. The implication of that definition is twofold: first, we acknowledge that we’re dealing with an art, which implies that an artist has constructed this thing; this end product, which is now available to its audience, and is meant to strike that audience as profoundly beautiful, or meaningful, or (ideally) both. It would be interesting to think about some of the art we love best (our favorite painting, or sculpture, or film, or book) weather it's something visual or verbal, or both…literature is aiming for that same impact. That impact is not just intellectual; we don't just think something is profound; we feel it, too. It moves us. Even slightly, but it moves us.

It is important to recognize the verbal aspect of the art of literature, because words are the writer's only tool. Questions related to how the writer shapes language, bends language, twists language and also manipulates language, so that it has that impact, are likely to make us realise that there are lots of things to learn about and observe, depending on the genre we want to study.

Fiction writers use elements in interesting, provocative ways; poets use figures of speech, predetermined structures, and other devices to make words sound striking together; dramatists use dialogue and sets, and the talents of live actors and actresses to give their work its punch. And what makes a good poem might not make a good play, or what makes a good play might make a boring poem. However, what's common to standard literary genres is that the writer has this unique, profound, beautiful vision to somehow embody in words. And if those words add up to something neither unique, nor profound, nor beautiful, nor in some way useful, then it's probably not good art.

People study literature because it enriches them; it's full of wisdom, it's entertaining, it's profound, it's beautiful and moving. The best of it can deepen our experience of being alive,

taking us beneath the superficial surface of people into their inner caverns. As a discipline, the study of literature is an excellent way to sharpen our close reading skills, assemble excellent critical thinking apparatus, and refine our general sense of art appreciation.

Thus, literature is a verbal art, an art which explores what it means to be human from the inside. It is also fed by philosophy, psychology, sociology, ideology and history rolled together in an attempt to clear up the unanswered questions. It's the questions and the questioner, and what we all make of it. Michael Meyer describes literature "...as a fiction consisting of carefully arranged words designed to stir the imagination. Stories, poems, and plays are fictional. They are made up -imagined- even when based upon actual historic events"**[[1]](#footnote-1)**, that is, a verbal art.

Literary works are primarily distinguishable from other pieces of writing by their creative or artistic intent.

**Text Types and Literary Discourse**

In literature a writer must tell the readers what they want them to know. This is called discourse or communication. There are four kinds of discourse: exposition, argument, description, and narration. The writers' purpose for writing decides which discourse to use.

Exposition is used to answer a real or imaginary question. When using exposition a writer can present facts, explain what something means, how something works, or why something is important. Exposition is used by writers to explain. This is also known as explanatory writing.

Description is used to picture something that a writer wants the reader to see. Description is used when the writer wants to write about the appearance of a person, place, or object. This is used to appeal the reader's sense of touch, taste, smell, or hearing. Writers use words instead of pictures to describe characters in a clear manner.

Argument is used by writers to convince readers of an attitude, or to persuade them to share the writers' attitude. It's used to change a reader’s mind. Argument is used to appeal to reason, emotion, or both.

Narration is used to give an account of action or events. It is used to tell the reader what is happening. It can be described as a motion picture.

In all books, magazines, newspapers, and any type of reading material one can find discourse. Writers may use more than one discourse in their writing. Discourse is a way for the writer to provide details such as how a place looks, how something feels, and the way something tastes. It is also used to provide a way for writers to answer questions or provide facts. Discourse is the communication a writer uses to involve the reader.

**Chapter 1**

**Prose Fiction**

**1.1 Prose Fiction Lecture 2**

Prose fiction is a type of writing that employs basic storytelling techniques that include dialogue, narrative, exposition, and so on. Fiction is any work that is not a narrative of reality; the story is, instead, conceived by the author. While prose fiction may be based on real events and people, the actual characters and plot of the story are made up, which can open up possibilities for fantastic events that could not take place in reality; the story is, instead conceived by the author. While prose fiction may be based on real events and people, the actual characters and plots of the story are made up, which can open up possibilities for fantastic events that could not take place in reality. This type of fiction may take the form of a novel, novella, short story, flash fiction story, and so on.

Prose fiction tends to be more literal and the author has more freedom to create a narrative. Dialogue is often used as one of the elements that drives the story forward; dialogue is a conversation between two or more characters in the story, and it is usually indicated in the prose fiction text by quotation marks and tags, such as he said or she said. Dialogues are very significant in fiction works as they help in the identification of motives.

The length of the prose fiction story will dictate which category it falls under. A novel, for example, is, a long story, usually ranges from about 10.000 words to around 50.000 or 60.000 words. A short story is usually 7.000 words or fewer, and a flash fiction story is less than 1.000 words. While many of the elements of each type of prose fiction category are similar, writing each type of story can have its own set of challenges.

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

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

The development of modern prose fiction in its present form particularly the novel is traced to the development of belles-lettres (beautiful letters) which is associated with elegance and style. They included an amalgam of genres that included history and science in vernaculars, personal memoirs, political discourse, fiction and poetry. Gradually, prose fiction in this wider spectrum soon became a prominent medium for the creation of a distinct style of writing and communication. The style gave the artist an opportunity for artistic experimentation and originality needed to exhibit and market his or her style. The reading of prose fiction later became fashionable and it remained close to everyday language, to the private letter, to the art of “gallant” conversation, to the personal memoir and travelogue.

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

Prose fiction could use informal language for particular effects but historical language is expected to be formal and correct at all times. The language of prose fiction is distinct and this enables the author to manipulate it to suit his or her purpose/style and for the readers’ appreciation. To conclude, prose fiction is a combination of two distinct words, “prose” and “fiction”. The former means a presentation of spoken or written words in a narrative manner while the latter means a nonrealistic account. Prose fiction is therefore an imaginary work that is presented in a narrative form. It is a literary genre that presents human experience to educate and entertain the readers. Thus, prose fiction tells a story that deals with cultural, social and political issues in the world and the characters are not real (known) human beings but bear human traits and dispositions. Although the story in prose fiction is fictitious, it contains identifiable characters, locations and incidents and these add to make the story that is presented as realistic as possible. Prose fiction is different from history which is a documentation of past realistic events.

Genres, or categories, of prose fiction include horror, science fiction, fantasy, young adult, literary fiction, mystery, family saga, and countless others. The subject matter of the story will dictate the category under which a particular story falls, and in many cases, a story may fall under more than one category. More fantastic plot lines that cannot take place in reality usually fall under science fiction or fantasy headings, while stories that are truer to life may fall under the categories of literary fiction or simply general fiction.

**1.2 The Conception of the Novel**

The conception of the novel genre has considerably evolved in time and its techniques have been subjected to a gradual change. The long and elaborate descriptions of the early novels have given way to sophisticated techniques and metaphoric styles, which require a more active and perceptive attitude of the reader.

An evolution is thus witnessed; a shift from the realistic representation of life to the fragmented, impressionistic from of narrative which presumably reflects the problems of our modern age. The change is still taking place. The established form of the novel- fictional prose narrative- was acquiring a different kind of writing process, a different kind of reader and a different social and economic foundation. It was altering in length, appearance, price, and in social, moral and commercial purpose.

**1.3 Reasons for its Development**

The reasons which finally enabled its development as a specific literary genre could be the ones suggested by Marjorie Boulton:

*"It is a form for solitary reading, so requires widespread literacy and leisure; it must have been helped by improved techniques of artificial lighting; it may have answered the new needs of large middle class, of a society growing more specialized and complicated; it reflects an increasing conscious interest in psychology and sociology; the rise in the eighteenth century of commercial circulating libraries encouraged the professional novelist and today the public library system is still an important customer for new novels".***[[2]](#footnote-2)**

**1.4 The Task of the Novel**

The primary task of the novel is to tell a story by means of a careful depiction of environment, characters and issues involved. It essentially reflects life with both its miseries and moments of exhilaration, and explores thus the problems of man in relation to environment and society. This genre is the one which clearly reflects the writer's idea and world-views. Walter Allen stresses this point, nothing that the novelist "*makes a working model of life as he sees it, his conclusions about it being expressed in the characters he invents, the situation in which he places them and in the very words he chooses for those purposes"***[[3]](#footnote-3).**

A genre is a French term used sometimes interchangeably with kind, literary type or class. It serves often to classify literary works according to the inherent structures they display.

**1.5 Elements of Literature Lecture 3**

The parts of a literary text are known as its literary elements. Rather than looking at a whole novel, we can examine its plot, setting, characters, point of view and themes individually using the following question words: what, when, where, who and how.

**1.5.1 Plot**

Plot is a literary term used to describe the series of events that make up a story. These events relate to each other in a pattern or sequence. The structure of a novel depends on the organization of events in the plot of the story.

Plot is known as the foundation of a story which the characters and settings are built around. It is meant to organize information and events in a logical manner. When writing the plot of a piece of literature, the author has to be careful that it does not dominate the other parts of the story.

Plots are typically made up of five main elements:

**1*.*** Exposition: At the beginning of the story, characters, setting, and the main conflict are typically introduced.

**2**. Rising Action: The main character is in crisis and events leading up to the conflict begin to unfold. The story becomes complicated.

**3*.*** Climax: At the peak of the story, a major event occurs in which the main character faces a major enemy, fear, challenge, or another source of conflict. The most striking action, drama, change or excitement occurs here.

**4*.*** Falling Action: The story begins to slow down and work towards its end, tying up loose ends.

**5*.*** Resolution: Also known as the denouement, the resolution is like a concluding paragraph that resolves any remaining issues and ends the story.

Plots, also known as storylines, include the most significant events of the story and how the characters and their problems change over time.

**1.5.1.1 Examples of Plot in Literature**

**Example 1 John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men**

*Exposition*

Off the Salinas River, in California, two migrant workers, George and Lennie, travel to a ranch for work.

*Conflict*

Lennie and George are friends. However, Lennie is developmentally disabled, and because of his childlike mentality, the two friends often find themselves in trouble.

*Rising Action*

Despite these problems, the boys make friends with the ranch hands, especially Candy, who offers up a large sum of money towards getting their own farm. They feel closer than ever to achieving their dream of "living off the fatta the land".

*Climax*

Lennie was given a puppy by Slim and is in the barn tending it. Curley’s wife enters and they begin to talk. Without realizing it, Lennie grabs her hair, because he likes soft things. When she gets nervous and tells him to stop, he panics and breaks her neck.

*Falling Action*

Lennie was given specific instructions by George that if anything bad happened he should hide near the river. George meets him there.

*Resolution*

George shoots Lennie before Curley can find him. The men cover it up. The reader feels the sorrow of George having to kill his best friend.

**Example 2 *The Road not Taken’ by Robert FROST***

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,*

*And sorry I could not travel both*

*And be one traveler, long I stood*

*And looked down one as far as I could*

*…*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,*

*And having perhaps the better claim*

*…*

*And both that morning equally lay*

*In leaves no step had trodden black.*

*…*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh*

*Somewhere ages and ages hence:*

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,*

*I took the one less traveled by,*

*And that has made all the difference.*

Robert Frost’s famous poem “*The Road Not Taken*,” has a very clear plot: The exposition occurs when a man stands at the fork of two roads, his conflict being which road to take. The climax occurs when he chooses the unique path. The resolution announces that “that has made all the difference,” meaning the man has made a significant decision.

**1.5.1.2 Functions of Plot in literature**

Plot is one of the most important parts of a story and has many different purposes. Firstly, the plot focuses attention on the important characters and their roles in the story. It motivates the characters to affect the story and connects the events in an orderly manner. It creates a desire for the reader to go on reading by absorbing them in the middle of the story, wanting to know what happens next. The plot leads to the climax, but by gradually releasing the story in order to maintain the reader’s interest. Throughout the plot of a story, a reader develops emotions and connects with the book, not allowing himself to put the book down. Eventually, the plot reveals the entire story and gives the reader a sense of completion that he has finished the story and reached a conclusion.

The plot is what forms a memory in the readers’ minds, allowing them to think about the book and even making them want to read it again. By identifying and understanding the plot, the reader is able to understand the message being conveyed by the author and the explicit or implicit moral of the story.

**1.5.1.3 Plot (practice) Lecture 4**

**To the student**

Here is a summary of "**the Pearl**" by John Steinbeck (published in 1947).

-Read the summary and organize the main events according to the five stages of the plot.

The story follows five momentous days in the life of an Indian pearl diver living in La Paz, a small port on the Gulf of California. Though told by an omniscient author, the work most often limits itself to Kino’s perspective as he suffers the gratuitous trials of an innocent tragic hero.

His sufferings begin when he witnesses a scorpion sting his beloved son, Coyotito, as the child lies happily in his cradle. Beside herself with terror, Kino’s common-law wife, Juana, insists that they take Coyotito to the doctor because that individual has authority even though he “was of a race which for nearly four hundred years had beaten and starved and robbed and despised Kino’s race.”

The doctor irresponsibly evades seeing the child, and Kino takes his first step in his tragic growth by challenging the unfair order of existence. He strikes the doctor’s gate “a crushing blow with his fist.” His knuckles give instead of the doorway, but Kino’s gesture shows that he is prepared to become “a man.”

That same day, he and Juana go to dive for pearls. Juana tries to bargain with her people’s ancient gods and offers a prayer to the Christian God that they might find a pearl. Though she has made a better poultice of seaweed than the doctor could, she still feels the need for his magic and wants the wherewithal to force him to attend her baby. As if in answer to her supplication, Kino finds “the greatest pearl in the world.” He begins to dream about the good the pearl will bring his family. He imagines being married now that they can pay for the service. He pictures a new harpoon and then dares imagine possessing a rifle. That last image is so defiant that he goes even further: He dreams of sending his son to school to learn to read, write, and “make numbers.”

The people of La Paz have heard the news, however, and they intrude on Kino’s dream. Even the priest comes to express his hope that Kino will not forget the Church. The doctor rushes over to force a powder down Coyotito’s throat, one that will make him temporarily ill so that the doctor can pretend that the scorpion’s poison is still working and he can “cure” the baby. The doctor also tricks Kino into revealing the place where he has hidden the pearl, and that night either he or his henchman returns to steal it. In defending his home, Kino draws his first blood. Still, the family begins the next day “with hope.”

This optimism is quickly dashed. The pearl brokers, acting together (because they actually are agents for a single dealer), offer him a pittance. Kino refuses to sell and announces that he will take the pearl to Mexico City instead. His family—his brother, his sister-in-law, and his wife—stick by him, but they are worried. Juana urges him to crush the pearl between two stones and forget it, but Kino answers that he is “a man” and will not be cheated. He does not yet recognize the reversal his fortunes have taken.

The third day begins with Juana stealing the pearl and trying to throw it back into the gulf in order to avert the evil she senses is bearing down on her family. Kino stops her, but as he returns from the shore, he is attacked. Dropping the pearl, he slays his assailant. Juana finds the gem and submissively returns it to her man; she also urges him to flee to save himself from certain arrest. They go to get their canoe and find that someone has knocked a hole in its bottom. Then their brush house is burned by other searchers, the “dark ones.” Taking refuge with Kino’s brother, the family hides out all that day while Juan Tomas borrows provisions for their flight.

That night, the three head into the Sierra de la Giganta, planning to go to Lorento, a gulf town to the north, but trackers quickly find their trail. By the evening of the fourth day, Kino and his family are holed up in a cave while the trackers camp in the mountain cleft below them. Kino tries to sneak up on them to steal their rifle, but Coyotito whimpers, and one of the trackers, thinking (ironically, considering the baby’s name) that it is a “coyote pup,” idly shoots in that direction. Kino leaps too late. He kills all three men but finds that the top of Coyotito’s head has been blown off.

Late in the afternoon of the fifth day, the two return to La Paz, carrying their dead child. They walk straight through the town to the gulf shore. There Kino pulls out the great pearl and offers it to Juana, but she declines, and it is he who returns the pearl to the sea. Because of its tragic dimensions, their story becomes forever one of the town’s legends.

**1*-***Expostion and conflict…………………………………………………………………….

**2*-***Rising action……………………………………………………………………………….

**3*-***Climax……………………………………………………………………………………..

**4*-***Falling action……………………………………………………………………………….

**5*-***Resolution………………………………………………………………………………….

**(Model answer)**

*Exposition*

The story opens in a remote seaside village where a young family of three live: Kino, Juana and their infant son Coyotito although they are poor, the family lives a relatively happy life.

*Conflict*

One day Coyotito is bitten by a scorpion and Kino and Juana do not have the money for treatment. So, Kino goes out in the ocean in search of a pearl.

*Rising Action*

At home Juana prays that her husband will find a pearl bigger than any other and her prayers are answered. Kino finds such a large pearl that it attracts attention from all the villagers. After Coyotito is cured, Juana and Kino end up fighting off thieves, robbers, and themselves when the greed and lust for the pearl become unbearable.

*Climax*

The two inevitably decide they must leave. Juana decides to go home to gather their belongings while Kino goes to ready the canoe. However, they each met with disaster: Kino finds the canoe destroyed and Juana finds the house has been set on fire. Narrowly escaping, the family hides at Juan Tomas’s house until it is safe to leave for the capital to sell the pearl.

*Falling Action*

The family leaves to travel up the mountain to get to the capital city. Kino realizes that they are being followed and he tries to create diversions for the tracers in the form of false trails. When he finally finds the trackers, he attempts to attack them. Yet at the same moment both Coyotito and a gunshot are heard. After Kino kills the trackers and rushes back to the cave, he finds that his son has been shot.

*Resolution*

Carrying their dead child, they emerge from the mountain back at their village, where the community silently looks on. Kino then takes the pearl and throws it as hard as he can back into the ocean.

**1.5.2 Setting**

The setting of a of literary work is the time and place in which the story takes place. Setting can also include social status, weather, historical period, and details about immediate surroundings. Settings can be real or fictional, or a combination of both real and fictional elements. Some settings are very specific while others are descriptive (a boat out on the ocean). Most pieces of literature include morethan one setting, either as the narrative progresses through time or to include points of view from more than one character. It follows that setting remains a fundamental aspect of fiction, along with plot, character, theme, and style. The setting provides the backdrop to the story and helps create mood.

**1.5.2.1 Setting and Exposition**

The most important components of setting, such as the overarching time period and location in which a story takes place, are usually introduced in the exposition of a text (which is often at its beginning). However, its wise not to tune out once we know the general where and when a narrative, since setting often shifts. Observing changes in the time of the day, the seasons, the weather, the geography and the landscape throughout any given story will enrich our understanding of its characters, their relationships to place, as well as their social and national identities.

**1.5.2.2 Aspects of Setting Lecture 5**

The setting of a story can involve a number of elements:

*The physical location*: The physical realities of where the story takes place, including geography, landscape, and other factors (urban or rural; domestic or wild; inside or out; on earth or in space).

*Time:* When does the story take place? In the past, the future, the present? What are the particular details of that time?

*The social milieu:* Setting is not just about the physical aspects. It is about the social world. Is the setting wealthy or poor? Homogeneous or diverse? Are things improving or getting worse?

*Change*: Setting can also be affected by how it changes, either over time (the changing seasons or the construction of a house or town or city), or suddenly (a terrible storm). The changes that do affect a setting are as important as the setting itself.

The more specific an author can be with their setting, the more real the story will feel and the more the setting will start “reach out” and affect the characters and their actions, in the same way the world around living people affects how they act and think.

**1.5.2.3 Functions of Setting in Literature**

The setting of a story can carry out a variety of functions that help improve the overall quality of the literary piece. Of course, its principal function remains to add context to the plot of the story. It can also be used to establish the story’s theme, which is important if the literary piece is to become relevant in the publishing market.

Setting can also be used to define the tone with which the plot of the story will be written. This, however, can only be accomplished by a writing expert who is capable of producing impressive fictional works. Accordingly, writers take great care in deciding on and describing the settings of their works, in order to:

-Reflect or emphasize certain traits belonging to people who inhabit certain settings.

-Give physical form to a theme that runs throughout the narrative.

-Indicate the social and economic statuses of their characters, as well as how those characters do or do not conform to those statuses.

-Create a source of pressure or stress that causes characters to act in a certain way.

It follows that setting is an extremely important aspect of almost every piece of fiction and drama, and can be an important element in poetry as well. In many narrative examples the setting can act almost as a non-human character, affecting the characters in many different ways. Indeed, most plot lines are so tied to their setting that they could not be put in other places, time periods, or socioeconomic environments.

**1.5.2.5 Setting (practice)**

**To the Student**

**Example 1-** Read the passage and describe its setting.

*It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black … It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness.*

*Hard Times (1854)*

**- Model answer:**

A vivid scene includes more than a visual sense of setting alone. Other details – the smell, feel and sound of a place – are equally important. When describing a place in fiction, one could think about the sounds, smells and other sense details that distinguish it from others. Here Dickens is describing the industrial city of Coketown.

In addition to visual description, Dickens includes smell (the river pollution) and the ‘monotonous’ sounds of industry. In sum, the description conjures a vivid mental image of the town. Dickens also shows how the industrial activities that take place in his setting alter it. Setting and action affect each other.

**Example 2-**  What about setting in here?

*DURING the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was--but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible.*

*I looked upon the scene before me --upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain --upon the bleak walls --upon the vacant eye-like windows --upon a few rank sedges --and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees --with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium --the bitter lapse into everyday life --the hideous dropping off of the veil.There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart--an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it--I paused to think--what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there are combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down--but with a shudder even more thrilling than before--upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.*

*The Fall of the House of Usher, (published 1839)*

**- Model answer:**

The setting is used in this passage to do many things. The author uses it to convey ideas, effects, and images. It establishes a mood and foreshadows future events. Poe communicates truths about the character through setting. Symbols are also used and Poe uses the setting to create an atmosphere in the reader’s mind. He chose every word in every sentence carefully to create a gloomy mood. For example, Usher’s house, its windows, bricks, and dungeon are all used to make a dismal atmosphere. The “white trunks of decayed trees,” the “black and lurid tarn,” and the “vacant, eyelike windows” contribute to the collective atmosphere of despair and anguish. This is done with the words black, lurid, decayed, and vacant. The narrator says that the Usher mansion had “an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven.” It was nowhere near being beautiful, holy, or clean. He uses descriptive words such as decayed, strange, peculiar, gray, mystic, Gothic, pestilent, dull and sluggish to create the atmosphere. Poe’s meticulous choice of words creates a very effective atmosphere in the story.

Another important way Poe uses the setting is to foreshadow events in the story. Roderick Usher’s mansion is one example of this. There is a “barely perceptible fissure” in the masonry. It is a small crack in “The House of Usher” which the narrator defines as “both the family and the family mansion.” This foreshadows an event that will ruin the house and the family. The fissure divides the house. Roderick and Madeline die, destroying the family. The narrator says there is a “wild inconsistency between [the masonry’s] still perfect adaptation and the crumbling condition of the individual stones.” This is also symbolic. The stones represent the individual people of the Usher family, and the entire mansion stands for the whole family. The “wild inconsistency” makes the reader aware that something later in the story will make the ‘‘inconsistency” clear or consistent. From far away, no one knows that the House of Usher is in despair. The “fabric gave little token of instability”– or the mansion itself did not tell of the turmoil it concealed. The story takes place in autumn, a season associated with death. When the story’s tension is about to reach its crescendo, a storm comes up, a “rising tempest.” This is a symbol for the “tempest” brewing in Roderick Usher’s mind. Poe’s use of foreshadowing is just enough to clue the reader into what will happen, but not enough to give it away.

Well, it is through the setting that Poe is able to foreshadow events, establish an atmosphere, and reveal character traits. Although the reader may not notice all the numerous devices used, they contribute to giving the story depth. Noticed or not, Poe utilizes the setting to its full capacity to create the mood, characters and foreshadowing.

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**Over to the Student**

**1**. Which of the following statements is the best definition of setting?

A. The environment in which a story takes place. ✓

B. The time of day in which actions occur in a novel. (This is a detail of setting)

C. The weather that characters experience in a narrative. (This is a detail of setting)

**2**. Consider the opening lines from George Orwell’s 1984:

*It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him.*

Which of the following does Orwell specify as the setting in this paragraph?

A. Historical period

B. Time of day✓

C. Country in which the story takes place

**3**. Which of the following does an example of setting not do in a piece of literature?

A. Helps create the mood

B. Sets the backdrop of the story

C. Introduces figures of speech✓

**1.5.3 Character and Characterization Lecture 6**

What do other people think? What emotions do they experience? How are they similar to or different from us?

Literature allows us to look into the lives of an endless collection of men and women and find answers to these questions. We can learn about people's hopes and fears, we can see them struggle through adverse circumstances, we can rejoice with them in moments of success and sympathize with them in moments of despair. In real life we have the opportunity of knowing intimately a relatively small number of people- family members, loved ones, close friends. Literature allows us to multiply that number by giving us access to the private thoughts and lives of an endless assortment of fascinating and memorable people.

**1.5.3.1 Defining Character**

When we analyse characters in fiction we need to ask some key questions about:

-Their relationship to the plot: do they play a major part in the events of the story or do they have a minor role?

-The degree to which they are developed: are they complex characters or are they one-dimensional?

-Their growth in the course of story: do they remain the same throughout the story or do significant changes in their personalities take place?

In order to discuss these issues we need to know the following terms, *protagonist* and *antagonist*. The central character of the plot is called the protagonist. Without this character there would be no story. The character against whom the protagonist struggles is called the antagonist. In many novels, however, the antagonist is not a human being. It may, for example, be the natural environment in which the protagonist lives, or society, or illness, or even death. The terms protagonist and antagonist do not have moral connotations and therefore should not be confused with 'hero' and 'villain'. Many protagonists area a mixture of good and evil elements. Other characters in a story may be referred to as major or minor characters, depending on the importance of their roles in developing the plot.

*Round characters*, like real people, have complex, multi-dimensional personalities. They show emotional and intellectual depth and are capable of growing and changing. Major characters in fiction are usually round or represent a single characteristic. They are the miser, the bully, the jealous lover, the endless optimist. They may also be referred to as types or as caricatures when distorted for humorous purposes. *Flat characters* are usually minor characters. However, the term 'flat' should not be confused with 'insignificant' or 'badly drawn'. A flat character may in fact be the protagonist of the story, in particular when the writer wishes to focus on the characteristic he or she represents. Some highly memorable characters, particularly in satirical or humorous novels, can be defined as flat, for example the miser Scrooge in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol.*

*Dynamic characters* change as a result of the experiences they have. The most: obvious examples can be found in initiation novels which tell stories of young people who grow into adults, for example Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn. However, dynamic characters can be found in many other types of stories. Major characters in novels are usually dynamic.

*Static characters* remain untouched by the events of the story. They do not learn from their experiences and consequently they remain unchanged. Static characters are usually minor characters, but sometimes a writer makes a static character the protagonist of his story, because he wishes to analyse a particular type of personality. Static characters also play major roles in stories that show how forces in life, such as the social environment or the family, sometimes make it hard for people to grow and change. An example can be found in the short story *Eveline* by James Joyce: the unhappy central character *Eveline* feels suffocated by her family circumstances and lifestyle but cannot find the strength to break free from her situation and start a new life with her fiancé in South America.

**1.5.3.2 How the Author Conveys Character (Characterization)**

Another important aspect of character analysis is determining how the author presents and establishes a character. There are two basic methods for conveying character: *telling* and *showing*.

Telling involves direct intervention and commentary by the author. He interrupts the narrative to comment on the character's personality, thoughts or actions. The guiding hand of the author is clearly evident as he helps us to form opinions about the character. An example of the telling technique can be found in this short extract from D.H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers*, in which the author describes the protagonist of his novel:

*Arthur Morel was growing up. He was a quick, careless, impulsive boy, a good deal like his father. He hated study, made a great moan if he had to work, and escaped as soon as possible to his sport again.*

When an author uses the technique of showing, he steps aside and allows the characters to reveal themselves through what they do and say. His voice is silent. The reader is asked to infer character from the evidence provided in the dialogue and action of the story. When the author chooses the showing method, the revelation of character is generally gradual. The reader must be attentive and receptive, and use his intelligence and memory to draw conclusions about the character's identity. Modern authors tend to favour showing over telling, but most writers use a mixture of both methods.

***Dialogue*:**

In real life what people say reveals a lot about who they are and what they think. Similarly, in fiction, what a character says can help us to understand basic elements of his personality. The character's attitude towards others may also emerge from the dialogue. Important information about his origin, education, occupation or social class may also be revealed by what he says and how he says it. However, characters in stories do not always say what they really think. Just like people in real life, they can be deceptive and create a false image of themselves.

***Action:***

We can learn a lot about a character's emotions, attitudes and values by examining what he does in the course of the story. We should try to understand the motives for the character's actions, and discover the underlying forces that make him behave the way he does.

***Comparison with Other Characters:***

Is the way a character behaves similar to or different from the way other characters act? One of the chief functions of minor characters in fiction is to provide contrast to the main character. What can you learn by comparing the protagonist to some of the other less important characters?

***Setting:***

The time and place in which the story unfolds may provide useful information about the characters. If events take place during a particular historical period (the Middle Ages, the French Revolution, the Vietnam War) the characters' ideas and actions may be shaped by important external events. The characters' physical surrounding (where they grew up, where they choose to live) may help us to understand their psychological make-up.

References to the social setting may also give us some helpful insight. Do the characters share or reject the values associated with their social background?

***Names:***

Occasionally the character’ s name may provide clues to his personality. Emily Bronte's choice of *Heathcliff* as a name for the protagonist of her novel *Wuthering Heights* conveys the character's wild, rugged, almost primitive nature. (Heath =wild, uncultivated land; cliff = high rocky land that usually faces the sea)

***Appearance:***

In real life it is not advisable to judge a person by his appearance, but in fiction how a character looks often provides important information about his personality. References to the clothes a character wears may, for example, indicate his social and economic status. Details of a character's physical appearance may prove useful in determining his age and the general state of

his physical and emotional health.

**1.5.4 Narrators and Point of View Lecture 7**

In fiction the author does not address the reader directly. He creates a narrator whose voice we hear as we read the story. It is from the narrator's point of view that we see events unfold. The narrator may be a strong presence in the text commenting on and interpreting the material he presents or, at the other end of the spectrum; he may be almost invisible, simply allowing the story to present itself.

Narrators are divided into two broad categories: first-person narrators and third-person narrators. The category of third-person narrators is divided into three subcategories: omniscient, limited and dramatic objective. Stream of consciousness, a relatively recent development in narrative technique, may be an extension of either first or third-person narratives.

**1.5.4.1 First-Person Narrators**

First-person narrators, who refer to themselves as 'I', tell stories in which they are directly involved. In a first-person narrative the reader's vision of the story, or point of view, is limited to what the narrator himself knows, experiences, infers or has learned second-hand from others.

First-person narratives are, by definition, subjective. The only thoughts and feelings that first-person narrators experience directly are their own. The reader can never expect to see characters and events as they actually are, but only as they appear to the 'I' narrator. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the personality of the first-person narrators. Are they reliable? Do they have biases and prejudices that may influence how they tell the story?

In certain first-person narratives the reader can understand more than the narrator himself. This is often the case when the narrator is a child or a not very perceptive adult. By contrasting the narrator's perception of events and the reader's more informed views, the author can create humour or irony.

The first-person narrative is commonly associated with non-fictional literary forms such as biographies, memoirs or diaries. When used in fictional works it lends authenticity to the story, it is also perhaps the most effective form of storytelling for getting the reader intellectually and emotionally involved.

**1.5.4.2 Third-Person Narrators**

When a story is told by someone outside the action, he is called a third-person narrator (because he refers to everybody in the story in the third person: 'he', 'she', and ‘they’). In this form of narration, the person who is telling the story is like an observer who has witnessed what has happened, but plays no part in the events,

***- Omniscient Point of View***

An omniscient narrator is a kind of god; he is all-knowing. He knows everything about the fictional world he has created: he can read other characters' innermost thoughts; he is able to be in several places at once, he knows exactly what is going to happen and how each character will behave. He is free to tell us as much or as little as he wishes. An omniscient third-person narrator who interrupts the narrative and speaks directly to the readers is called obtrusive. He may use these intrusions to summarise, philosophise, moralise or to guide the reader's interpretation of events. This kind of narrator was particularly popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. If the narrator does not address the reader directly he is referred to as non-obtrusive.

***- Limited Omniscient Point of View***

When an author uses a limited omniscient narrator, he chooses a character in the story and tells the story from his point of view, this character becomes the centre of revelation and the reader sees the events and other characters from his viewpoint. If the narrator moves back and forth between an omniscient viewpoint and the viewpoint of the focal character, we refer to the narrative technique as 'free indirect style'. Free indirect style is perhaps the most widely-used mode of narration in modern fiction. Limited omniscient narration involves the reader more than pure omniscient narration. By associating the narrating voice with one of the characters in the story, the author gives it an identity and therefore makes it more interesting for the reader. Also, because much of the story is told from the partial viewpoint of one of the characters, the reader gets the idea that anything can happen in the course of the novel, just as it can in real life.

***- Dramatic /Objective Point of View***

When an author uses a dramatic or objective point of view, the story seems to be told by no one. This narrative technique has often been compared to a video camera left running. The narrator does not mediate between the story and the reader. He steps aside and allows the story to present itself through setting, action and dialogue. The reader is never taken inside the minds of the characters. He is presented with material which he alone must analyse and interpret. Although the narrator does not actively participate in the storytelling, he does have an important role to play in this type of narrative. It is the narrator who decides when to turn the video camera on and off and where to point it. He decides what material to present and his choices will obviously affect the reader's response. The dramatic point of 'view is widely used by modern writers because of the impersonal and objective way it presents experience.

**1.5.4.3 Stream of Consciousness**

It is the term applied to any attempt by a writer to represent the conscious and subconscious thoughts and impressions in the mind of a character. This technique takes the reader inside the narrating character's mind, where he sees the world of the story through the thoughts and senses of the focal character.

**1.5.4.4 Interior Monologue**

At the beginning of the twentieth century some authors, notably James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner, developed a stream of consciousness technique called interior monologue. The term is borrowed from drama, where monologue refers to the part in a play where an actor expresses his inner thoughts aloud to the audience. In fiction, an interior monologue is a record of a character’s, thoughts and sense impressions.

As people do not think in complete, well-formed logical sentences, Joyce, Woolf and Faulkner abandoned traditional syntax, punctuation and logical connections in order to represent the flow of a character's thoughts. For example, in Joyce's Ulysses (1922) the reader finds himself with a transcript of one of the character's thoughts which contains no commas, full stops or capital letters. The stop, start, disjointed and often illogical nature of interior monologue makes it a challenge for the reader to interpret.

**1.5.4.5. Narrative Perspective (practice)**

* Read and practice:

**1**-Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, by Lewis Carroll

*ALICE was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations l" So she was considering, in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.*

-Narrative Perspective: .....................

-How do you know? ...........................

**2*-***Middlemarch, by George Eliot

"*Shall you wear them in company*?" *said Celia, who was watching her with real curiosity as to what she would do.*

*'Dorothea glanced quickly at her sister. [...] "Perhaps," she said, rather haughtily. "I cannot tell to what level I may sink."*

*'Celia blushed, and was unhappy: she saw that she had offended her sister, and dared not say even anything pretty about the gift of the ornaments which she put back into the box and carried away. Dorothea too was unhappy [...] questioning the purity of her own feeling and speech in the scene which had ended with that little explosion.'*

-Narrative Perspective: .........................

-How do you know?..............................

**3**- As I Lay Dying, by William Faulkner

*"I am I and you are you and I know it and you don’t know it and you could do so much for me if you just would and if you just would then I could tell you and then nobody would have to know it except you and me and Darl"*

-Narrative Perspective: ..........................

-How do you know?...............................

**4**-The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, by T. S. Eliot

*Let us go then, you and I,*

*When the evening is spread out against the sky*

*Like a patient etherized upon a table;*

*Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,*

*The muttering retreats*

*Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels*

*…*

-Narrative Perspective: ...........................

-How do you know? ..............................

**1.5.5. Mood and Tone Lecture 8**

Tone and mood are literary elements integrated into literary works, but can also be included into any piece of writing. Besides, identifying the tone and mood in literature is very important to truly understanding what an author is trying to say and can be helpful in helping to discern the theme and author's style. Students often mix up the two terms and can become confused.

Tone is the author's attitude towards the audience, the subject, or the character.

* Tone is shown through:
* **Dialogue - talking**
* **Descriptions- author's diction [word choice]**

Words that describe tone:

*Amused Angry Cheerful Critical Clear Formal Gloomy*

*Humorous Informal Ironic Light Mocking Optimistic*

*Pessimistic Playful Sincere Serious Suspicious Witty*

Mood is the feeling the reader gets from a story.

* Mood is shown through:
* **Setting**
* **Atmosphere**

Words that describe mood:

*Light-hearted, Playful, Tender, Warm, Hopeful, Peaceful*

*Joyous, Welcoming, Tense, Gloomy, Violent, Cold, Haunting*

*Suspenseful, Threatening, Painful, Terrifying, Lonely*

***Tone is not Mood***

The tone could be serious but the mood could be ridiculous.

**1.5.6 Themes and Motifs**

**1.5.6.1 Themes**

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work. Here is an extract from *Conrad’s*.

“… *he (Kurtz) began with the argument that we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at must necessarily appear to them (savages) in the nature of supernatural beings-we approach them with the might of a deity*”, Chapter 2, p. I3

This passage describes Kurtz's idea of what natives saw in the Europeans. It is an example of imperialism and racism because it is describing how Europeans are superior to Africans and should help them develop.

Here is another passage.

*"... The conquest of the earth, which mostly means taking it away from people with different colored skin or flatter noses, is not a pretty thing when you think about it. The only good thing about it is the idea behind it…Not some pretty words you can use to describe it, but a real and powerful idea that men will unselfishly sacrifice themselves for--something that men will bow down to and worship...*" Chapter 1, p .3

In this passage Marlow is talking about Imperialism. About how when you take a deep look into it you find out that it is not a positive thing.

The main theme is *hypocrisy of imperialism*

**1.5.6.2 Motifs**

Look at this excerpt from Heart of Darkness. What could be the Motif?

*They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind- as it is very proper for those who tackle a darkness*. Part I

The motif is *darkness*.

The use of the word darkness in this quote holds a double meaning. On one hand the darkness can represent the people and the wilderness in the new world within the Congo. Upon further examination, the darkness that they are tackling does not only refer to the uncivilized world around them, but also to the darkness within themselves or the human race in general. The horrors that they create are driven from the anger and wildness within. Overall, we see that in actuality one cannot hide away from the "heart of darkness" by being blind to it because the evil lies within the depths of the human soul.

**1.5.6.3 Themes and Motifs (practice)**

With reference to the previously studied excerpts:

**1**. Which of these is not a theme from the context?

* The hypocrisy of imperialism
* Madness resulting from imperialism
* The absurdity of evil
* The lunacy of freedom ✓

**2**. Which of these is not a motif in the story?

* Sailing ✓
* Observation and eavesdropping
* Interiors and exteriors
* Darkness

**1.5.7. Study of Sample Texts Lecture 9**

**1.5.7.1 Celia from *Mister Johnson* by *J. Cary* (An extract from a novel)**

Mister Johnson is a cheerful young man from Southern Nigeria. He works for the government as junior clerk, and is proud to be the friend of the district officer Rudbeck, his boss. The latter has just been married, but keeps mostly at his task of supervising road-works, while Johnson makes his wife Celia visit places of interest.

Celia doesn't know whether she is a good sort. Sometimes she thinks so; sometimes she thinks she is a fraud that she is acting a part; that all her life is acting. She is determined, however, not to be a fraud as Rudbeck’s wife. She is going to be useful to him, an encouragement and an inspiration. She means to enjoy Africa, to admire his friends and his staff; to understand his work. Above all, she refuses to be a nuisance to him. When, therefore, she wants to see the survey gang at work, she insists that he will not leave his1abourers; Johnson will take her. The next day Johnson takes her to a village to see a village assembly. Everyday there is a new excursion. To see women making water-pots without a wheel, to see a house being built mats being p1aited, cotton woven on the native loom.

Everywhere Celia is curious, attentive, and charmed by the African people, and tells Rudbeck in the evenings how much she had enjoyed herself, how marvelous Africa is.

Rudbeck is extremely busy. While Johnson is away with Celia, he has to do his own office work and type his own letters. Office work in a bush camp is always troublesome, because the files, kept in a tin case, are not easily consulted, mail-runners are erratic, and wires take three days to get an answer. At the same time he is planning the most difficult section of the road, where it runs through high jungle among lakes and swamps. Swamp road is expensive and he has to pick the driest route, in spite of deviations. He thanks goodness very often while he wades through half'- dried swamps, from dawn to dark, in clouds of tsetse, that Celia is happy with Johnson, visiting the sights. Rudbeck adores his young wife, but is still, like other young married men, the essential bachelor; He cannot do with a woman except for amusement.

Celia doesn't notice this while she is enjoying Africa with the delightful Johnson, with whom, as she says, she is quite in love. She calls him privately "Mr Wog". Rudbeck hears her laughing at six in the morning and asks,

"What's the joke, darling?"

"Only Mr Wog".

"He's a comic, isn't he?"

"A perfect quaint".

"Where are you going today?"

"I don't really know. Mr. Wog said something about weaving"

"You’ve seen that, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes but we must do weaving again for Wog's sake".

In fact Johnson finds Celia difficult to amuse. Instead of ecstatic exclamation she utters a sigh, gazes blankly and says, "oh yes, they’re making pots”, or "It's a fish trap, isn't it?" She knows Africa. Johnson can't understand this. He has seen pot-making all his life, but he is always interested to hear the life history of'each pot, to criticize its form, to argue with the potter about its quality, or to discuss the general state of the pot at that moment. To him Africa is simply perpetual experience, exciting, amusing, alarming or delightful, which he soaks into himself through all his five senses at once and produces again in the form of reflections, comments, songs, jokes, all in the pure Johnsonian form. Like a horse or a rose tree, he can turn the crudest form of fodder into beauty and power of his own quality.

But to Celia Africa is simply a number of disconnected events which have no meaning for her at all. She gazes at the pot-maker without seeing that she has one leg shorter than the other, that she is in the first stages of leprosy, that her pot is bulging on one side. She doesn't really see either woman or pot, but only a scene in Africa. Even Mr Wog is to her a scene in Africa, and one morning when he suggests going to see a fish-hunt in a river pool, she yawns in his face without knowing her rudeness. Yet she is a most kind and considerate girl.

**Joyce Cary,** *Mister Johnson*

**WORDS AND PHRASES**

***A wire***: a telegram.

***Mail runner***: A person in charge of mail delivery.

***Survey gang***: The group that takes care of all details involved in buildinga road up to standard.

***A good sort***: a kindly sort of person.

***A fraud***: someone dishonest, hypocritical.

***Mr Wog***: wog is a pejorative word for foreigner, non-white in particular (perhaps originally the initials of 'Western Oriental Gentleman').

\*Use the following words in sentences of your own:

*Plaited; erratic; quaint; to wade; ecstatic; fodder; to gaze (blankly); loom.*

\*Explain the following expressions in your own words:

*-The essential bachelor.*

*-He cannot do with a woman.*

*-She means to enjoy Africa.*

*- He soaks into himself.*

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Born in Ireland in 1888, Joyce Cary had his education in Oxford, Edinburgh and Paris. His novel, ***Mister Johnson*** (1939) is viewed by critics as a "classic of colonial literature". It contains many of the writer's experiences during the time when he served as a magistrate and executive officer in the north of Nigeria. His other books include **Aissa Saved, The Horse's Mouth, Spring Songs** and **Other Stories, To Be a Pilgrim** and **The Captive and the Free.** Cary died in **1957.**

**SKIMMING AND UNDERSTANDING**

**Questions:**

1. What in Rudbeck's attitude towards his wife shows that he is "the essential bachelor"?
2. Why does Celia think she sometimes is a fraud?
3. How does she intend to behave as Rudbeck's wife?
4. What is Rudbeck's job?
5. What is Celia's attitude towards Africa and the Africans?
6. Is she really interested in the places she visits? Do Rudbeck andJohnson think she is?

* ***Composition:***

Describe Rudbeck's activities in Nigeria. (10 lines)

**EXPLORING THE CONTEXT**

1. What does "wog" suggest to you? Compare with the "Golly-wog", the toy-doll popularized in Britain and featuring a b1ack man in caricature. Compare with other familiar, sometimes pejorative expressions used for people from various cultures (e.g., "John Bull","Paddy", "Paki", etc.).

2. Situate the story in place and time. What is a governor? A district officer?

3. Find elements about the way in which Nigeria was administered before its independence. Consult the following books for reference:

* Michael CROWDER, West Africa under Colonial Rule, London: Hutchinson, 1698.
* Basil DAVIDSON, The Africans, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964.
* K. Onwuka DIKE, 100 Years of British Rule in Nigeria, Lagos, 1957.
* Roland OLIVER and Anthony ATMORE, Africa since 1800, Cambridge University Press, 1972.

**SCANNING: STYLE AND EFFECT**

**Questions:**

1. What effect is obtained by the use of the present tense?

2. What is striking in Johnson's personality? And Celia’s? How is it conveyed?

3. How does Cary bring out the lack of communication between the twopeople?

4. As regards Johnson's creative ability, what can one think of theexpression "in pure Johnsonian form"? Compare with "Johnsonianstyle", a form of style in writing recalling Dr. Samuel Johnson's (1709-1784).

5. What elements are used to make the young African a comic-heroic figure?

6. Note the derogatory terms used by Celia and Rudbeck about Johnson. What do they reflect?

7. A number of remarks by the narrator about Celia are ironical. Which ones? What do they suggest? Locate a passage where she is portrayed in more critical terms.

***Composition:***

Write a description of Celia from Johnson's point of view. (10-15 lines).

**GETTING TO KNOW THE GENRE**

1. This text is a passage from a novel. Examine the different points of view, as the author moves from one character's perception to another's. Is there such a thing as a neutral point of view?

2. Would you consider the use of the present tense a normal practice in prose fiction? What aims are pursued in so doing?

***Key Notes ( To the Teacher)***

In many respects Johnson appears as the prototype of the African, as seen from the western collective mind; ''half-devil, half -child''.

The present text features Johnson's eagerness to acquaint Celia with the scenery and the folklore around the town of Fada.

The words and phrases pose no difficulty, for their meaning can be inferred from the context.

The skimming and understanding questions are related to the difference in motivation (and psychological disposition) of the three characters.

- Rudbeck is presented as an egoistic bachelor, all engrossed in his manly duties.

- Johnson is an enthusiast of his people's folklore (he wishes to share his enthusiasm with his white masters).

- Celia is placid and indifferent tourist, whose sole purpose is to please her husband by taking interest in her new life in Africa.

***Context***:

Celia's guided tour in Africa can appear as a vignette of the heyday of colonization, and exemplify the pattern of relation between colonizer and colonized, master and servant, withsome accuracy and objectivity. However, we can note that there is no apparent questioning or criticism of the self-righteous attitude of the colonizer in Africa and the myth of white superiority and the British civilizing mission.

***Style:***

The conspicuous feature in the style here is the use of the present tense. It is appropriate, Cary argues, for his main character ''is carried unreflecting through the stream of events''. This technique lends itself to several reading options. We can note that it allows the writer to render the immediacy of events, and to probe the inner consciousness of the main characters. It also suggests a timeless quality in the types of characters involved.

- The verisimilitude of Cary's portrait of the clerk: ''turn the crudest and simplest form of fodder into beauty and power of its own quality. '' Johnson rather appears a mock-heroic figure.

***Genre:***

In this novel, the writer usually devotes much space to the description of his main characters. It is in this genre that characters are fully developed, and various motives are presented and contrasted. It is essential for the writer to show early in his novel the basic differences between Johnson, Rudbeck and Celia, so as to plant the seeds of the tension that is later to unfold. Thus, Johnson's portrait could be understood by comparing it to Rudbeck's paternalistic posture and also the superficial and smug attitude of Celia (''how marvelous Africa is'' and ''we must do weaving for Wog's sake'' are expressions that exemplify this attitude.

**1.5.8. Introduction to the Short Story Lecture 10**

The short story seems to define itself, but actually it is not necessarily a story which is short. We should stress the fact that in contrast to the related literary genre of the novel, the short story in indeed characterized by its concision. But even though a short story is written more economically than a full-length novel, it is nonetheless an art form; and such it involves artistic selection and careful organization on the part of the writer. A short story like a miniature picture is a complete artistic work; it has a beginning, middle, and an end. Unlike the novel, however, the short story must make its point quickly, economically, and effectively. Indeed, the short story does not allow for digressions or extended treatments of character and incident.

More often, the short story offers a highly dense type of plot. It provides also a glimpse on the nature of character unveils a mind or probes a soul, but because of the time contraction, the story writer cannot and does not allow for much character development.

To read a short story is to witness the inner evolution of a central character, or the short story is the unfolding of a psychological change. This demands from the short story writer *talent* and *style*.

-Talent because of the economy and reduction he brings in his writing (choosing a single event or incident reflects the writer’s craftsmanship in his handling of materials and literary devices)

-As for style-the concentration of the genre- the words and images used should all lead to create a unity of effect and impression.

Unlike the novel, the short story cannot afford an alternative of different tones and moods but rests essentially on its displaying and mastering of a single, unique tone.

**1.5.8.1 The Sacrificial Egg by C. Achebe**

JULIUS Obi sat gazing at his typewriter. The fat chief clerk, his boss, was snoring at his table. Outside, the gatekeeper in his green uniform was sleeping at his post. No customer had passed through the gate for nearly a week. There was an empty basket on the giant weighing machine. A few palm kernels lay in the dust around the machine.

Julius went to the window that overlooked the great market on the bank of the Niger. This market, like all Ibo markets, had been held on one of the four days of the week. But with the coming of the white man and the growth of Umuru into a big palm-oil port, it had become a daily market. In spite of that however, it was still busiest on its original Nkwo day, because the deity that presided over it cast her spell only on that day. It was said that she appeared in the form of an old woman in the center of the market just before cockcrow and waved her magic fan in the four directions of the earth — in front of her, behind her, to the right, and to the left — to draw to the market men and women from distant clans. And they came, these men and women, bringing the produce of their lands: palm oil and kernels, kola nuts, cassava, mats, baskets, and earthenware pots. And they took home many-colored cloths, smoked fish, iron pots and plates.

Others came by the great river bringing yams and fish in their canoes. Sometimes it was a big canoe with a dozen or more people in it; sometimes it was just a fisherman and his wife in a small vessel from the swift flowing Anambara. They moored their canoe on the bank and sold their fish, after much haggling. The woman then walked up the steep banks of the river to the heart of the market to buy salt and oil and, if the sales had been good, a length of cloth. And for her children at home she bought bean cakes or akara and mai-mai, which the Igara women cooked. As evening approached, they took up their paddles and paddled away, the water shimmering in the sunset and their canoe becoming smaller and smaller in the distance until it was just a dark crescent on the water’s face and two dark bodies swaying forwards and backwards in it.

Julius Obi was not a native of Umuru. He came from a bush village twenty or so miles away. But having passed his Standard Six in a mission school in 1920 he came to Umuru to work as a clerk in the offices of the Niger Company, which dealt in palm oil and kernels. The offices were situated beside the famous Umuru market, so that in his first two or three weeks Julius had to learn to work against the background of its noise. Sometimes when the chief clerk was away or asleep he walked to the window and looked down on the vast anthill activity. Most of these people were not there yesterday, he thought, and yet the market was as full. There must be many, many people in the world. Of course they say that not everyone who came to the great market was a real person. Janet’s mother had said so.

“Some of the beautiful young women you see squeezing through the crowds are not real people but mammy-wota from the river,” she said.

“How does one know them?” asked Julius, whose education placed him above such superstitious stuff. But he took care not to sound unbelieving. He had long learned that it was bad policy to argue with Ma on such points.

“You can always tell,” she explained, “because they are beautiful with a beauty that is not of this world. You catch a glimpse of them with the tail of your eye, then they disappear in the crowd.”

Julius thought about these things as he now stood at the window looking down at the empty market. Who would have believed that the great market could ever be so empty? But such was the power of Kitikpa, or smallpox.

When Umuru had been a little village, it had been swept and kept clean by its handful of inhabitants. But now it had grown into a busy, sprawling, crowded, and dirty river port. And Kitikpa came. No other disease is feared by the Ibo people as much as they fear Kitikpa. It is personified as an evil deity. Its victims are not mourned lest it be offended. It put an end to the coming and going between neighbors and between villages. They said, “Kitikpa is in that village, and immediately it was cut off by its neighbors.

Julius was worried because it was almost a week since he had seen Janet, the girl he was going to marry. Ma had explained to him very gently that he should no longer come to see them “until this thing is over by the power of Jehovah.” Ma was a very devout Christian, and one reason why she approved of Julius for her only daughter was that he sang in the church choir.

“You must keep to your rooms,” she had said. “You never know whom you might meet on the streets. That family has got it.” She pointed at the house across the road. “That is what the yellow palm frond at the doorway means. The family were all moved away today in the big government lorry.”

Janet walked a short way with him, and they said good night. And they shook hands, which was very odd.

Julius did not go straight home. He went to the bank of the river and just walked up and down it. He must have been there a long time, because he was still there when the ekwe, or wooden gong, of the night spirit sounded. He immediately set out for home, half walking and half running. He had about half an hour to get home before the spirit ran its race through the town.

As Julius hurried home he stepped on something that broke with a slight liquid explosion. He stopped and peeped down at the footpath. The moon was not yet up, but there was some faint light which showed that it would not be long delayed. In this light Julius saw that he had stepped on a sacrificial egg. There were young palm fronds around it. Someone oppressed by misfortune had brought the offering to the crossroads in the dusk. And he had stepped on it and taken the sufferer’s ill luck to himself. “Nonsense,” he said and hurried away. But it was too late; the night spirit was already abroad. Its voice rose high and clear in the still, black air. It was a long way away, but Julius knew that distance did not apply to these beings. So he made straight for the cocoyam farm beside the road and threw himself on his belly. He had hardly done this when he heard the rattling staff of the spirit and a thundering stream of esoteric speech. He shook all over. The sounds came bearing down on him. And then he could hear the footsteps. It was as if twenty men were running together. In no time at all the sounds had passed and disappeared in the distance on the other side of the road.

As Julius stood at the window looking out on the empty market he lived through that night again. It was only a week ago, but already it seemed to be separated from the present by a vast emptiness. This emptiness deepened with the passage of time. On this side stood Julius, and on the other Ma and Janet, who were carried away by the smallpox.

**Chinua Achebe**

**WORDS AND PHRASES**

**Word explanation**

**Ibos:** an ethnic group in South East Nigeria.

**Igaras:** another ethnic group in the same region.

**The Niger Company:** originally the Royal Niger Company, a trading monopoly, which was the main instrument of the colonization of Nigeria.

**Standard Six:** under the British educational system in Africa, the Sixth year of primary education.

**Kitikpa:** Ibo god of Smallpox.

**Jeovah:** Name of God in the Old Testament: a word used by some Christian religious sects.

**The four days of the week:** Among lbos, the week has four days.

**Rattling Staff:** a thick stick equipped with a device meant to produce a noise, used by the Ibo Sorcerer.

**Esoteric:** following a particular code, only known by initiates.

**Vocabulary building**

Find sentences in the text equivalent to the ones provided below:

1. They tied their canoes on the river bank

2. They sold their fish after much arguing over the price

3. It has grown into an active, populated, extended and untidy river port.

4. His education prevented him from believing in magic, or ideas not based on reason.

5. Julius was looking at his typewriter without interest.

6. The deity that presided over it brought her enchantment on that day.

7. He looked down on the vast frantic activity.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Born in Ogidi (Nigeria) in 1930, Chinua Achebe is one of the greatest African writers. His first novel, ***Things Fall Apart***, published in 1958, marked the beginning of modern African writing in English. Achebe essentially describes the experience of his people, the lbos, during and after British Colonization. His works often emphasize the difficulties caused by the coexistence of modern life and traditional customs. The writer produced more than 20 works - some fiercely critical of politicians and a failure of leadership in Nigeria.

Mr. Achebe died in 2013 at the age of 82 in Boston, USA, where he was said to have suffered from an undisclosed ailment.

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**SKIMMING AND UNDERSTANDING**

Questions:

1. Where does the story take place? Where are the offices of the Niger Company?

2. What sorts of spirits populate the market and the town of Umuru?

What sentences describe them?

3. What precautions do Ibo people take to prevent the epidemic from spreading?

4. What is the name of the Spirit of Smallpox?

5. How many characters are there in the text?

6. Does Obi believe in Spirits? What about Ma?

If so, can that be reconciled with her being a Christian?

7. Why does Obi hurry home when he hears the ekwe, or wooden gong announcing the night

spirit?

Is he really unaffected by Ibo traditional beliefs?

8. What is a sacrificial egg? What happens when Obi steps on one?

**Composition:**

Describe one particular superstitious practice which you know of.

**EXPLORING THE CONTEXT**

Traditionally, Achebe's people, the Ibos, believe that their lives are controlled by gods and spirits. Like other ethnic groups, the lbos have a well-structured hierarchy of gods and spirits, each fulfilling a specific role. Ibos have rites and practices for each deity and spirit. These are usually propitiated by means of sacrifices, charms and amulets.

**Questions:**

1. What deities (or gods) are mentioned in the text? Can you name others?

2. What spirits are referred to also?

3. What charms and amulets are used for them?

4. How far do you think Christianity has penetrated the lives of Ibo people?

**SCANNING: SYTLE AND EFFECT**

1. How does the writer impart an African flavour to the text?

2. Study the contradiction in Julius Obi's character with respect to his beliefs. How is the

contradiction brought out? Refer to passages from the text.

3. Is there a difference in attitude between Julius and Ma regarding superstitious beliefs?

Illustrate from the text.

4. Is there a suggestion that Umuru has been "polluted", by having grown large and crowded, and

made permeable to external influences and diseases? What passages refer to this?

5. Is there a form of immanent punishment in the text? Do you perceive here an instance of irony

of fate? How is it Suggested by the action and the denouement?

6. Study the words "empty and "emptiness" used at the beginning and at the close of the story.

What do they suggest in each instance?

What structural effect does Achebe achieve by using them in that way?

**GETTING TO KNOW THE GENRE**

1. Study the narrative structure of the story, identifying the passages set in the present and those

describing the events set in the past.

2. What effect does the use of flashback have on our final understanding of Julius Obi's

character?

3. Situate the climax of the story and comment on the irony produced by the unexpected ending

of the story.

1. - Meyer, Michael. The Bedford Introduction to Literature. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993, p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 1 - Marjorie Boulton, The Anatomy of the Novel, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975, p.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 1 - Walter Allen, The English Novel, Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1958, p.14. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)