

WEST AFRICAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL RECOMMENDED 2026-2030 LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS ANALYSIS

Antony and Cleopatra

AFRICAN PROSE

- 1. Pede Hollist: So the Path Does Not Die**
- 2. Elma Shaw: Redemption Road**

NON-AFRICAN PROSE

- 1. Harper Lee: To Kill a Mockingbird**
- 2. Susanne Bellefeuille: Path of Lucas: The Journey He Endured**

AFRICAN DRAMA

- 1. Bosede Ademilua- Afolayan: Once Upon an Elephant**
- 2. Efua Sutherland : The Marriage of Anansewa**

NON-AFRICAN DRAMA

- 1. J. B. Priestley : An Inspector Calls**
- 2. Robert Bolt: A Man for all Seasons**

AFRICAN POETRY

- 1. Gabriel Okara: Once Upon a Time**
- 2. Elizabeth L. A. Kamara : New Tongue**
- 3. Wole Soyinka: Night**
- 4. Niyi Osundare: Not My Business**
- 5. S.O.H. Afriyie -Vidza: Hearty Garlands**
- 6. Syl Cheney-Coker: The Breast of The Sea**

NON-AFRICAN POETRY

- 1. Lord Byron: She Walks in Beauty**
- 2. Geoffrey Chaucer (shortened) : The Nun's Priest's Tale**
- 3. Seamus Heaney : Digging**
- 4. Maya Angelou : Still I Rise**
- 5. Fleur Adcock : The Telephone Call**
- 6. Wilfrid Wilson Gibson : The Stone**

B R SHOTALA

**WEST AFRICAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL
RECOMMENDED 2026-2030 LITERATURE
IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS ANALYSIS**

BY

BOLANLE REBECCA SHOTALA

**WEST AFRICAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL RECOMMENDED
2026-2030 LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS ANALYSIS
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DEDICATION

**This book is dedicated to God Almighty the Giver of
Wisdom.**

And also to all Students of Literature in English.

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I am deeply grateful to God Almighty for the beginning to the end of these analyses, for the strength, idea and inspiration to accomplish it.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank all authors and different sources I have consulted in analysing these textbooks.

And finally, my gratitude goes to my parents, siblings, Mrs. Kemisola Shotala and my friends for their support in all aspects and for their advice. They are all wonderful personalities.

PREFACE

This book is based on the analysis of the recommended textbooks and poems by West African Examinations Council. It covers both texts and poems from different Authors and Poets. The recommended books include:

SHAKESPEAREAN TEXT: Antony and Cleopatra

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This edition is being simplified for easy grasping.

I assume full responsibility for the errors or shortcomings of this book with the promise to address detected and reported errors in the next editions.

Bolanle R. Shotale
January, 2024

CONTENT

DEDICATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PREFACE

SHAKESPEAREAN TEXT: Antony and Cleopatra.	8-13
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AFRICAN DRAMA

1. Abosede Ademilua-Afolayan: Once Upon an Elephant.	14-24
2. Elua Sutherland: The Marriage of Anansewa.	25-34

AFRICAN PROSE

1. Pede Hollist: So the Path Does Not Die.	35-36
2. Elma Shaw: Redemption Road.	37-39

NON-AFRICAN PROSE

1. Harper Lee: To Kill a Mockingbird.	40-43
2. Susanne Bellefeuille: Path of Lucas: The Journey He Endured	43-46

NON-AFRICAN DRAMA

1. J. B. Priestley : An Inspector Calls.	47-55
2. Robert Bolt: A Man for all Seasons.	55-58

AFRICAN POETRY

1. Gabriel Okara: Once Upon a Time.	59-63
2. Elizabeth L. A. Kamara : New Tongue.	64-68
3. Wole Soyinka: Night.	68-71
4. Niyi Osundare: Not My Business.	72-77
5. S.O.H. Afriyie -Vidza: Hearty Garlands.	77-82
6. Syl Cheney-Coker: The Breast of The Sea.	82-89

NON-AFRICAN POETRY

1. Lord Byron: She Walks in Beauty.	90-94
2. Geoffrey Chaucer (shortened) : The Nun's Priest's Tale.	95-106
3. Seamus Heaney : Digging.	107-114
4. Maya Angelou : Still I Rise.	115-120
5. Fleur Adcock : The Telephone Call.	121-129
6. Wilfrid Wilson Gibson : The Stone.	129-136

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William Shakespeare was an English playwright, poet and actor. He is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon" (or simply "the Bard"). His extant works, including collaborations, consist of some 39 plays, 154 sonnets, three long narrative poems, and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. Shakespeare remains arguably the most influential writer in the English language, and his works continue to be studied and reinterpreted.

ABOUT THE PLAY

At the height of power, Mark Antony neglects his empire for his mistress, Cleopatra. Torn between love and duty, his passion leads them to tragedy.

A summary of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra - a tragedy of love and duty.

Antony and Cleopatra written around 1606 is one of Shakespeare's great historical love stories. Antony is captivated by Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. Gossip and scandal leads to plots of murder and battles.

Mark Antony, Octavius Caesar and Lepidus, having defeated Julius Caesar's assassins at Philippi, now rule the Roman Empire as a triumvirate.

While in Alexandria however, the ageing Antony has become captivated by Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt (and mother to Julius Caesar's illegitimate son, Caesarion). The gossip and scandal this is creating both amongst Romans in Alexandria and at home in Rome gives rise to dissension between Octavius and Antony, whose behaviour is felt to be debauched and 'un-Roman'.

At the same time as the power of the triumvirate is being challenged by a dissatisfied senator, Pompey, Antony hears news from Rome that his wife, Fulvia, is dead. These two issues together force Antony to return to Rome and take up his responsibilities as a triumvir again.

Once back in Rome, Antony seems less controlled by his fascination for Cleopatra and, in an attempt to strengthen the triumvirate and cement his political alliance with Octavius following a quarrel, he agrees to marry Octavius's sister, Octavia. This news drives Cleopatra into a jealous rage.

BROKEN ALLIANCES

On the brink of another bloody civil war against Pompey's forces, Antony and Octavius manage to negotiate a peace and they, along with Lepidus, feast with Pompey in celebration.

Antony and Octavia then leave for Athens, where Antony has been summoned to quell a rebellion by the Scythians. No sooner have they arrived there than Antony learns that Octavius has ignored the agreed peace treaty, has taken arms against Pompey once more, is plotting against Lepidus, the third member of the triumvirate, and has also spoken critically of Mark Antony. Enraged, Antony sends Octavia back to Rome to act as a go-between but also prepares for war against Octavius.

WAR

Octavius learns that Antony has returned to Alexandria and, with Cleopatra, has appeared enthroned in the market place, crowning themselves and their children as kings and queens. Octavius declares war on Egypt and, despite warnings not to fight at sea, Antony agrees that the two navies will meet for a sea battle at Actium.

The Egyptians, under Antony's command, lose when he deserts the battle to follow Cleopatra's fleeing ships. Antony is ashamed and in despair at his own unsoldierly behaviour. But when he hears that Octavius is planning a secret peace with Cleopatra at the expense of Antony's own life, he has Caesar's messenger whipped and rouses himself for a second battle in which he is victorious.

Before the third and decisive battle, many of Antony's soldiers desert him fearing bad omens, including his most loyal friend Enobarbus. A disappointed Antony sends after Enobarbus all the treasures he had left behind on his desertion, and Enobarbus is so stricken with shame that he dies.

Having won the initial battle by land, Antony prepares to face Octavius's forces again at sea.

THE ENDING

The Egyptian navy deserts, leading the defeated Antony to believe that Cleopatra has betrayed him to Octavius. She is so angry that she retreats to her monument and sends false word to Antony that she has committed suicide.

Appalled, and echoing the suicide of the conspirator Brutus at Philippi, Antony begs a faithful servant to hold his sword while he falls upon it. Unwilling to do so, the servant, Eros, kills himself. Antony then attempts suicide but fails, leaving himself badly wounded.

A messenger arrives from Cleopatra, telling Antony of her deception. Antony instructs his guards to take him to Cleopatra's monument where he is raised up to the top of the monument to die in her arms.

Having persuaded Octavius that she will surrender, but fearful of capture and the shame of being exhibited as a defeated enemy through the streets of Rome, Cleopatra holds a poisonous snake to her breast and dies, along with her faithful maid.

CHARACTERS

Antony

A once fierce and feared soldier who rules the Roman Empire along with Octavius Caesar and Lepidus. When the play opens, Antony has neglected his duties as a ruler in order to live in Egypt, where he carries on a highly visible love affair with Cleopatra. His loyalty is divided between the Western and Eastern worlds; he is torn between the sense of duty and the desire to seek pleasure, between reason and passion. While he feels the need to reaffirm the honor that has made him a celebrated Roman hero, he is also madly in love with Cleopatra.

Cleopatra

The queen of Egypt and Antony's lover. A highly attractive woman who once seduced Julius Caesar, Cleopatra delights in the thought that she has caught Antony like a fish. In matters of love, as in all things, Cleopatra favors high drama: her emotions are as volatile as they are theatrical, and, regardless of whether her audience is her handmaid or the emperor of Rome, she always offers a top-notch performance. Although she tends to make a spectacle of her emotions, one cannot doubt the genuine nature of her love for Antony. Shakespeare makes clear that the queen does love the general, even if her loyalty is sometimes misplaced.

Octavius Caesar

The nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar. Octavius rules the Roman Empire with Antony and Lepidus. Relations between Caesar and Antony are strained throughout the play, for the young triumvir believes that Antony squanders his time and neglects his duties while in Egypt. Ambitious and extremely pragmatic, Octavius lacks Antony's military might as a general, but his careful and stoic reasoning enables him to avoid Antony's tendency toward heroic or romantic folly. Destined to be the first Roman emperor (later renamed Caesar Augustus), he symbolizes "Western" values in the play, which stand opposed to the exotic lures of Cleopatra's "East."

Enobarbus

Antony's most loyal supporter. Worldly and cynical, Enobarbus is friendly with the subordinates of both Pompey and Caesar, yet stays faithful to his master even after Antony makes grave political and military missteps. He abandons Antony only when the general appears to be completely finished.

Marcus Aemilius Lepidus

The third member of the triumvirate and the weakest, both politically and personally. Lepidus's rather desperate attempts to keep the peace between Caesar and Antony fail when Caesar imprisons him after the defeat of Pompey.

Pompey

The son of a great general who was one of Julius Caesar's partners in power. Pompey is young and popular with the Roman people, and he possesses enough military might to stand as a legitimate threat to the triumvirs.

He fancies himself honorable for refusing to allow one of his men to kill the unsuspecting Caesar, Antony, and Lepidus when they are his guests.

Octavia

Octavius Caesar's sister. Octavia marries Antony in order to cement an alliance between the two triumvirs. She is a victim of Antony's deception, and her meekness, purity, and submission make her the paradigm of Roman womanhood, and Cleopatra's polar opposite.

Charmian and Iras

Cleopatra's faithful attendants.

The Soothsayer

An Egyptian fortune-teller who follows Antony to Rome and predicts that his fortune will always pale in comparison to Caesar's.

Dolabella

One of Octavius Caesar's men. Dolabella is assigned to guard the captive Cleopatra.

Agrippa

One of Octavius Caesar's officers. Agrippa leads the retreat from Antony's unexpectedly powerful forces.

Camidius

A general in Antony's army. After the battle in which Antony follows Cleopatra's lead and flees, Camidius surrenders and defects to Caesar's side.

Ventidius

A Roman soldier under Antony's command. Ventidius leads the legions to victory against the kingdom of Parthia. Although a competent fighter, he cautiously decides not to push his troops further into battle, for fear that winning too much glory would sour his relationship with Antony.

Scarus

A brave young soldier serving under Antony. Scarus garners fantastic wounds in the battle against Caesar's army, and begs for the opportunity to win more.

Proculeius

One of Caesar's soldiers, who proves untrustworthy.

Diomedes

Cleopatra's servant. She employs Diomedes to bring to Antony the message that she has not committed suicide but is still alive.

Eros

An attendant serving Antony. Eros's love for his master compels him to refuse Antony's order that Eros kill him.

Menas

An ambitious young soldier under Pompey. During the dinner party that Pompey hosts for the triumvirate, Menas asks for permission to kill Caesar, Antony, and Lepidus, which would result in the control of the world falling into his master's hands.

Seleucus

Cleopatra's treasurer, who betrays his master.

Clown

An Egyptian who brings a basket of figs containing poisonous snakes to Cleopatra.

Decretas

One of Antony's soldiers.

ONCE UPON AN ELEPHANT BY ABOSEDE ADEMILUA-AFOLAYAN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Bosedede Funke Ademilua Afolayan is an Associate Professor at the Department of English, University of Lagos. She is the author of two plays, *Look Back in Gratitude* and *Once Upon an Elephant* published by Kraft books, Ibadan in 2013 and 2015 respectively.

INTRODUCTION

“Once Upon an Elephant” is a Satirical drama that chronicles the leadership styles of African leaders, especially in some African countries like Nigeria, Egypt, Uganda, Gambia, Cameroun, just to mention a few.

It dramatizes the dictatorial tendencies of African leaders and the effects on the citizenry as well as the outcome generally.

The tendency of these leaders is to take power by force without minding the process; whether legitimate or otherwise. It also exposes the “hold on to power” mindset of these leaders.

It also reflects how the people are oppressed and deprived of their rights.

The people are turned into slaves on their own land as there is no freedom of speech. Anybody who dares them is dehumanized if not sent to the grave.

The activities of the human rights group in the society are also reflected in the play. When the maltreatment reaches the climax, some people are forced to react.

There is a reward for every activity on the surface of the earth. The play does not end without rewarding the people according to their roles.

This makes the play a tragi-comedy; some are rewarded positively and are happy, while the wicked leader, Ajanaku is brought down. This may bring an end to the oppressive rule in the land.

Plot Summary of Once Upon an Elephant

“Once Upon a Time” opens with succession disputes among the contenders who want to succeed the ailing king.

King Akinjobi, the king on the throne is seriously sick and dying, this gives room to the different power players who are scheming to assume the throne.

The key players in this clandestine plot are Ajanaku and Serubawon. They plot to install Ajanaku as king and Serubawon in a triple role as king maker, medicine, and priest.

The selection process is not made open and it is full of intrigues and schemes. The Hunter's Guild, who are responsible for the selection process are bribed and bought over.

It is only some of the people who are wise enough and understand the modus operandi of the king's selection who realize that the process is un-democratic.

This set of people knows that Ajanaku is not the first son of the late king and he is not even the legitimate son of the king. His father is traced to Serubawon, the evil medicine man.

The duo is desperate in their agitations for the coveted seats. Serubawon holds on to make Ajanaku the king against all odds and the latter is also desperate to be the king.

Ajanaku is ready to undergo the rituals without minding the difficulties and the side effects on him and the people.

He performs the ritual of raping the virgins in the Ijedodo. With this, he keeps himself alive while the victim dies in installments.

"Every day is for the thief and a day for the owner." Nemesis catches up with Ajanaku one day when he rapes Desola who is Odekunle's girl friend.

Desola is Serubawon's daughter from the extra-marital affairs he had with Adebisi, the second wife of the late King Akinjobi. With this, Desola is Ajanaku's step-sister or half-sister.

This ugly scenario is part of the causes of the strange sickness that killed the former king. Serubawon was the medicine man and one of the trusted allies of King Akinjobi.

The conflicting situations in the play reach the climax and it calls for resolution. The intervention of Iya Agba, the disgraced and falsely accused wife of the late king, savages the situation.

Ajanaku, the wicked king is expected to attain immortality at the ceremony of Jobele. Iya Agba makes Ajanaku's victims claim back their rights and lives from him.

Desola confronts Ajanaku to reclaim her life. Odekunle also weakens Ajanaku by wrapping a charmed red cloth around his neck, hence he dies gradually.

Serubawon also commits suicide as he cannot face the unfolding reality that he has ruined his family himself through his wickedness.

The truth has been revealed that Ajanaku is not the one that impregnated Omoyeni, it is Delani. With the death of Ajanaku now, Delani and Omoyeni can be together.

The process of selecting the new king is in progress. The process could bring to the fore the people's choice. A king that would bring peace and tranquility to the community.

Themes of Once Upon an Elephant

Dictatorship/Autocracy: Dictatorship is one of the major themes in this play. The play is written to expose the leadership style of African leaders over the years. Olaniyonu is presented as a dictator and he projects the characteristics of an autocratic leader.

Olaniyonu's insistence that Iya Agba should call him by his rightful name is a sign of dictatorship and autocratic posture.

"You must call me by my rightful name. I am Ajanaku, conqueror of lands and forests!"

After being made the king, he becomes a dictator; he always wants to have his way in any discourse.

Rascality: Ajanaku is a rascal right from his younger age and that is the reason many people are against him being crowned as the king.

Serubawon confirms that people call him a rascal, but he says it is a “youthful misdemeanor.” Ajanaku is able to perform the role of a dictator and an autocratic leader because of his rascality.

This also gives him the audacity to trample on the other people’s rights in the play. He forces himself on Omoyeni, who out of fear of attacking her family and Delani her husband by Ajanaku agrees to marry him.

Ajanaku and Serubawon are also reckless in their operation to achieve their aims. They don’t bother whose ox is gored or is affected in the process of making Ajanaku immortal and administering the people according to their dictates.

Sit-tight Leadership/Perpetuation: Ajanaku in the play symbolizes the sit-tight leaders of Africa. Some countries in Africa like Nigeria, Egypt, Uganda and Cameroun, just to mention some of them have experienced this.

Their leaders in the recent past and presently in Cameroon keep on extending their stay in office through different means.

This is similar to the Olubori and Ijedodo rites that are done for Ajanaku and the ritual births in the play. If successfully done makes him immortal and unconquerable by any mortal.

Rituals and Festivals: Rituals and festivals are parts and parcels of African society and their importance for the people cannot be over-emphasized.

These are embedded by the author in this play. Festivals are useful in African societies to bring the people together at a specific time of the year to celebrate and promote their cultural heritage.

Rituals and rites are carried out for the purification of the deeds and misdeeds of the people. They are also used for the purging of the ills of the society hence, there is a rebirth of the society; a new lease of life is ushered in.

These rites and rituals can be used both for an individual selfish end and for the benefit of the people. Olubori and Ijedodo are selfishly used in the play by Ajanaku in conjunction with Serubawon for their selfish end to the detriment of the people.

While Iya Agba makes use of the Jobele rite for the benefit of the people. She uses it for the cleansing of the land and to revive Desola who is already knocking on the door of the hereafter.

Bribery and Corruption: The selection of Olaniyonu as the successor of King Akinjobi is full of corruption. Because he is desperate to be crowned as the king, he buys his way by giving bribes to the Guild of Hunters.

These are the kingmakers headed by Serubawon whom he sends the bribes through. Serubawon finds all means to convince the members to give in to Ajanaku.

Betrayal: Serubawon is a close friend of King Akinjobi and his medicine man. Despite this, he still sleeps with Adebisi, the second wife of the king, this leads to the king's ill health and eventually leads to his death.

He also connived with Olaniyonu and enthroned him as the king when Baderin, the eldest son, was alive.

Injustice: Ajanaku's administration as the king is full of injustices. The case of two families fighting on a piece of fertile land is an example. Instead of him settling it so that no side is hurt like his father did, he took over the land completely from the two families.

Another one is the case of the people of Oguno, who pay tributes to Ajanaku. The people are in danger of incessant attacks from some faceless groups.

The people now run to Ajanaku to protect and liberate them from their assailants. This is one of the responsibilities of Ajanaku as the recipient of their tributes.

Instead, he says he would not come to their aid until they fulfill his demand for an increase in the tributes. He doesn't even consider their plights; how they have lost their loved ones to their attackers. He says he doesn't care if they die.

Women as Agents of Problem Solving: It is generally believed that "women are necessary evils." This is a result of the different roles played in the scriptures and everyday life.

But, in this play, Bosede Ademilua-Afolayan presents the character of Iya Agba as an agent of problem-solving.

Though the people do not understand her and call her a mad woman, when the conflict reaches the climax they run to her. She is the one who brings succor at the end when she sees to the end of Ajanaku after Desola snatches back her life from him.

Dramatic Techniques in Once Upon an Elephant

Flashbacks: There is the use of flashbacks in the play, some past events are related to the readers through the use of flashbacks.

The readers know how Olaniyonu came about bearing Ajanaku through the use of flashbacks. Olaniyonu himself narrates this on the day of his coronation as the king.

He says his father saw the greatness in him when he was a child; the way he struggled to suck his mother's breast. How he fought and beat the little children of his age. His father then called him Ajanaku.

The readers are able to know how King Akinjobi died through the use of flashbacks. King Ajanaku narrates this when the people of Oguno village run to him for help to rescue them from their attackers.

One of the men refers to King Akinjobi as a very good and kind friend of his. Ajanaku tries to explain the deplorable condition the king was in despite being kind to the people before he died. Nobody came to his aid despite being kind to them.

The real name of Iya Agba is also known through flashbacks. Iya Agba reveals this when Serubawon runs to her for help. She reminded him how he used his treachery to change her name from Omofadeke Adunni to Iya Agba, all to cover up his atrocities.

The events that culminate in the death of King Akinjobi are also related to the readers through flashbacks.

Iya Agba narrates how Serubawon was having affairs with Adebisi, King Akinjobi's second wife. This eventually results in the king developing a strange ailment that kills him.

How Iya Agba was sent out of the palace is revealed through flashbacks. For Serubawon to cover up his atrocities, falsely accused Iya Agba of adultery. Demoke testified to it and the woman was sent out of the palace.

Foreshadowing: The dream Desola has about their wedding ceremony where everybody is happy, wining and dining.

Odekunle chants his Ijala to the admiration of the people, but when it is her turn to chant her own Ekun iyawo, she loses her voice.

Odekunle is then furious and threatens to kill if she does not sing. This foreshadows the crisis that mars their wedding later in the play; Desola is raped by Ajanaku when the wedding preparation is in top gear.

Another instance of foreshadowing is the statement made when Ajanaku relates why he was named Ajanaku.

“But what exactly does an elephant do to creepers, and thorns, and bushes, and thickets, and a whole forest of trees standing in its way? He tramples them!”

This foreshadows his actions when crowned as the king. He tramples on other people's rights and becomes autocratic.

Another one is in Act Six when Iya Agba tells Ajanaku that ancestors don't forget wrongs and never overlook rights.

She says what Ajanaku took from her and others would be returned at the appropriate time. This foreshadows the tragic end of Ajanaku later in the play.

Irony: There are different types of irony in Literature, and some of them are used in this play. The first one is dramatic irony where the audience knows more than the character.

Ajanaku believes that he is the father of the child in Omoyeni's womb, but the audience knows that the baby is Delani's.

There is also the use of situational irony through Serubawon. His evil deeds come back to him; his daughter is raped by Ajanaku and he also commits suicide eventually.

Rhetorical Questions: This is an expression presented in the form of a question. This is used in Act One when Serubawon tries to explain what he has done to save the life of King Akinjobi as his medicine man.

Rhetorical questions are also used when Iya Agba reveals how Serubawon had affairs with Adebisi in her room. She expresses her determination not to expose them and not to say anything provided they stop it in rhetorical questions.

Symbolism: Ajanaku symbolizes the sit-tight autocratic leaders in Africa. He is crowned as the king in a corrupt manner and forces his unpopular policies on the people as done by some African leaders.

Iya Agba is a symbol of the citizens that are ready to tell the truth, no matter how they are persecuted in the society. She is called a madwoman, lies against her and is sent out of the palace, but she remains undeterred.

Allusion: The song Iya Agba always sings when in the presence of Ajanaku is an allusion from Yoruba folktales which is composed as a poem by Adeboye Babalola.

“Erin ka re ‘le o wa j’oba, erin yeeye; erin yeeye.”

The song is from the Yoruba oral narratives about an elephant and a tortoise. Iya Agba sings the song to predict the downfall of Ajanaku.

Language: The author makes use of simple English vocabulary in writing the play. She also uses Yoruba vocabulary and proverbs.

This becomes imperative because she delves into some cultural heritages of the Yorubas like marriage, rituals, rites, and festivals.

Characters in Once Upon an Elephant

Akinjobi: Akinjobi is the ailing king and the father of Olaniyonu (Ajanaku) anAkinjobi: Akinjobi is the ailing king and the father of Olaniyonu (Ajanaku) and Baderin. He is described by the people of Oguno as a friendly and kind king during his reign. He is also the husband of Iya Agba and Adebisi.

Olaniyonu (Ajanaku): He is the husband of Omoyeni and a tyrant king. He is a bastard; Serubawon is his biological father but is believed to be born by King Akinjobi until the truth is revealed.

Olaniyonu is a rascal from his youthful age as described by the people. He is crowned the king through corrupt means. He buys his ways by bribing the Guild of Hunters and the elders who are the kingmakers.

He creates fears in Omoyeni’s mind to marry him. The latter drops her former lover to marry him to protect her family and her lover from being attacked by Olaniyonu.

Olaniyonu is a wicked character; he raped virgins including Desola to perpetuate himself on the throne. He does not have feelings for the people of Oguno who run to him for help. He says he doesn't care if they are killed.

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Olaniyonu (Ajanaku): He is the husband of Omoyeni and a tyrant king. He is a bastard; Serubawon is his biological father but is believed to be born by King Akinjobi until the truth is revealed.

Olaniyonu is a rascal from his youthful age as described by the people. He is crowned the king through corrupt means. He buys his ways by bribing the Guild of Hunters and the elders who are the kingmakers.

He creates fears in Omoyeni's mind to marry him. The latter drops her former lover to marry him to protect her family and her lover from being attacked by Olaniyonu.

Olaniyonu is a wicked character; he raped virgins including Desola to perpetuate himself on the throne. He does not have feelings for the people of Oguno who run to him for help. He says he doesn't care if they are killed.

He is a corrupt man; he becomes the king through corrupt means. He also takes over the fertile farmland from the people who come to him to settle the dispute over the land.

Olaniyonu symbolizes the autocratic, corrupt, sit-tight leaders of Africa. He commissions Serubawon to perform the Olubori rites for him to become immortal and unconquerable.

Iya Agba: She is the wife of the former King Akinjobi. She is an upright woman who is misunderstood by many, hence she is referred to as a mad woman. She discovered the abominable relationship between Serubawon and Adebisi, the second wife of King Akinjobi. As a result of this, she is lied on as being adulterous and sent out of the palace.

She symbolizes the citizens that tell the truth in every situation. She is seriously humiliated in the play; she has her name changed to a mad woman from Omofadeke Adunni by Serubawon.

Despite these, she remains truthful and upright. She finds solutions to the problems created by the corrupt leader and his cohorts. The people run to him at the end for solutions to their problems.

Serubawon: Serubawon is the husband of Demoke and the father of Desola. He is the medicine man of King Akinjobi and his friend. He is the head of the Guild of Hunters and the elders who are the kingmakers.

He is a betrayal as he has affairs with Adebisi, the second wife of King Akinjobi, his friend.

Serubawon is a corrupt man; Ajanaku makes use of him in his bid to be crowned unjustifiably as the king. Serubawon uses all possible means to convince the other kingmakers.

To block his atrocities with Adebisi, he plans the adulterous allegations against Iya Agba and the woman is sent out of the palace.

Serubawon is treacherous; he is instrumental in the name-changing of Iya Agba. Her original name is Omofadeke Adunni, but through lies and treachery, he changed her name to Mad Woman and then to Iya Agba.

Desola: Desola is Serubawon and Demoke's daughter. She is Odekunle's fiancé who is raped by Ajanaku. She symbolizes a victim of a tyrant leader in the play.

Guild of Hunters/Elders: The Guild of Hunters are Serubawon the head, Odejimi, Ogundele and Odegbami.

They are the kingmakers and the council of elders who deliberates with the king on any issue. Ajanaku is able to buy them over through Serubawon, their leader.

“THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA” BY EFUA T. SUTHERLAND

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Efua Theodora Sutherland (born 27 June 1924 – 2 January 1996) was a Ghanaian playwright, director, dramatist, children's author, poet, educationalist, researcher, child advocate, and cultural activist. Her works include the plays *Foriwa* (1962), *Edufa* (1967), and *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1975). She founded the Ghana Drama Studio, the Ghana Society of Writers, the Ghana Experimental Theatre, and a community project called the Kodzidan (Story House). As Ghana's earliest playwright-director, she was an influential figure in the development of modern Ghanaian theatre, and helped to introduce the study of African performance traditions at university level. She was also a pioneering African publisher, establishing the company Afram Publications in Accra in the 1970s.

INTRODUCTION

This article introduces you to another text in comedy. We have decided to use an African text written by a woman. You may have noticed that we have been using the male instances throughout the book wherever we refer to scholars, critics, or a playwright just for convenience and not because we do not have female scholars and playwrights.

In *Marriage of Anansewa*, Efua Sutherland develops the Akan art of story-telling called Anansem (Ananse stories). The play is a folklore based on the exploits of Ananse (spider). In different countries, people have their own legendary animal around which so many tales (exploits) are woven. These animals like tortoise, ram, and fox and so on get involved in very difficult and intricate situations but escape unhurt or triumph in the end through a cunning way. Many of these stories/fables are didactic while some of them are just for mere entertainment.

PLOT

The play tells a story of how Ananse, a wretched poor man gets rich through cunning and fraudulent means. Ananse has an only daughter called Anansewa who is a student of E. P. Secretarial School. He is so poor that he could not pay her school fees. She was driven from school and has stayed at home for about two weeks.

He devices means of paying his daughter's school fees and feeding himself. He gets completely out of poverty. In his plan, he visits four Chiefs and promises to give each of them his only daughter Anansewa in marriage. He returns from the trip and dictates letters to the Chiefs, assuring them that their discussion on the 'object of their interest' is still as planned. Anansewa types the letters, oblivious of the fact that she is the object being referred to in the letter.

However, when she realizes that the letters are for choosing a husband for her, she protests. She feels that her father wants to “sell her like some parcel to a customer”. However, her father convinces her of the necessity of such plan. He arouses her interest in one of the Chiefs, Chief Who-is-Chief, whom he describes as “ finely built, glowing black, large eyed, handsome as anything, courageous and famous”.

In addition, the Chief has already given Ananse some money with which to pay Anansewa’s school fees. Consequently, Anansewa becomes interested and actually falls in love with this Chief. Ananse receives gifts from all the Chiefs, he improves his lifestyle considerably, renovates his house and buys new clothes. They are all interested in marrying Anansewa. Ananse is in a fix. He decides that Anansewa should “die”. He invites his mother (Aya) his aunt (Ekuwa) and Christie to outdoor ceremony for Anansewa.

This ceremony is cut short to enable him carry out his next plan successfully. He bundles his mother and aunt home on the pretext that “... enemies have set fire to our hope, our cocoa farm at their home town Nanka. He then connives with Christie and Anansewa to announce that Anansewa is “dead”. The news gets to the Chiefs and they send their condolences with gifts and inadvertently reveal the intention/motive for deciding to marry Anansewa. The last messengers to come are from Chief-Who-is-Chief. It is revealed that he wanted to marry Anansewa for true love and devotion. Ananse then goes into a trance and invokes Anansewa to resurrect.

Ancestors, I am pleading with you
If it is your desire As it is ours
That Chief-Who-Is-Chief Should marry Anansewa
See to it that she returns to life! Wake her. See to it that Anansewa awakes
And returns to become a bride!

At that invocation, Anansewa awakes and claims that she could hear Chief-Who-Is-Chief calling her. The play ends on a happy note as the power of love ostensibly triumphs.

Style

I have taken time to treat the dramatic techniques in detail. I have tried to explore all the devices used by the playwright to create this beautiful comedy.

Language

The language is simple, direct and humorous. The playwright uses ludicrous exaggeration and flattery, especially while Ananse addresses or talks about the chiefs. He uses praise-songs and appellations to address the chiefs. This also brings into focus the love of flattery by our chiefs and leaders.

Suspense

Suspense is a very good technique in playwriting and Efua Sutherland uses it very well in this play. The audience is kept in suspense from the beginning to the end. The question in everyone's mind is, how would Ananse wriggle himself out of this mess? The answer is not got until the end of the play. Ananse's plans are not disclosed even to Christie. The Storyteller who comments on the progress of the play does not disclose it.

Characters in Efua T. Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* are George Kweku Ananse

Anansewa

Aya,

Ekuwa, and

Christie

George Kweku Ananse

George Kweku Ananse is the protagonist of the play, *The Marriage of Anansewa*. He is a poor, struggling ageing widower. He has a daughter, Anansewa, an aged mother, Aya, and an elderly aunt, Ekuwa. These characters are his immediate family members.

Ananse

Ananse is a very cunning character. It is least surprising that he is admired by the storyteller who wishes he "had a little of his cunning." At the beginning of the text, Ananse is portrayed as a pauper. But as the play progresses, he goes from someone "wearing a shabby coat" to one "dressed in a suit fit for a business executive." His change in fortune could only be attributed to his cunningness and craftiness.

Wanting to better his lot from his ripe-for-marriage daughter, Ananse schemes a foolproof plan that will make him benefit immensely financially from his daughter's marriage. He takes the pictures of his daughter, Anansewa, which he takes to four selected chiefs from different parts of the country. He does this with the impression that he wants to give the damsel in marriage to any of them without giving any hint of his double-dealing.

Each chief is hooked to the idea that Anansewa is reserved for them and begins to send monetary gifts to Ananse to commence the marriage rites. Ananse's financial status suddenly changes for good largely because of the fortune he makes from the four chiefs cum suitors. Thus, by appeasing four children with a rabbit, Ananse becomes rich.

As customary of traditional marriages, the prospective husband will come for the head-drink ceremony. This is where Ananse runs into trouble. The four suitors decide to come for the head-drink ceremony at almost the same time.

In order to avoid the embarrassment that may come from the any of the four suitors meeting the other, Ananse has to scheme yet another plan which serves apart from its initial design the purpose of sieving the suitors. His daughter is to feign death. Ananse announces this to the suitors. Of all the suitors, Ananse finds Chief-Who-Is-Who worthy for his daughter. He pretends to invoke Anansewa back to life.

That Ananse uses his daughter to improve his financial status does not however make him a bad and irresponsible father. He does not fail to pick for her a good husband in the process.

In summation, Ananse is portrayed as a crafty and cunning character with the mind for risky exploits. He personifies the proverbial spider of the Ghanaian folktale. In the manner of the spider, Ananse spins web of schemes which he lures unsuspecting victims into.

Anansewa

Anansewa is the twenty year old daughter of Ananse. She is an eponymous character. Anansewa is considered the heroine in the text although her role is passive, determined by her father. However, Ananse's schemes will not have materialised if Anansewa had not agreed to play along. While Ananse is the hero of the play, Anansewa is the heroine.

Anansewa is a half-orphan, having lost her mother. The shoes of her mother are however filled by both her grandmother, Aya, and her grandaunt, Ekuwa. She turns to the two for emotional support.

She is educated. She had her secretarial studies at the E. P.'s Secretarial School and she is later enrolled at the Institute for Prospective Brides in preparation for marriage. According to Aya, Anansewa's outdooing ceremony comes five years late.

She is very submissive and obedient. This is evident in how she submits to her father's authority and obeys her father's instructions. Without her cooperation, it wouldn't have been possible for Ananse to initiate or execute any of his schemes. Anansewa however understands the state of their finance to object to being manipulated by her father for financial gains.

Anansewa's pictures are used to ensnare the chiefs into Ananse's trap. In line with the request of her father, she fakes her death and plays the role of a corpse convincingly. This distinguishes her as a good actress.

By the end of the play, Anansewa marries Chief-Who-Is-Who whom she has developed fondness for. Her marriage illustrates the idea of matchmaking in the traditional marriage setting.

Aya

Aya is the mother of Ananse and the grandmother of Anansewa. She is a central figure of the Ananse family. She is a strong pillar behind Ananse and the go-to person for Anansewa for emotional support

Ananse tricks her and Ekuwa to Nanka, their hometown, so he can carry out his schemes. Aya plays an important role in the outdooing ceremony of Anansewa, her granddaughter. As the elder of the family, her role in the rituals of the event is significant. She prays for Anansewa in the process of the ritual.

Aya does not hide her dislike for Christie. An overprotective mother that she is, Aya is suspicious of Christie's relationship with Ananse. She is uncomfortable with the intimacy Christie is initiating with Ananse with her over-activeness in the household. Aya thinks she is "senselessly extravagant".

Ekuwa

Ekuwa is Aya's sister and Ananse's aunt. She is also the grandaunt of Anansewa. Like Aya, she is tricked by Ananse to Nanka so he can execute his plan.

Ekuwa is accommodating. This is evident in her relations with Christie and Ananse in the play. She also plays a significant role in the outdooing ceremony of her grandniece whom she passes the egg of blessing during the ritual ceremony.

Christie

Miss Christina Yamoah is the stylish woman in charge of Institute for Prospective Brides. Introduced in Act Three of the play, she is contracted by Ananse to prepare Anansewa for marriage.

Christie is very crucial in the staging of the fake funeral of Anansewa. Ananse takes her into his confidence about his plan. She helps Ananse realise this. She functions as Anansewa's mother during the fake burial ceremony and she is in charge of the reception of the chiefs' entourages.

Christie has a soft spot for Ananse and she fantasises being referred to as "Mrs Ananse". She refers to Ananse by his first name, "Georgie", which is improper given the kind of relationship between them. This only confirms further that Christie is in love with Ananse.

Other characters in Efua T. Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* are the storyteller, the property man, and the players.

The storyteller hints the audience with the events in Ananse's household. He is more like a narrator telling a story, the story of the Ananses. In his narration, he alternates between speech and song.

The property man and the players contribute to the play. Their roles in the play serve as reminder that the story is not real but just a dramatic presentation.

THEMES

The Marriage of Anansewa is dominated by the themes of poverty and ambition, wit and cunning, love and materialism, matchmaking, and African marital tradition.

The themes are justifiably sustained by the actions and the antics of the trickster in Ananse, the protagonist of the play.

Poverty and Ambition

The theme of poverty and ambition is prevalent in the play.

Ananse's desire to better his position in life, obtain access to wealth, and rise to a higher social rank is the central theme of the entire play.

At the opening of the play, Ananse is depicted as a suffering, unhappy man who lives in a leaky, poor excuse of a house.

He also has certain bills that need to be paid off, including his daughter's school fees and the final installment on the typewriter he bought for her.

He then takes advantage of his daughter's marriage to profit from the numerous suitors without jeopardizing her prospective love union.

Ananse's progress from poverty to success as well as the challenges he faced along the way meticulously emphasises the theme of poverty and ambition.

Wit and Cunning

Ananse's cunning and extraordinary intelligence are highlighted.

In the Ghanaian folktale, Ananse is the spider who, like the fox and the tortoise in other cultures, is said to have a keen sense of mischief, cunning, and intelligence that frequently allows him to maneuver through incredibly tight spaces and challenging circumstances.

For instance, Ananse eventually escapes from difficulties in this play with an equally impressive display of wit and intelligence thanks to his overwhelming avarice and cunning.

Love and Materialism

Although true love and material love are diametrically opposed concepts, Ananse finds a way to harmonize them in this drama.

Despite being driven by his own financial gain, Ananse manages to make his daughter's marriage based on pure love in the process.

Matchmaking

Since matchmaking is frequently driven by material concerns instead of genuine love, this is another perspective on the issue of love and materialism.

The idea of matchmaking, however, always involves a third party who brings the couple together, often for their own selfish gain, in contrast to the former theme.

The practice of forced marriage, in which a young, innocent girl is "sold out" to a man against her will, should therefore be the focus of discussion on this issue.

Ananse begins his plans for Anansewa by photographing her in various poses. He takes her photographs to some wealthy chiefs in order to make marriage arrangements with them.

At first, Anansewa herself rejects the notion of being sold out “like some parcel to a consumer” and insists on picking her own lover instead.

But as the play goes on, we come to understand that this is a matchmaking with a twist—a matchmaking in which love is a significant factor.

Anansewa develops a love for Chief-Who-Is-Chief as a result of Ananse’s efforts, and she grows more and more willing to endure any hardship or do anything in order to be with him.

In the end, we are convinced that Anansewa could not have chosen a better marriage for herself because the chief himself proves to be the best and most sincere of all the suitors.

Ananse therefore chooses mild persuasion over force to bring about this ideal marriage.

African Marital Tradition

African marital tradition is clearly portrayed in Efua T. Sutherland’s *The Marriage of Anansewa*.

The payment of the bride price, for example, is typically viewed in the African marital tradition as the true sign of the marital union, without which no marriage can be regarded as legal.

The placing of the head-drink (symbolized by a symbolic amount of money and some drinks) is a crucial procedure by which the marriage is legally registered in this drama, which is based on a Ghanaian tradition.

Typically, members of the bride’s family are given it by the suitor’s family.

Without the usual head-drink ceremony, no amount of cash or freely given presents can make the relationship legal. This is one of the significant aspects of the African marriage tradition depicted in the play.

Ananse exploits this significant traditional event to enrich himself at the detriment of the four rich suitors. He also ensures that three of them are not present for the head-drink ceremony.

Another important aspect of the African marriage tradition portrayed in the play is the outdoor ceremony. It is an important preparation towards marriage.

It signifies that Anansewa is ripe for marriage. It is also an avenue for elders to chant and invoke prayers for the prospective bride.

PEDE HOLLIST, SO THE PATH DOES NOT DIE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pede Hollist: He is a teacher of African and World literature but a lover of stories, oral and written. Give him a book to read or tell him an interesting story in any genre from any part of the world, and he will lap it up, although, if you press him, he like narratives involving characters on a quest. Spice it with science and the unbelievable, and you have him hooked.

PEDE HOLLIST, SO THE PATH DOES NOT DIE

SUMMARY

Long after Fina has left Sierra Leone for America, memories of a broken initiation still haunt her. She longs to return, to find her grandmother and right the path that has been set for young girls centuries past. Her journey from the streets of Freetown to Washington echo with the tensions, ambiguities, and fragmentation of the diaspora. Fina's inner turmoil and feelings of 'otherness', persist as she travels further from home. Ultimately, the broken path of her childhood brings Fina back to Sierra Leone, to a life she had never imagined for herself. *So the Path Does Not Die* is a tender and gently observed novel exploring attitudes towards female circumcision, and a beautifully rendered novel, from an exciting new voice in African literature.

In post-colonial Africa and the African Diaspora, issues of cultural traditions, material wealth, civilisation, Western education, marriage, family, love, identity and belonging raise political and economic concerns. *So The Path Does Not Die*, Pede Hollist's debut explores the issues as themes in a pulsating and an intricately interwoven narrative. Through the life of the chief protagonist, Faniba, aka Fani, and her relationships in their complex and convolutedly interwoven maze, Hollist lays bare the contradictions and complexities of survival and belonging in a money-driven economy on both mainland Africa and the United States of America.

The writer's prologue to the novel prepares the reader for the intricacies of the over-arching theme of home and belonging and their unusual demands. The prologue is an allegory of a village, Musudugu, far away and long ago, inhabited only by women. In the allegory men tried many times to conquer Musudugu but the brave and patriotic women defended their village.

The village was also protected by the Virgin Girl, the daughter of Atala the Supreme. The Virgin Girl in return asked women to keep only one rule: darkness must never cover a man in Musudugu. Only male infants could stay with their mothers in Musudugu until their time of weaning from the breast. The narrator says that Musudugu is a place of harmony, of singing and dancing, and most of all, of caring and sharing. Those who cannot withstand its traditions and rules are free to leave, but they find themselves often returning for its harmony. The story of Musudugu changes when an unusual girl child, Kumba Kargbo is born. She demands to know why men are forbidden in Musudugu. After confronting the village elders she leaves to find out why darkness should not find a man in Musudugu. She meets Atala, the Supreme, who tells her to journey into self so that she may be at home among her people. Upon returning to Musudugu, Kumba destroys the village and mourns the harm and destruction that she has caused.

Immediately after the prologue, the story of Faniba Marah commences as narrated by a third person narrator who uses very accessible everyday language. The tension-filled narrative bursts into life through the heated argument between mother-in-law, Baramusu, and daughter-in-law, Nabou, over Faniba's impending initiation with her age-mates.

THE SETTING OF THE STORY

Protagonist Fina's search for happiness and belonging begins on the night of her aborted circumcision and continues through her teenage years in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital; her twenties in the Washington Metropolitan Area; and ends with her return to Sierra Leone to work as an advocate for war-traumatized .

THE THEMES OF THE STORY

A very modern story, *So the Path Does Not Die* addresses issues of ethnicity, sexuality and gender, exploring attitudes towards female circumcision, identity and belonging through the life of a feisty, young African woman as she makes her way through the world, balancing the weights of tradition and modernity.

THE CHARACTERS OF THE STORY

So The Path Does Not Die reminded me of Adichie's 'Americanah' as all the side stories of the people Fina encountered like: Sidebe - the diamonds trader, Aman - her African American bestie in the US, Bayo - Aman's Nigerian beau, Cammy - Fina's Trinidadian beau, Mawaf - the child soldier's wife, Baramusu - her grandma .

REDEMPTION ROAD BY ELMA SHAW

About the Author

Elma Shaw holds a degree in Communication Media and in Film and Video from American University.

SYNOPSIS OF REDEMPTION ROAD

In a society where the narrow path to national peace and stability suddenly split into a seemingly dichotomized quest for two equally elusive desirables – reconciliation and healing on the one hand and justice on the other – Redemption Road becomes the story of Liberia and her diehard attempt to see the end of both roads.

This novel by Liberian writer Elma Shaw is a fictional rendition of true historical accounts of Liberians from various backgrounds as each character struggles with their own past, as well as the past of their beloved country regardless of their level of involvement in the 14-year Liberian civil war.

The story is set in the last couple of years of Charles Taylor's presidency, a period of uncertain normality that keeps Monrovia and its denizens on their marks, ready to run at the sound of the next gunshot. As people try to go about their daily activities under this cloud of uncertainty, their bleeding past is a sore that needs healing. But who's responsible for it? What will it take to heal it and how long?

The author opens with the following poem:

1980: Redemption is here
One mother rejoices
One mother grieves
One mother dances
One mother weeps
And what, pray tell
Was Redemption Road paved with?
Good intentions
Aid from abroad
Greed
Blood
Rigged elections
More blood
And still, more aid

So, 1990: Redemption comes again
This time almost everyone rejoices
Then everyone grieves
Almost everyone dances
Then everyone weeps
Over a decade of turmoil
And prayers for Peace

Bendu, the main character, often wakes up in a cold sweat from nightmares of being held captive in Commander Cobra's camp in the town of Duluma. Then she bumps into him on the street one day after work. As the curtain closes on the war theatre, the city becomes a blend of real victims, notorious war actors, politicians as well as others who could only care less because of their privilege not to have experienced the war. Shaw crafts a classic convergence among the characters, causing them to vehemently confront one another only to find out that they really needed to confront themselves. So who's guilty?

This is a story that deserves a telling because it offers a way forward amidst all the ideological divisions about what peace in Liberia should look, sound, smell and feel like. The politics of peace in post-war Liberia are still torn between the passionate pleas for the retributive justice of a war crimes court and the healing power of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In Shaw's mind, however, perhaps if Liberia went back to where it all began, as the cover photo suggests, maybe then the nation could understand better its destination.

There is tantalizing suspense at the turn of every chapter and the reader is led deep into the minds of the main characters, Bendu and Commander Cobra. What is missing in this novel is an equally deep insight into the personal story of Agnes, Bendu's closest friend.

Throughout the story, Agnes plays a supporting role to the main character and is extremely intense at what she does, though she is only featured here and there. Not to take the spotlight off Bendu, the author equally portrays Agnes in her own right as equally preponderant in the story just as Bendu, leaving the reader only thirsty to imbibe from the soul of such a dynamic character.

To this end, the novel could find its own

redemption by way of transformation into a movie script. Possibly then, could Agnes' story be more adequately explored. As retributive as Bendu is portrayed, representing the argument of a

war crimes court, Agnes represents the more soul-searching,

healing characteristic of the TRC and therefore deserves equal prominence. Yes, the author also has a background in film. So why not?

SETTING

Redemption Road is Set in Monrovia during the administration of Liberia's former president, Charles Taylor, this riveting debut is a story of recovery, atonement, and the continuing quest for peace and justice in a nation plagued by conflict and inequalities since its founding by freed American slaves.

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

"Redemption Road" by Elma Shaw features a compelling and immersive writing style that captivates readers from the very beginning. Shaw's use of language is powerful and evocative, effectively bringing the setting and characters to life. The book is written in a clear and engaging manner, allowing for an easy and immersive reading experience.

In terms of style, Shaw's writing is characterized by vivid descriptions, emotional depth, and a keen attention to detail. The narrative is rich in sensory language, enabling readers to vividly imagine the scenes and feel connected to the characters. Additionally, the author's pacing and storytelling technique are skillfully executed, creating a sense of tension and anticipation that drives the plot forward.

Overall, "Redemption Road" showcases Elma Shaw's mastery of language and style, making it a compelling read for those who appreciate rich, immersive storytelling and well-crafted prose

"TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD" BY HERPER LEE

PLOT

The story is told by the little six-year-old girl Jean Louise Finch nicknamed Scout. She is a rebellious girl who has tomboy tendencies.

The storyline is based in Maycomb, a small town in Alabama in the 1930s where Scout lives with her elder brother Jem, and her father, Atticus, who is widowed. They have a housekeeper named Calpurnia, who is a stern kind-hearted African-American. They also befriend Dill, a small boy who comes to visit and stay with his aunt every summer.

The timeline is placed during the depression where the status of her father as a respected and successful lawyer alleviates the Finch family from the harshness of the depression gripping the small town.

The two major themes in the novel are judgment and justice. Scout and her brother get to learn some crucial lessons about judging others through the character of Boo, the cryptic and solitary neighbor. Early in the story, the children mimic and mock Radley, but they, later on, come to experience his goodness.

The judgment theme is depicted in the circumstances that befell Tom Robinson, a poor African-American field attendant who is accused and put on trial for rape. He was charged with trying to rape a white woman Mayella Ewell. Atticus is appointed by Judge Taylor as Robinson's defense against the disapproval of many of the town's citizens. Despite the apparent evidence that proves Tom's innocence, the jury convicts him. The racist nature of the white supremacy society places all odds against Tom.

After being humiliated in court, Bob Ewell sets out on a revenge mission against the Finch's as he spits into Atticus' face; he tries breaking into the Judge Taylor's house; he menaces Robinson's widow, and he later attacks Scout and her brother as they walk home at night. Boo comes to the rescue of the children where Jem is injured, a fight erupts, and Bob is killed.

SETTINGS

To Kill a Mockingbird is set in the small, rural town of Maycomb, Alabama, during the early 1930s. The character of Atticus Finch, Scout's father, was based on Lee's own father, a liberal Alabama lawyer and statesman who frequently defended African Americans within the racially prejudiced Southern legal system.

CHARACTERS

Jean Louise Finch (Scout): the protagonist and narrator of the novel. Scout comes to understand the goodness and the dark side of people.

Jeremy Finch (Jem): Scout's older brother who appears as a protective figure. In his shadow, Scout's youthful innocence is highlighted.

Atticus Finch: The proud, moral, and respected father, Scout's father.

Tom Robinson: The accused but seemingly innocent rapist who is shot dead trying to escape prison.

Arthur "Boo" Radley: The neighbor who is clouded and hidden in mystery.

THEME

CASTING JUDGMENT

Judgment is a major theme in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The two notable instances where judgment comes out are:

Scout's burlesque towards "Boo" Radley till she, later on, discovers his kindness and bravery.

Most of the town's citizens already had their minds made up that Tom Robinson was guilty of raping Ewell's daughter, Mayella, contrary to the evidence that came out during the trial.

SYMBOLISM OF MOCKINGBIRD

The mockingbird is used to symbolize innocence in the novel. The symbolism is portrayed in the instances where the goodness and innocence of some characters were bruised and crushed. For instance, Jeremy and Scout's innocence is lost; Tom Robinson is tried and convicted of rape despite him being innocent; Atticus almost had his goodness broken; Radley is viewed by both adults and children as being weird overlooking his kindness and bravery.

STYLE

The dominant element of style the author applies in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is storytelling. Her talent has been described in several reviews as “tactile brilliance.” She narrates her story in a visual and cinematographic fluid prose merging scene after scene without jolts of transition.

The narration style adopts two perspectives; one that of the young girl growing up in hardship and problematic era and that of a grown-up woman reflecting on her childhood memories. The method of narration applied allows the author to fuse the simplicity of childhood observations with the adulthood situations intricate with veiled motivations and unquestioned custom. By adopting a child’s perspective, the author efficiently applies satire, parody, and irony.

ATTICUS FINCH AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION

One of the most profound effects *To Kill a Mockingbird* has had is to create a model of integrity for the legal profession in Atticus Finch’s characterization. Several practicing professionals have cited the influence Atticus had on their decisions to join law school or shaped their ideology during school days and afterward during practice.

Despite the heroic depictions, some critics have come up to maintain the assertion that his figure is irrelevant in the modern profession as he existed in a past era where racism and injustice were the order of the day. They draw their assumptions from the notion that he does not put his skills to use against the racist status quo in Maycomb.

A controversial earlier draft of the novel, which was titled *Go Set a Watchman*, was released on July 14, 2015. The draft was completed in 1957 and is set in a timeline 20 years after the time depicted in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The plot is based on the adult Scout Finch who has traveled to Alabama from New York to visit her father. She is then confronted by the intolerance still existing in her society. The novel was intended to be the first in a trilogy with a smaller novel in between the two.

GENRE

The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been classified as both a Southern Gothic Bildungsroman. The weird and near-supernatural traits of Boo and the aspect of racial injustice concerning Tom Robinson underwrite the quality of the gothic in the novel.

"PATH OF LUCAS, The journey he endured" by Sussanne Bellefeuille

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bellefeuille is a sister, mother, grandmother and an inspirational mentor to many people. Graduating from the social service worker programme at St. Lawrence College in Cornwall, Ontario, she spends countless hours offering her professional aid, guidance, and most importantly, her friendship to people with intellectual disabilities.

PLOT

Lucas Clarkson grew up on his father's farm. He had a good, simple life, loving parents, and a close family. He met the love of his life at age 17, and continued on to be a hard working, strong family man. He had many ups and downs after starting his family, and had to make several hard decisions to keep them together.

Told through his daughter's eye, this biography is a true story of family, faith, and purpose, set in 1950s Canada up to today. Lucas' legacy is one the readers can learn from and cherish.

As far as Lucas's own family, he falls in love with Isabelle, a poor neighbour girl who doesn't speak English when they meet. Her sister acts as interpreter and they each learn enough of the other's language to be able to start dating. I found Isabelle's dedication to her family as inspiring as Lucas's dedication to his. She didn't want to marry right away because she had to help support her poor family. When she becomes pregnant, however, they end up marrying sooner than planned.

Her life changed remarkably after the realisation that her desires will require her to complete college and set a better example for her children and grandchildren.

From being a high school dropout and a mother at the young age of 17, Bellefeuille has journeyed a considerable distance to become the successful person she is today. Her journey is not only to write books but also to help people reach their full potential, as she truly believes that everyone deserves the opportunity to shine in life.

Lucas's path is not as simple as the man he's portrayed to be. From the days spent working on his dad's farm to becoming a successful mechanic, with a genuine heart and his incredible strength, Lucas faces many difficult decisions. The choices he makes may be the difference between realising his dreams and keeping his family together.

It is nicely plotted. It has a similar type of story and feel, and takes place in the present, but is told through flashbacks of Lucas' life, in chronological order. The book tells the story of an older father sharing his life with his adult daughter, who is lying in a hospital bed in a coma after a terrible accident.

Lucas's path is not as simple as the man he's portrayed to be, however, the days spent working on his dad's farm to becoming a successful mechanic, with a genuine heart and his incredible strength, he faced many difficult decisions. The choices he makes may be the difference between realising his dreams and keeping his family together.

Through it all, the story's message is one of love, sacrifice, determination and the knowledge that you can have a good life even if you have to make compromises.

The story that Lucas tells Lucy is one of navigating family crises, illness, bereavement, and of having to make agonising choices between duty and responsibility or following your dream. Lucas's commitment to his family is never more effectively communicated than during a particularly troubled period in Isabelle's life. The reader is certainly given the sense that it is only Lucas's love and determination that gets the family through.

Although there is tragedy, struggle and sadness, Path of Lucas is also a story of love, devotion, determination and friendship. About the pleasure to be found in simple things like sharing family meals, choosing gifts for loved ones, listening to favourite music or enjoying the natural world around you. But more than anything, it's about a belief in the importance of family.

A striking glimpse into midcentury farm life near the small town of Alexandria in Ontario Canada, discover that no path is simple. Choices are hard, and Lucas must decide between realising his dreams and fighting to keep his family together.

The story that Lucas tells Lucy is one of navigating family crises, illness, bereavement, and of having to make agonising choices between duty and responsibility or following your dream. Lucas's commitment to his family is never more effectively communicated than during a particularly troubled period in Isabelle's life. The reader is certainly given the sense that it is only Lucas's love and determination that gets the family through.

From a small town in Eastern Ontario, the author, Susanne Bellefeuille, brings her readers on a journey of trials and tribulations of his life.

This is Susanne Bellefeuille's first novel and it won't be wrong it is a faction. A genre that is gradually emerging as one that should be taken into consideration.

The main character's life didn't follow the expected path with his hard work meaning every dream was realised. Instead readers are offered a more realistic journey that had great highs, moments of love, family and success, but also the heartache of life challenges that demand you let go of a dream as well as challenging health issues that turn the family's lives upside down.

Lucas is forced to wait, but he doesn't give up hope. He talks to his daughter, fighting to break through, and what unfolds is his story of love, his dreams, and the struggles he endured keeping his family together.

CHARACTERS

Lucas Clarkson: is a family man and the son of a hard working farmer. The author is from a small town in Eastern Ontario and brings Lucas' journey through his life. He spent many days working on his dad's farm, became a successful mechanic, and then has to face many difficult decisions.

Lucy in the game "The Path of Lucas," is a supporting character who plays a significant role in Lucas' journey. She is portrayed as a helpful and understanding companion who assists Lucas as he faces various trials and challenges throughout the game. Lucy's character provides emotional support and guidance to Lucas, ultimately contributing to his personal growth and development as he progresses along his journey.

Mr. Johnson: A mentor or influential figure who plays a significant role in Lucas's development and provides essential guidance.

Victor: Victor serves as the primary obstacle in Lucas' journey, often creating conflict and presenting challenges for the protagonist to overcome. His actions and decisions directly oppose Lucas' goals, serving as a source of adversity and tension throughout the game. As the story unfolds, the player experiences the ongoing struggle between Lucas and Victor, adding depth and complexity to the narrative.

Maria: A character who may serve as a love interest or provide emotional depth to Lucas's journey.

Thomas: A companion or fellow traveler who shares in Lucas's experiences and contributes to his growth.

Rachel: Another supportive character who adds complexity to the story and influences Lucas's decisions and actions.

Mrs. Parker: A maternal figure or mentor who imparts wisdom and support to Lucas.

Officer Ramirez: A character who represents authority or conflict within Lucas's journey.

Professor Stein: A knowledgeable and influential figure who plays a role in shaping Lucas's path and provides valuable insights.

Each of these characters contributes to the richness of the narrative and influences Lucas in distinct ways, collectively shaping his journey and personal growth.

AN INSPECTOR CALLS BY J.B. PRIESTLY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J. B. Priestley, (born Sept. 13, 1894, Bradford, Yorkshire, Eng.—died Aug. 14, 1984, Alveston, near Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire), British novelist, playwright, and essayist, noted for his varied output and his ability for shrewd characterization.

Category: Arts & Culture

Summary of An Inspector Calls

The play centres around the prosperous Birling family who are hosting a dinner party to celebrate the engagement of their daughter, Sheila Birling, to Gerald Croft, the son of a competing industrialist. The merriment is interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Inspector Goole, who investigates the suicide of a young woman named Eva Smith/Daisy Renton

Dramatic devices

Foreshadowing, dramatic irony, stage directions, cliffhangers, time shift, symbolism

Main characters

Inspector Goole, Arthur Birling, Sybil Birling, Sheila Birling, Eric Birling, Gerald Croft, Eva Smith

Setting

1912, Edwardian England

Themes

Social responsibility, judgment and consequences, hypocrisy, generational gaps

Analysis

The play is a critique of the hypocrisies of Victorian and Edwardian English society and is particularly scathing in its indictment of the callousness of the British upper class towards the lower class. It's also a reminder that our actions have consequences, and we are all responsible for each other.

Act one

Act 1 takes place in the Birling family's lavish dining room, where a celebratory dinner is taking place. The family, including Arthur Birling, his wife Sybil, their daughter Sheila, and their son Eric, are celebrating Sheila's engagement to Gerald Croft, the son of a fellow successful industrialist.

Arthur Birling, in a moment of patriarchal pride, delivers a toast for the young couple and then gives advice to Gerald and Eric, expressing his strong belief in individualism and capitalist values. He dismisses the rumours of war and predictions of social unrest, claiming they are nonsense.

Just as the mood becomes jovial, an unexpected visitor arrives. Edna, the maid, introduces Inspector Goole, who has come to investigate the suicide of a young woman named Eva Smith. The inspector shows a photograph of Eva to Mr Birling, who admits that Eva used to work in his factory. He had sacked her eighteen months ago for inciting a strike for higher wages. Mr Birling is defensive and maintains that he was justified in firing her.

Inspector Goole next reveals that after leaving Birling's factory, Eva worked in a shop where Sheila often went. He shows Sheila the same photo of Eva Smith, and she breaks down and runs out of the room, confessing she had been instrumental in getting Eva fired from the shop. Sheila had been envious and spiteful after Eva had looked better in a dress that Sheila wanted to buy.

Throughout the act, the Inspector continues his questioning in a calm and methodical manner, allowing the Birlings to incriminate themselves. The inspector's presence and questions start to reveal the flaws and cracks in the seemingly perfect Birling family.

The act concludes with Sheila warning her family that they are just beginning to realize the full implications of their actions, suggesting that the family's entanglement with the deceased Eva Smith is far from over. The stage is set for further revelations in the subsequent acts.

Act two

Act 2 sees the Birling family and Gerald Croft in their dining room, facing questioning from Inspector Goole about their connection to the suicide of a young woman, Eva Smith.

The Inspector turns his attention towards Gerald Croft, who initially denies knowing Eva Smith. But when pressured, Gerald admits to having had an affair with a woman named Daisy Renton, who the Inspector suggests is Eva Smith under a different name. Gerald had met her at a local bar and, learning she was in a desperate situation, had provided her with money and temporary accommodation in a friend's vacant apartment.

Sheila, upon hearing this, is deeply upset and returns Gerald's engagement ring, although she appreciates his honesty. Gerald then asks to leave the room to get some fresh air, which Inspector Goole allows.

The Inspector then turns his questioning to Mrs Birling. It is revealed that Eva, pregnant and destitute, had approached a women's charity headed by Mrs Birling for help. Eva used the name 'Mrs Birling,' which greatly offended Sybil. Without investigating Eva's circumstances, she used her influence to deny her the assistance she sought, driving her further into despair.

Throughout this act, Sheila grows increasingly distressed as she begins to grasp the full implications of her family's actions. She contrasts sharply with her parents, who persistently refuse to acknowledge their responsibility for Eva's death.

Act 2 ends with Mrs Birling trying to shift the blame onto the father of Eva's unborn child, insisting that he should be made to pay and be held responsible, not knowing that the person she condemns is her own son, Eric. This cliffhanger sets the stage for the final act.

Act 3

Act 3 opens with the aftermath of Mrs Birling's condemning statement about the father of Eva's unborn child, whom she's unaware is her own son, Eric. The family anxiously awaits Eric's return as Gerald comes back from his walk outside.

When Eric returns, he admits to meeting Eva/Daisy at the same bar Gerald had and having a relationship with her. When Eva became pregnant, he stole money from his father's office to support her. However, Eva refused to take any more money when she found out it was stolen. Eric is remorseful and upset over Eva's death and angrily responds to his parent's attempts to cover up their part in Eva's fate.

As the revelations wind down, Inspector Goole delivers a final monologue, reminding the Birlings of their responsibility towards other people. He warns them that if they don't learn from their actions, they will be taught in "fire and blood and anguish," foreshadowing the upcoming wars. After delivering this message, he leaves.

After the Inspector's exit, the family begins arguing. Gerald, who had left the room for some time, reveals that he met a police officer outside who claimed that no Inspector Goole works at the police department. The family begins to speculate that the Inspector might have been a fraud. They also find out that there might not have been a recent suicide case.

Just as they start feeling relieved and begin to believe they've escaped the consequences of their actions, the phone rings. Mr Birling answers and is informed that a young woman has just died in the hospital after swallowing disinfectant, and a police inspector is on his way to question them. The play ends on this cliffhanger, leaving the audience to wonder what will happen next and reinforcing the themes of collective responsibility and the cyclical nature of consequences.

An Inspector Calls was written by J.B. Priestley just after the end of World War II, but it is set in 1912, during the Edwardian era. The context of both these periods significantly influences the themes and messages of the play.

The Edwardian era (1901-1910), which slightly extended into the years beyond 1910, was a period of significant social disparity in Britain. The upper class enjoyed luxurious lifestyles, while the working class struggled with low wages, poor working conditions, and a lack of social mobility. The character of Eva Smith represents the plight of the working class, and the attitudes of the Birling family and Gerald Croft towards her highlight the class-based prejudice prevalent during this time.

The theme of social responsibility in the play is directly tied to these conditions. The Inspector repeatedly emphasizes that everyone in society, regardless of their social status, has a responsibility to care for others. This message directly contradicts the values held by many in the Edwardian upper class, like Mr Birling, who believe in looking out for their own interests without considering the impact of their actions on the lower classes.

The fact that Priestley wrote the play in 1945 is also significant. Britain had just emerged from World War II, and the nation was coming to terms with the vast human cost of the conflict. During this period, there was a strong desire for social change and improvement, leading to the election of a Labour government and the creation of the welfare state, including the National Health Service.

In this context, Priestley's call for social responsibility can be seen as a response to the social conditions of both the Edwardian era and his contemporary post-war Britain. His message is a critique of the self-interested capitalist values that had contributed to social inequality and two devastating world wars and an appeal for a more caring and community-focused society.

The dramatic irony of the play lies in the fact that the audience, aware of the historical events that followed 1912, such as World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, knows that Mr Birling's optimistic predictions for the future are terribly wrong. This irony serves to further discredit his views and reinforce Priestley's message about the dangers of social irresponsibility.

In Act one, Mr Birling says 'unsinkable, absolutely unsinkable' as one of his several confident predictions about the future. This quote refers to the Titanic, which is particularly significant because the play is set in 1912, the same year the Titanic famously hit an iceberg and sank on its maiden voyage, resulting in a tragic loss of life. The audience, knowing the historical fact of the Titanic disaster, realises the inaccuracy of Birling's assertion.

The Titanic itself, like the society represented in *An Inspector Calls*, was a microcosm of early 20th-century class divisions. On the Titanic, passengers were segregated into different classes: first, second, and third, each with different levels of comfort, luxury, and safety precautions. First-class passengers enjoyed opulent accommodations and had the highest survival rate during the sinking, while third-class passengers had far less comfortable conditions and a significantly lower survival rate. This structure mirrors the class system of the Edwardian era, where upper-class individuals, like the Birlings in the play, enjoyed privileged lives at the expense of the working class, represented by Eva Smith.

In *An Inspector Calls*, J.B. Priestley uses the Birling family's treatment of Eva Smith to reflect the indifference and contempt the wealthy often had for the poor. Like the disadvantaged passengers on the Titanic, Eva is a casualty of a society that values the lives of the rich more than those of the poor.

Moreover, Mr Birling's confident assertion that the Titanic is 'unsinkable' can be viewed as a metaphor for his belief in the stability and fairness of the social system in which he thrives. The sinking of the Titanic, known to the audience but unknown to the characters, symbolizes the coming collapse of this system in the face of war and social change. Therefore, the class system on the Titanic and the fate of the ship serve as powerful symbols to underline the theme of class inequality and social responsibility in *An Inspector Calls*.

Characters

A mysterious figure who interrogates the Birling family about their involvement in Eva Smith/Daisy Renton's life. He serves as the moral compass of the play, encouraging the characters to accept responsibility for their actions.

Arthur Birling

The patriarch of the Birling family. He is a prosperous factory owner, a local magistrate, and a former mayor. He is more concerned with his family's reputation and his potential knighthood than the welfare of his employees. He fired Eva from his factory for demanding higher wages.

Sybil Birling

The matriarch of the Birling family and a prominent member of local women's charities. She is cold and detached, refusing to accept responsibility for denying help to Eva, who was pregnant and destitute.

Sheila Birling

The Birlings' daughter, initially portrayed as naive and sheltered. After learning of her role in Eva's dismissal from a job at a local shop, she becomes remorseful and is the most receptive to the Inspector's message.

Eric Birling

The Birlings' son who is revealed to be an alcoholic and the father of Eva's unborn child. He stole money from his father's business to support Eva but was rejected when she discovered the money was stolen.

Gerald Croft

Engaged to Sheila Birling, he is the son of a wealthy industrialist. He had an affair with Eva (known to him as Daisy Renton) while he was in a relationship with Sheila. He provides Eva with temporary shelter and financial aid before eventually ending the affair.

Eva Smith/Daisy Renton

Eva Smith is a pivotal yet unseen character in J.B. Priestley's "An Inspector Calls". She is a young working-class woman who tragically commits suicide by ingesting disinfectant, sparking the investigation that forms the basis of the play.

Throughout Inspector Goole's inquiry, it becomes clear that each member of the family is implicated in the woman's demise, demonstrating the important roles each character has in the play.

Arthur Birling, a self-made businessman, had fired Eva from his factory because she led a strike for higher wages.

Sheila Birling had Eva dismissed from her job in a shop through a fit of jealousy and spite. Gerald Croft, Sheila's fiancé, had an affair with Eva when she was out of work and later abandoned her.

Eric Birling, the Birlings' son, also had an affair with Eva, resulting in her pregnancy. He stole money from his father's business to support Eva, but she refused to accept it once she knew of its origins.

Sybil Birling, Arthur's wife, used her influence in a charity organization to deny aid to Eva when she was pregnant and destitute, resulting in Eva's suicide.

THEMES

The main themes in *An Inspector Calls* are:

Social Responsibility: The play underscores the idea that every individual is responsible for their actions and their impact on others, particularly those less fortunate. The Inspector's probing questions force each character to confront their actions towards Eva Smith, emphasizing the interconnectedness of society.

Class and Social Inequality: The stark differences between the lives of the Birlings and Eva Smith highlight the deep-seated class divisions in early 20th-century Britain. The characters' attitudes towards Eva are heavily influenced by her lower social status.

Gender Roles: The women in the play face different expectations and opportunities compared to the men, reflecting the gender inequalities of the period. The tragic circumstances of Eva's life are partly a result of her vulnerability as a woman in a patriarchal society.

Guilt and Responsibility: The characters' different reactions to their roles in Eva's death reflect their feelings of guilt and their willingness (or unwillingness) to take responsibility for their actions. Sheila and Eric feel guilty and accept responsibility, while their parents, Arthur and Sybil, deflect blame.

Judgment and Consequence: The arrival of Inspector Goole forces the characters to face judgment for their actions.

The prospect of public scandal reflects the societal judgment they fear, while the repeated phone call at the end of the play suggests that actions have consequences.

Age and Youth: There's a clear divide between the younger and older characters in the play. The younger characters (Sheila and Eric) are willing to change and accept responsibility, while the older characters (Mr. and Mrs. Birling) are set in their ways and refuse to acknowledge their wrongdoings. This represents the clash between the old and new generations.

Hypocrisy: The Birlings are initially portrayed as a respectable upper-class family, but as the play progresses, their actions reveal them to be hypocritical. They preach high moral standards but fail to live up to them, illuminating the hypocrisy prevalent in the upper classes of society.

A Man For All Seasons BY ROBERT BOLT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Oxtan Bolt CBE (15 August 1924 – 20 February 1995) was an English playwright and a two-time Oscar-winning screenwriter, known for writing the screenplays for Lawrence of Arabia, Doctor Zhivago, and A Man for All Seasons, the latter two of which won him the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay.

Plot Summary and Synopsis Of A Man For All Seasons

A Man for All Seasons by Robert Bolt is a play set in the 1530s in England just before the start of the Reformation and based on real events in English history. The main character and hero of the story is Sir Thomas More who is a dedicated Catholic. More is also a close friend of King Henry VIII, the King of England at that time.

King Henry soon realizes that his Queen will not be able to provide him with an heir to his throne and therefore orders Cardinal Wolsey, the head of the English church, to organize a divorce. When the divorce is not allowed by the Pope, Wolsey falls from power and More takes his place.

Thomas Cromwell, who is the villain of the story and an assistant to the King, then proposes that the King start his own church and therefore be able to divorce the Queen. This is done and the Church of England is formed with the King as the leader.

Thomas More is very much against the divorce because it is against Catholic law and he will not sign the document to agree to the new church. He is consequently imprisoned and, after a trial in which Cromwell convicts him, executed.

Themes

The major theme in Robert Bolt's *A Man For All Seasons* is that in life people should have a set of morals and principles that won't be compromised for anything even death, just as Sir Thomas More wouldn't compromise.

If a person were to deny these principles within themselves then life would become valueless and they would become like Richard Rich, bending to influence and taking the easy road of life. Robert Bolt would expect people to feel more strongly about these principles and to stand up for them as a result of seeing or reading *A Man For All Seasons*.

CHARACTER

Thomas Cromwell (1485-1540), the villain in *A Man For All Seasons*, was an ambitious man who rose from humble origins to become the Lord Chancellor of England through his ability and determination. He was also a keen follower of Macchiavelli's teachings which was that the ends justified the means. In 1540, after losing favour with King Henry VIII, Cromwell was executed.

In *A Man for All Seasons*, Cromwell plays the villain and represents all that is evil and bad. He is the opposite to Sir Thomas More who is the hero of the story and represents the good side. Cromwell is also very unscrupulous and ambitious in *A Man For All Seasons* and is much more concerned with getting to higher places in the kingdom than with any moral principles. He plays a large part in Thomas More's execution.

During *A Man for all Seasons*, Cromwell was portrayed as a man who seemed to be much more concerned with his earthly life and the things of value on earth rather than in heaven. He never let religion or morals get in the way of his ambitions and as a result rose to high places in England but also fell quickly with his execution.

Cromwell's character demonstrates the idea that if a person wants something enough and is willing to put everything else aside for that, even their conscience and God, then they will eventually achieve this goal as Cromwell did, but at a high price. In contrast, Thomas More did the opposite yet still was successful and this shows that achieving success is also possible through honesty and Godliness.

The Common Man Character In *A Man For All Seasons*

Throughout *A Man for All Seasons*, Robert Bolt uses a form of alienation technique. An alienation technique is a method used in plays to link the actors closer to their audience by communicating directly with them. In *A Man for All Seasons*, Robert Bolt uses a form of this where one actor only, the Common Man, interacts with the audience.

In traditional dramas only narrators or occasionally different characters in the play talk to the audience; the Common Man is similar to a narrator except that he plays a part in the play and represents "that which is common to us all". As a result of this technique, the audience is given a different view from the Common Man throughout *A Man For All Seasons* and these different views help to provoke a reaction from the audience and make the viewer feel more strongly about the events as they happen.

The Historical King Henry VIII

After King Henry VIII had married Catherine of Aragon, his dead brother's widow, in order to form an alliance with Spain, he soon became concerned that she would not be able to give him an heir to continue his line. He concluded that his marriage displeased God because it was forbidden to marry your brother's widow.

Henry approached the head of the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope, to allow him a divorce. The Pope, in fear of Spain who opposed the divorce, could not allow this. King Henry became angry and one of his ministers, Thomas Cromwell, proposed that he break from the Roman Catholic Church and begin his own with the King as the head and thus allowing him to have a divorce. Anyone who opposed the break from the Church was executed.

The Historical Sir Thomas More

Sir Thomas More was one of the few people of those times who was in a high position and was also a very moral and scrupulous person. More acted very much on his conscience and would refuse to do anything that he believed to be wrong.

King Henry VIII soon recognized him as a very moral and honest man and More served Henry frequently on diplomatic missions and was knighted in 1521. More and Henry soon became close friends and Sir Thomas More was made Lord Chancellor in 1529.

More's relationship and position soon changed, however, when King Henry wanted More's support to divorce his wife. More's religious scruples would not allow this and King Henry had him executed in 1535.

Politics In The Time Of A Man For All Seasons

The political system of England during King Henry's reign gave the King a great deal of power and made him the most powerful person in England besides the Pope. The King had the power to declare wars and he also appointed the Cardinal, who was the head of the Church in England, and Chancellor, who advised the King.

At this time, Henry was married to Catherine who was from the royal family in Spain and so had formed an alliance with Spain. Spain, however, kept an eye on England by using Signor Chapuys as a spy.

Religion And The Church In The Time Of A Man For All Seasons

Back in these times, the church was very different to what it is today. The church seemed more interested in getting money and power than in teaching people about God and Jesus Christ and the spiritual aspect of church. As a result there were many wrong practices going on in the church.

Such immoralities took place as selling of indulgences, where people could pay money in order to commit a sin; selling of relics, selling things to people that were meant to have a special spiritual value but were often fake; and reading the Bible only in Latin so that the people couldn't understand it. The sole purposes of these wrong practices were to gain money and power for the church. As a result many churchmen, such as Wolsey, became very rich and powerful.

ONCE UPON A TIME BY GABRIEL OKARA

ABOUT THE POET

Gabriel Okara, (born April 21, 1921, Bumodi, Nigeria—died March 25, 2019, Yenagoa, Nigeria), Nigerian poet and novelist whose verse had been translated into several languages by the early 1960s.

"ONCE UPON A TIME "

Once Upon a Time
Once upon a time, son,
they used to laugh with their hearts
and laugh with their eyes:
but now they only laugh with their teeth,
while their ice-block-cold eyes
search behind my shadow.

There was a time indeed
they used to shake hands with their hearts:
but that's gone, son.
Now they shake hands without hearts
while their left hands search
my empty pockets.

'Feel at home!' 'Come again':
they say, and when I come
again and feel
at home, once, twice,
there will be no thrice-
for then I find doors shut on me.

So I have learned many things, son.
I have learned to wear many faces
like dresses – homeface,
officeface, streetface, hostface,
cocktailface, with all their conforming smiles
like a fixed portrait smile.

And I have learned too
to laugh with only my teeth
and shake hands without my heart.
I have also learned to say, 'Goodbye',
when I mean 'Good-riddance':
to say 'Glad to meet you',
without being glad; and to say 'It's been
nice talking to you', after being bored.

But believe me, son.
I want to be what I used to be
when I was like you. I want
to unlearn all these muting things.
Most of all, I want to relearn
how to laugh, for my laugh in the mirror
shows only my teeth like a snake's bare fangs!

So show me, son,
how to laugh; show me how
I used to laugh and smile
once upon a time when I was like you.

Summary

In this poem, the persona, a father (or mother) seems to be speaking to his son about how people, as well as he himself have changed from showing genuine emotion to being insincere and ingenuine. The persona reminisces about times gone when people would "laugh with their eyes" and "shake hands with their hearts." He disdainfully remarks about the disingenuous pretences people put on now of feigned laughs and heartless handshakes whilst they search him for information about his financial status.

The persona also speaks about his own adaptation to this new insincere world by saying nice things and acting amiably in contrast to what he really feels. However, he expresses to his son as well how much he misses people being genuine, and being sincere himself- as he finds himself unable to really laugh. He wants to be young and able to show his true feelings again like his son.

The theme of the poem is societal changes, hypocrisy and values. The mood is one of disdain and nostalgia.

The tone of this poem could be considered to be ironic, since not only does the father act the exact way he despises, but his dream dream of turning the clock back to a time of sincerity is nothing more than a fantasy as well.

Analysis

Stanza 1

"Once upon a time, son, they used to laugh with their hearts and laugh with their eyes". The first stanza opens with the titular phrase of 'once upon a time,' showing that there is a sort of story about to be told. The father begins to speak about 'they,' the people who used to laugh genuinely, and show their true emotions. "But now they only laugh with their teeth, while their ice-block-cold eyes search behind my shadow."

These lines show how these people no longer laugh genuinely, but rather do it for show while they inspect the persona closely- hoping to find secrets and flaws of some sort. He describes their eyes using a metaphor- "ice-block-cold eyes"- to show how callous and unfeeling they truly are.

Stanza 2

"There was a time indeed- they used to shake hands with their hearts: but that's gone, son."

Once again, the persona recalls (nostalgically) time when people would shake hands 'with their hearts,' or with love- but states disdainfully that that time has passed.

"Now they shake hands without hearts while their left hands search my empty pockets."

The people shake hands callously, without any intention of showing trust and interpersonal warmth. Instead, they want to find out how much money he has, his financial status; as is exemplified in western capitalist values. This draws parallel with what was said at the end of the previous stanza: "...their ice-block-cold eyes search behind my shadow." They only aim to find or gain something, therefore losing the sincerity of the gesture or action.

Stanza 3

"'Feel at home!' 'Come again': they say, and when I come again and feel at home, once, twice, there will be no thrice- for then I find doors shut on me."

This connects again to what was previously said about the people inspecting and evaluating the persona and putting genuineness and sincerity to the wayside in favour of a newer culture where financial and social status is paramount. In this stanza, the persona is invited to their houses and told gladly after each time to feel at home and come again. However, once they see that his social or financial status doesn't quite measure up, he is excluded without a second thought.

Stanza 4

"So I have learned many things, son. I have learned to wear many faces like dresses – homeface, officeface, streetface, hostface, cocktailface, with all their conforming smiles like a fixed portrait smile."

The father has learned from this new culture of cold, unfeeling people, and now cycles through faces for different occasions. Each one has a fixed smile whose aim is to please those around and conform to other people.

Stanza 5

"And I have learned too to laugh with only my teeth and shake hands without my heart. I have also learned to say, 'Goodbye', when I mean 'Good-riddance'; to say 'Glad to meet you', without being glad; and to say 'It's been nice talking to you', after being bored."

The persona again expresses what he has adapted to do over the years: to do things not because he means them or they come from his heart, but rather for show in hopes of gaining something.

Stanza 6

"But believe me, son. I want to be what I used to be when I was like you. I want to unlearn all these muting things. Most of all, I want to relearn how to laugh, for my laugh in the mirror shows only my teeth like a snake's bare fangs!"

The father wants to be like his son again. Despite having learnt all of these tricks and hollow expressions to conform to the changes in society, he wants to be able to embrace the innocence and sincerity he once had as a child. These disingenuous things he has learnt have only served to mute him ('these muting things') and silence his true thoughts and emotions. He has adapted to this cold culture so much that when he sees his laugh in the mirror, his teeth are the only things laughing- so he seems deceitful and mendacious like a snake.

Stanza 7

"So show me, son, how to laugh; show me how I used to laugh and smile once upon a time when I was like you."

The persona now pleads (pointlessly, one might argue) to his son to teach him how to laugh and smile genuinely again. He wants to be innocent and sincere like he was when he was younger, and lived in a society that encouraged honesty and a pure identity.

Literary Devices

Simile

"I have learned to wear many faces like dresses" (lines 20-21) The 'faces' of the persona are compared to dresses, in that he cycles through them based on where he is. He simply switches between the personality/face he puts on to conform to where he goes.

"...with all their conforming smiles like a fixed portrait smile."
(lines 23-24)

The persona's several faces have smiles compared here to a fixed portrait smile. The smile a person puts on in a photograph or portrait of themselves is often not representative of the normal state of being of the person, and is also often uncomfortable and an exaggerated pretence of happiness-similar to the pretence the persona performs here with his several smiling faces.

"my laugh in the mirror shows only my teeth like a snake's bare fangs!" (lines 38-39)

The father's teeth are compared to a snake's fangs because of the connotation of a snake- deception and deceitfulness. The father no longer shows sincerity when he laughs, and so his teeth are deceptive as they don't reflect his true feelings. He himself becomes something like a snake through this deception.

Metaphor

"while their ice-block-cold eyes" (line 5)

The eyes of the people are compared to ice-blocks in how cold and unwelcoming they are. It emphasizes how callous and unfeeling the people have become.

Repetition

"Once upon a time..." (lines 1 and 43)

Enjambment

This is when a line runs on to a new line without a stop or pause.

"And I have learned too

to laugh with only my teeth

and shake hands without my heart." (lines 25-27)

"they used to laugh with their hearts

and laugh with their eyes:" (lines 2-3)

(There are many more examples in the poem)

Alliteration

"shake hands without hearts" (line 8)

"...after being bored." (line 32)

"But believe me, son." (line 33)

Elizabeth L. A. Kamara : "New Tongue"

Elizabeth Lucy Alberta Kamara is a Sierra Leonean educator, writer, and poet. She was raised in the east end of Freetown. She received her early education at Kamara Holy Trinity Primary School and Annie Walsh Memorial School before pursuing her academic journey at Fourah Bay College. Currently, she holds the esteemed position of Literature in English lecturer within the Department of Language Studies at the college and has ascended to the role of Head of the English Unit.

"New Tongue"

They speak in a new tongue
And dance new dances Minds battered into new modes and shapes
Their eyes revel in the wonder of the new
Embraced and bound to hearts with impregnable chains The old songs as disregarded
dreams
Remnants of a past.
Ties of family and friendship
Loosened, broken, burnt The ashes strewn into the bottomless sea
As fishes swim by Careless of the loss
Mindful of where they dare

A new generation Careless of bonds
Of family
Of tradition
Of heritage
They care not
Nor revere the old
Their minds turn inwards
Only inwards
Like the insides of clothes That marry the bodies of mankind

No room for elders
No,
Not even on the edge of their minds
Their ears blocked to the old tongue
And ways of doing things
Glorying in their new newness of a borrowed tongue and culture
Every man
For himself
By himself Of himself
A strange coldness descending like snow covered mountain
Or like bathing at the back of the house On a rainy July day
The gusts of wind falling trees Carting roofs away
Tugging skirts
And swirling debris in the air

Their borrowed shoes dance
Their borrowed minds parted the red sea long ago
They hang the last lock on their culture
And glide into the future
Without a backward glance.

Analysis of "New Tongue"

The poem opens with the acquisition of the new language and the transformation it brings to the people's life.

It also emphasizes the rigors the people passed through in learning the language.

"They speak in a new tongue
And dance new dances
Minds battered into new modes and shapes"

It requires a lot of effort to acquire and communicate with the new language. They are not just learning a new language, but also assimilating to a new culture. Through this, they are adapting to new ways of life and custom.

The poem also reflects on the attitudes of the people after the acquisition of the new language. The people are excited about the language which is a new form of colonization.

"Their eyes revel in the wonder of the new
Embraced and bound hearts with impregnable chains
The old songs as disregarded dreams"

The poet stresses the beauty in the original language abandoned by the people. It refers to the language as a symbol that unifies families and brings friends together.

"The old songs as disregarded dreams
Remnants of post.
Ties of family and friendship
Loosened, broken burnt
The ashes strewn into the bottomless sea
As fishes swim by
Careless of the loss
Mindful of where they dare
A new generation
Careless of bonds
Of family
Of tradition
Of heritage"

All these are burnt and the ashes are thrown into a very deep sea. They are all forgotten as a new generation of people is born. There are no more family bonds, respect for tradition and heritage.

They don't care about giving respect to the elders any longer as we have in the original culture. They cannot think straight again. Their minds are compared to the inside of clothes.

“Nor room for elders

No,

Not even on the edge of their minds

Their ears blocked to the old tongue

And ways of doing things”

They are no more listening to advice from their elders. They don't even want to speak or hear their original language or ways of life any longer.

They are engrossed in the new language and culture. They promote the newly borrowed language and culture. There is no family bond, it's every man for himself, by himself and of himself.

The poet metaphorically refers to the new way of life as a strange coldness and compares it to a snow-covered mountain. And the cold one feels while bathing at the back of a house on a rainy July day.

He also describes how fast the new language and the culture spread among the people. It is compared to wind falling trees, carting roofs and shirts away, throwing debris in the air.

In the last part of the poem, the poet describes how the people completely forgot their culture and focused on the new language and culture.

Themes of "New Tongue"

Language and Identity: The poem stresses the importance of language as it serves as the identity of the speaker. When somebody loses his language, his identity is lost.

We see this when the people drop their language and acquire a new language. The new language changed their culture and ways of life.

Cultural Assimilation: The poem establishes the fact that learning a new language is a step towards assimilating a new culture. It also implies that the process of assimilation is not easy; it can be difficult and painful. Since the new language is totally different from their original language.

Transformation: This poem expresses one of the advantages of the acquisition of a new language, that it is transformative. The acquisition of a new language is transforming them into a new person.

They dropped the old ways of life and embraced new ones. They are now able to interact, communicate and understand people from different cultural backgrounds.

The richness of African Culture: “New Tongue” itemizes the richness of African culture. According to the poem, African culture is capable of uniting the people.

Families, friends and relatives are brought together. The new culture, where the people found themselves after the acquisition of the new language, is totally different. It is “every man for himself, by himself, of himself.”

The Poetic Devices Used in "New Tongue"

The poet makes use of some figures of speech to add beauty to the poem and concretize the subject matter of the poem. The figures of speech are explained below.

Repetition: This is a literary device used to lay emphasis and call the attention of the readers. “New” is repeated from line 1 to line four of the poem. This is to call the attention of the readers to the changes that take place after the acquisition of the new language. It is also repeated in the other lines of the poem. There is also the repetition of “of” in lines 16, 17 and 18. “Himself” is also repeated in lines 32, 33 and 34.

Alliteration: This is a literary device whereby a consonant sound is pronounced at the beginning of two or more words in a line of poems. It is a figure of sound and it is used in lines 4, 6, 8, 9, 36 and 44.

Simile: This is a figure of comparison; two things are compared with the use of “as” or “like.” We have this in lines 23, 35 and 36.

Personification: This is when the attributes of the animate are given to the inanimate. This is used in line 24.

“That marry the bodies of mankind”

Parallelism: This is a literary device in which all or parts of the sentence are similar in construction or grammatically the same. This is in lines 16, 17 and 18.

“Of family

Of tradition

Of heritage”

It is also used in lines 32, 33 and 34.

“For himself

By himself

Of himself”

Imagery: This is a literary device in which the readers are perceiving the images of what is being read in a poem. The mental picture is being built in the brain. This is used in the second to the last stanza:

“A strange coldness descending like snow covered mountain

Or like bathing at the back of the house

On a rainy July day

The guts of wind falling trees

Carting roofs away

Tugging skirts

And swirling debris in the air”

"NIGHT" BY WOLE SHOYINKA

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wole Soyinka is a black Africa's foremost dramatist and one of the controversial writers of this generation. As playwright, actor, producer, poet, novelist and author of scathing satirical revues, Soyinka has been a champion of the responsibility of art and the artist to society. This has made him a bitter critic

Wole Soyinka
"Night"

Your hand is heavy, Night, upon my brow.
I bear no heart mercuric like the clouds, to dare.
Exacerbation from your subtle plough.

Woman as a clam, on the sea's crescent.
I saw your jealous eye quench the sea's
Flouorescence, dance on the pulse incessant

Of the waves. And I stood, drained
Submitting like the sands, blood and brine
Coursing to the roots. Night, you rained

Serrated shadows through dank leaves
Till, bathed in warm suffusion of your dappled cells
Sensations pained me, faceless, silent as night thieves.

Hide me now, when night children haunt the earth
I must hear none! These misted cells will yet
Undo me; naked, unbidden, at Night's muted birth

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM NIGHT

Night, a structurally arranged poem of five stanzas, is an expression of Wole Soyinka's reflection of nightfall effect on him and humanity in general. The beginning of the poem first stanza, particularly line 1, is clearly an indication of the poet's view of what exactly he thinks of night. Thus, the poet addresses night as someone who intrudes his privacy, apparently creating discomfort and horror each time it arrives. The poet complains bitterly:

Your hand is heavy, Night, upon my brow

The poet's use of upper case letter to inscribe "Night" in the middle of line 1 of the poem is to give successfully the attribute of human to night. Humans are not stagnant beings. Movement from one place to another is a major and essential thing that characterized human. Night, like human, moves also, paving way for day to manifest. To the poet therefore, night has a hand – ***heavy hand***.

In spite of night being extremely meddlesome to the poet, he avers plainly that he “bears(s) no mercuric heart like the cloud” towards it. By heart mercuric, the poet refers to changing of thought about the night. Night will remain night. Consequently, he cannot change his reflection of what night is to him. He remains unmoved about his thought. The cloud may decide to change from bright to dark. It does not really matter to him. What actually matters is that he is screamingly irksome – “to dare” line 2 – about his powerlessness towards the night, which keeps coming accompanied with terror.

In stanza two, night is portrayed as a woman who is jealous. The poet conjures the image of jealousy through a sea creatures called clam. The closing and opening of clam is associated with the meddling of night which keeps coming and going. Night is, of course, jealous of light. Light is describe as fluorescence and people are more attracted to it and this has thus made night more jealous. Even the brightness of the sea is darkened at night.

I saw your jealous eye quench the sea's fluorescence

In stanza 3 the poet concedes to the inevitable nightfall which no one can dare to stop. The poet, in the fact, divulges that he submit “like the sands” to the irresistible coming of the night, he stresses: “Night, you rained.”

The poet forges ahead in stanza 4 and 5 respectively to recount his emotional experience of how he feels. He expresses this through words such as “suffusion” – feeling and darkness of the night, and dappled cell – an indication that he is restricted in movement and to do some works which will create noise and disturb the neighborhood. All this is simply because night comes with different horrible things, therefore:

Hide me now, when night children haunt the earth

It is mainly in the night that armed robbers, thieves, witches and all evil vices are put into action. When night comes, he is absolutely “naked” – unprotected from the deadly ploy that accompanies it. Truly, night is “unbidden” – not invited, and it approaches him silently – “Night’s muted birth.” By “Night’s muted birth,” the poet also means the repeated comings of night, which he sees as “birth.”

About the poems Soyinka's (1976: 119) 'Night' is a poem written in triplets with the first and third lines of each stanza rhyming. It has five stanzas and fifteen lines. The poet describes nightfall and its effect on him.

"NOT MY BUSINESS" BY NIYI OSUNDARE

Not My Business

They picked Akanni up one morning
Beat him soft like clay
And stuffed him down the belly
Of a waiting jeep.

What business of mine is it
So long they don't take the yam
From my savouring mouth?

They came one night
Booted the whole house awake
And dragged Danladi out,
Then off to a lengthy absence.

What business of mine is it
So long they don't take the yam
From my savouring mouth?

Chinwe went to work one day
Only to find her job was gone:
No query, no warning, no probe –
Just one neat sack for a stainless record.

What business of mine is it
So long they don't take the yam
From my savouring mouth?

And then one evening
As I sat down to eat my yam
A knock on the door froze my hungry hand.

The jeep was waiting on my bewildered lawn
Waiting, waiting in its usual silence.

— Niyi Osundare

ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Niyi Osundare is a Nigerian poet, dramatist, linguist, and literary critic. Born on March 12, 1947, in Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria, his poetry is influenced by the oral poetry of his Yoruba culture, which he hybridizes with other poetic traditions of the world, including African-American, Latin American, Asian, and European.

Key Poem Information

Central Message: Don't ignore the suffering of others.

Themes: Death, War

Speaker: Unknown

Emotions Evoked: Fear, Panic

Poetic Form: Free Verse

Time Period: 20th Century

This poem highlights the dangers of apathy and the consequences of turning a blind eye to the suffering of others as injustice impacts everyone.

When Niyi Osundare wrote poetry criticizing his country's rule, security officials frequently visited him to ask him what he meant in his poems. The Nigerian author penned 'Not My Business' in defiance of the brutal dictator General Sani Abacha. Abacha, who reigned from 1993-1998, and his rule saw multiple cases of human rights abuse. Still, Osundare felt a duty to express his grievances and the injustices he saw happening around him. In his poem, he emphasizes the importance of this duty for every human being, through his satirical portrayal of a selfish, ignorant speaker.

Summary

'Not My Business' is about the spread of oppression in the world and the consequences of staying silent in the face of injustice.

In this poem, the speaker recounts three separate instances of oppression that he sees around him. Each instance has its own defining characteristic that reinforces this system of oppression: violent suppression, the human impact, and loss of livelihood. Despite all this, the speaker chooses to remain indifferent. He refuses to take any responsibility to stop what he can clearly see as injustice. Instead, he focuses on worldly pleasures and his own needs. #

Finally, his selfishness catches up to him as the same oppressive forces that he helped to enable, arrive at his doorstep, to mistreat him in the same way. The speaker is truly shocked since he thought he was superior and that this suffering could never fall on his shoulders.

Stanza One

They picked Akanni up one morning
Beat him soft like clay
(...)
So long they don't take the yam
From my savouring mouth?

‘Not My Business’ begins by referring to a general, ambiguous “they”, suggesting the speaker’s carelessness or lack of awareness of the unjust forces. It also promotes a feeling of ominous dread towards the enemy. The victim being mentioned by name (Akanni) encourages the reader to feel basic human empathy.

The second line of this stanza is interesting in its attempt to tone down or minimize the victim’s suffering. It is compared to something “soft like clay”. Again, this implies the speaker doesn’t really care about the seriousness of his torment. The particular reference to clay also hints at how rebels or dissenters are forced into submission. The oppressive forces try to make them more malleable, so their thoughts and actions are easier to control. Moving on, the “waiting jeep” is personified by referring to its “belly”. It seems like a predator or a hungry beast, and Akanni is reduced to its helpless victim.

Stanza Two

They came one night
Booted the whole house awake
(...)
So long they don't take the yam
From my savouring mouth?

Where the previous stanza recounted an event that took place in the morning, this stanza references the night. This suggests that the oppressive forces have become highly pervasive and ever-present. “Booted” and “dragged” are powerful words because they are highly physical (or kinesthetic) and connote violence. They also parallel “beat” and “stuffed” in stanza one. However, following this strong vocabulary is “a lengthy absence”. This is a euphemism for what the victim might actually be facing, which can range from life imprisonment to death.

It is also important to consider that the forces abducting people like Danladi may also attempt to conceal their actions. They may not tell the truth about the suffering and torment their victims are going through. This has happened multiple times in past history, and the general public is thus misled. The speaker seems to have fallen for this lie. He may passively absorb the information fed to him rather than critically thinking about the injustices taking place around him.

Lastly, this stanza also mentions the house, personifying it by saying it has been woken. This is meant to implicitly draw the reader's attention to Danladi's family. The reader ponders the effect of a single disappearance on the wider circle of people, and how it would contribute to an atmosphere of fear, tragedy, and suppression.

Stanza Three

Chinwe went to work one day

Only to find her job was gone:

(...)

So long they don't take the yam

From my savouring mouth?

The poem moves from dealing with the effects of resistance on one's family to one's livelihood and means of sustenance. Chinwe's everyday life must have been uprooted by this sudden, unexpected loss of employment and all the consequences that come along with it. This was a callous decision to make since she only found out once she arrived at work, to show how people like her are clearly considered this insignificant or unworthy.

The repetition in the third line has a tone of surprise or incredulity. It seems as if she cannot believe that she has to deal with such a betrayal. Like the poem's speaker, Chinwe might have also thought she was safe. However, the poem shows the aftermath of this type of mistaken complacency.

The fourth line is heavily sarcastic: "one neat sack" reflects the oppressors' perspective. They are ruthless and unfeeling they can be as they once again trivialize something that has an immense impact on the victim's life.

Stanza Four

And then one evening

As I sat down to eat my yam

(...)

Waiting, waiting in its usual silence.

Here comes the shift in events. The stanza begins with the speaker retelling his own experience instead of someone else's, creating a sense of doom for what could possibly happen to him. His daily yam-eating ritual that was so intrinsic to his life has been interrupted.

The "knock on the door" is an auditory image. It suddenly heightens the fear felt by the speaker as well as the reader.

The alliteration in "hungry hand" draws attention to this line and makes it more powerful. His surroundings mirror his feelings of surprise, as seen with the personification in the "bewildered lawn". This is a strange image, but it may reflect how he is all alone. After all these instances of mistreatment, there is no one left around him to mourn his loss except for nature, which is ultimately powerless to do anything.

The image of the waiting jeep from the first stanza returns as if it had been there all the while. It searches for its prey like a hungry beast that will never be satisfied until everyone has fallen victim to it. This proves that oppression, in any shape or form, is long-lasting. These hierarchies will continue to operate until every potential form of resistance has been crushed.

Structure and Form

'Not My Business' is written in free verse, with no rhyme scheme, and is made up of four stanzas. The first three stanzas have the same structure: they begin with a description of the events taking place, and end with a three-line refrain in which the speaker asks a question. This pattern, once established, is then broken in the final stanza to reflect how the speaker's situation also takes a sharp turn.

Speaker

The refrain in 'Not My Business' is repeated for emphasis since it tells us a lot about the speaker's character. He asks a cruel rhetorical question through which he clarifies that he feels no responsibility to take action against injustice, as long as it only targets other people. Instead, his focus is on his yam, a form of nourishment and a symbol for his own sustenance and fulfilling worldly desires.

Poetic Devices

Niyi Osundare uses several different literary devices in 'Not My Business':

Anaphora: the repetition of the refrain, used to establish the speaker's selfish, deluded nature.

Personification: the "waiting jeep" emphasises its harsh, antagonistic nature, and the "bewildered lawn" highlights the speaker's disbelief at falling victim.

Alliteration: "beat" and "belly" and "hungry hand" to create a lyrical effect and strengthen the poem's impact.

HEARTY GARLANDS BY S.O.H FRIYIE VIDZA

For a person who has lived as long
And one who, as well, has done much
As you Life's whole process blooms into stark beauty
And failures give no trite, crippling regrets Yet.

On occasion, shamed, horrid green-eyed
Envy fights benign
Felicitation exclusively couched
For you
By us who won't be left out of today's joy
And must send you warm hearty birthday garlands

You must, you wondrous mentor of rouges like us,
Receive copious blessings today;
d stay well blessed
To you
Age eighty-five is life's smiley,
cloudless dawn It is the gainful twilight of fulfilled dreams

Hope now nods in contented concert with spent desires
Now restful
Hope neither nags nor raves nor rants
At you But your heart sits on garlanded satis shores
Looking out to sea for health delivering vessels

From the subdued heights of your lofty conquered toils
And from flights of vanquished steps, at five and eighty,
Must you Watch us strive and beat your mahogany chest in pride
You must shake your own hands like iroko agama

March on, old boy, do, and clinch yonder untamed gain
For yon lies mop-up work and higher tasks still
By you
To be accomplished; then must you hear trumpet sound
That to a guru must blow solo musical bravo

As you give yourself a cozy comfy treat today
Reclining in reminiscing and fondling a lingering smile
Could you

A certain style of locomotion all your own recall,
Best and aptly but simply dubbed 'poetic walking'?

— S.O.H. Afriyie-Vidza

Garland, according to the English dictionary, is a wreath, especially one of plaited flowers or leaves worn on the body. It is also defined as an accolade or mark of honor.

“Hearty Garlands” is the recognition and celebration of an achiever that is devoid of pretense by the people and the mentee of the celebrants.

The poem is a celebration of a dutiful and diligent man worthy of emulation on his eighty-five-year birthday. The celebrity receives commendation and garlands from the well-wishers.

The Poetic Meanings of Some Difficult Words and Expressions in the Poem:

Garlands- A wreath or mark of honor

No trite- Not effective

Green-eyed- Jealous, Envious

Benign- Good

Couched- Arranged

Twilight- Sign

Neither nags nor faces- Disturb

A guru- A great man

A cozy comfy- Splendid, Sumptuous

Reclining in reminiscing- To Remember

Dubbed- Called

Poetic walking- A strange movement of the body (Dancing)

The Stanza by Stanza Analysis

The first stanza opens with encomium being showered on the celebrity for his contributions and achievements so far. His past lives make his present life blossom and pleasurable; there is no room for failures and regrets.

The second stanza talks about the exclusive program organized for the celebrity to celebrate him and the envious people.

The poet establishes the fact that not everybody would be happy with somebody's achievements.

No matter how lovely and good the person is, some people would be jealous of the achievements of such a person.

The envious people would not be happy with the program of felicitation organized for the person. Such a program is organized to shame this set of people.

“Yet. On occasion, shamed, horrid green-eyed
Envy fights benign Felicitation exclusively couched
For you”

Those who are happy with the celebrant wouldn't be left out of the birthday celebration. He is presented and decorated with hearty birthday garlands, showering encomium on him.

“By us who won't be left out of today's joy
And must send you warm hearty birthday garlands”

The mentees of the celebrant bless him abundantly in the third stanza. They said age eighty-five is a feat, which is a testimony to fulfilled dreams.

“Age eighty-five is life's smiley, cloudless dawn
It is the gainful twilight of fulfilled dreams”

There is no doubt that the celebrity's achievements resonate with his heart desires hence, there is rest of mind for him.

There is absolute peace of mind for him. Stanza four is about the effects of his achievements on his mind.

The well-wishers continue their encomiums on the celebrant in stanza four.

They said in stanza five that, considering his noble achievements from his struggles and the feats accomplished for clocking eighty-five, they are proud of him. He should also be proud of himself for his achievements.

Still in the euphoria of the celebration, the well-wishers call on the celebrant to be merry in receiving blessings, gifts, and hearty garlands.

It is the result of the great tasks he has done in the past. And for a great man like him who has great accomplishments, he deserves solo music and trumpet sounds.

As the man celebrates himself and remembers his past events, which put smiles on him, he is urged to show his happiness more. They request from him to make a style of movement tagged “poetic walking.” (Dancing).

Themes

Celebration: This theme is reflected in the poem from the beginning to the end. “Hearty Garlands” is all about the celebration of an achiever on his eighty-fifth birthday.

The well-wishers including his mentees celebrate him with trumpet sounds, solo music, accolades, and encomium.

“To be accomplished; then must you hear trumpet sound
That to a guru must blow solo musical bravo”

Envy: This is a resentful desire for something owned by somebody. Afriyie-Vidza establishes the fact that envy is part of human life and that envious people are everywhere.

Such a hearty felicitation would put such people in shame and lessons are learnt.

Mentorship: The poem stresses the importance of mentoring as we see the reward of “Hearty Garlands.” The mentees gather together to pour blessings on the celebrant on his eighty-fifth birthday celebration. That is the reward of being a good mentor.

“You must, you wondrous mentor of rogues like us,
Receive copious blessings today, d stay well blessed
To you”

Satisfaction: The celebrant has done much and achieved greatly in the past and his past achievements are in line with his heart desires. This shall invariably give him satisfaction and rest of mind. And when there is rest of mind, the person is rest assured of healthy living.

“But your heart sits on garlanded satis shores
Looking out to sea for health delivering vessels”

Hardworking: There is no doubt that the celebrant worked very hard and diligently before being celebrated by the people on his eighty-fifth birthday.

This stresses the need to be diligent in whatever we are doing to be an achiever who is celebrated. It also teaches that rest is sweet after labor. These are reflected in stanza five of the poem.

“From the subdued heights of your lofty conquered toils
And from flights of vanquished steps, at five and eighty,

Pride: The people are proud of the celebrant and his achievements. He is also called on to be proud of himself. People are always proud of good things and emulate such.

“Watch us strive and beat your mahogany chest in pride
You must shake your own hands like iroko agama”

Poetic Devices

Alliteration: This is a figure of sound where a consonant sound is repeated at the beginning of two or more closely placed words in an expression. It is used in lines 2, 4, 11, 17, 19, 22, 25, 30, 31, 32 and 35.

Personification: This is giving the attributes of a living thing to non-living things.

In the second stanza of the poem, “occasion” and “envy” are personified; they are given the attributes of living things.

It is said that the occasion shamed the envious eyes and envy fights the program organized for the celebrant.

“Yet. On occasion, shamed, horrid green-eyed
Envy fights benign Felicitation exclusively couched
You”

Rhetorical Questions: These are questions that require no answers. They are expressions presented in the form of a question. This is used in the last stanza of the poem.

“Could you
A certain style of locomotion all your own recall,
Best and aptly but simply dubbed ‘poetic walking’?”

Mood: This is the state of mind of the poet while composing the poem. The mood of a poem has a lot to do with the content of the poem.

If we look at this, the subject matter of the poem is celebration. A great achiever is being celebrated in the poem, the celebrant and the well-wishers are happy hence, the mood of the poem is happiness.

Enjambment: If we look at the poem, we’ll see that it runs on line. The lines of the poem run to each other without any pause. This is used to improve the flow of the poem.

THE BREAST OF THE SEA BY SYL CHENEY-COKER

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Syl Cheney-Coker is a Sierra Leonean poet and novelist, born 28 June 1945 in Freetown. He was born to Christian Creole parents in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Having received his early education in Sierra Leone, at the age of twenty-one he went to the United States to pursue post-secondary education at the Universities of Oregon and Wisconsin and also worked for a time as a journalist.

He has taught at universities in the Philippines, Nigeria and the U.S. and served as editor and publisher of a fortnightly newspaper, the Vanguard, in Freetown in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

THE BREAST OF THE SEA

After our bloody century, the sea will groan
under its weight, somewhere between breasts and anus.
Filled with toxins, her belly will not yield new islands
even though the orphans of East Timor wish it so.

The sea is only capable of so much history:
Noah's monologue, the Middle Passage's cargoes,
Darwin's examination of the turtle's shit,
the remains of the Titanic, and a diver's story
about how the coelacanth was recaptured.
Anything else is only a fractured chela
we cannot preserve, once the sea's belly
has washed itself clean of our century's blight.

Throbbing, the sea's breasts will console some orphans,
Even those shut out of Australia, drifters on a tired moon,
but Sierra Leone won't be worth a raped woman's cry,
despite her broken back, this shredded garment,
her hands swimming like horrors of red corals.
But do you, O Sea, long-suffering mistress,
have the balm to heal the wound of her children,
hand to foot the axe, alluvial river flowing into you?

Analysis of Syl Cheney-Coker's "The Breasts of the Sea"

The Breasts of the Sea reads like a non-verbal pondering on the human condition by which a whole century is blighted by series of war, colonialism, imperialism, environmental degradation, destitution and other painful experiences that undermine man's abuse of intellectual and physical power.

The weight of a traumatic history, no doubt, could work disillusionment about the prospects of a reformation. Such is the deducible idea that runs through the poet's consciousness in Syl Cheney-Coker's The Breasts of the Sea.

The background of the poem is di-faceted. One, today's Sierra Leone was the 'home' where the emancipated Africans settled upon their return from the Americas as slaves. As such, it has a bloody history of slavery and its unspeakable demonstrations among which is the death of innumerable Africans in the ocean on their way to and from Europe as slaves.

Two, it is a reflection on the catastrophic end of the 20th century fraught with international wars and conflicts resulting from the horse race inclination to power and dominance. This first directly alludes to the First and the Second World Wars between 1914–1918 and 1939–1945 respectively; and secondly to the political ineptitude that plunged Sierra Leone into a Civil War between 1991–2002.

Before Sierra Leone's episode, Nigeria had had hers between 1967–1970. And so, there had been series of national crisis fomented by power-drunk juggernauts of nations. The venomous hardship such violence has resulted to, featuring deaths, underdevelopment, and political backlash, serves as the background to the angst recollected in meditation in the poem.

... we continue to live with the indelible impacts of war because, to quote Ernest Hemingway in his acclaimed novel entitled *A Farewell to Arms*, "There is no finish to a war." This is the dubiety captured in the metaphor, "new islands" that "her belly will not yield" (stanza 1, line 3) even though the wars ended.

The *Breasts of the Sea* underscores the sea's mothering and murdering realities as an accommodating body. It opens in an *in medias res* style, whereby the poet bursts into a deep sense of loss characterised by the aftermath of war and the plunder of a nation and, on a wider scope, the world.

The "bloody century" reminds the reader of the two World Wars that plunged Europe into disarray, involving the Central Powers: Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, Great Britain, France, Japan, the United States, Russia, the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser degree, China. This tragic episode therefore conveys the fact of millions of dead bodies in the sea, which the poet describes as "its weight" (stanza 1, line 2).

In the poet's cogitation on the disparate functions of the sea, the metaphor, "breasts and anus" suggests that the sea is a mother to all of these nations such that it, itself, represents the vastness of humanity. However, man has utilised her for exploration and exploitation alike. Either way, it stands to awaken a memory of benevolence and cruelty.

But because she has taken in a great number of impurities which the poet calls "toxins" (stanza 1, line 3), he supposes that the enmity that must have ensued through the years of war will invalidate any fraternity between nations; or that war will continue to engender suspicion and misgivings between nations. And that we continue to live with the indelible impacts of war because, to quote Ernest Hemingway in his acclaimed novel entitled *A Farewell to Arms*, "There is no finish to a war." This is the dubiety captured in the metaphor, "new islands" that "her belly will not yield" (stanza 1, line 3) even though the wars ended.

It is in furtherance to that that he plays a witty sarcasm on the subservience of Timor-Leste in forgiving her imperialists, which is the significance of "children" in the line 4 of stanza 1. During World War II, Japan dominated East Timor; upon her cessation of imperialism, Portugal colonised her again until East Timor's declaration of independence from Portugal in 1975. Not long after, tyranny continued upon East Timor when Indonesia invaded her whereupon she was later incorporated as a province of Indonesia. Not until 2002 did the country become a full fledged sovereign nation. This country becomes for the poet forgiveness personified; however, he indirectly avows that there is no such realism as "the children of East Timor" represent.

Another viable, possible interpretation of this line is that East Timor is an Asian country reputable for having the Island that has the most diverse species cohabiting it. Therefore, the metaphor, "new islands" conveys a world of friendly relationship between diverse nations. Again, the "toxin" also suggests industrial wastes with which the sea is polluted since industrial revolution was one great and sudden change that heralded the century. Oil spillage and fossil fuels on the face of the sea, dead matters of human lives, war, political crisis, and environmental degradation are the focus of the first stanza of the poem.

Again, the poet recalls the tragic history of deaths that have polluted the sea. One is the great flooding that consummated the Biblical Noah's one hundred and twenty years of call to righteousness whereupon the death toll gorily outweighed the few numbers of God's own survivors!

Another is the Atlantic crossing. This recalls the slave trade that existed between 1445 and 1870, in which millions of Africans were shipped to the Americas. The European slavers coined the phrase "the Middle Passage" to refer to the gory tragedy that characterised the crossing of the ocean: the drowning of millions of slaves who could not reach the destination safely. This also includes the honour suicide of some Igbo slaves who drowned themselves because they would not ridicule their ancestors by going to die as slaves in a foreign land.

There is also a reference to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution which happened by natural selection. Here the poet suggests the injurious consequence of the explosion of scientific knowledge; how that it has maimed lives on the notion of struggle for survival. This conveys the capitalist struggle and survivalist whereby only the stronger breed remains.

According to Michel Foucault, knowledge is a form of power, and the search for knowledge manifests a will to exercise power over others. It is not an object, but a group of forces in which power meets with resistance. Then, there the poet recalls the fiasco of the Titanic, a famed passenger ship that broke apart upon striking an iceberg, just five days in on its maiden voyage (15 April, 1911); and which, sinking, took more than 1,500 lives of passengers and crew alike. The coelacanth is a species of fish thought to have been extinct for 70 million years but was later discovered in 1936, identified by its remains. This whole idea suggests the devastation that the world has experienced through untamed scientific knowledge, the dumping of mineral and chemical wastes, human corpses after wars and crises; environmental and national pollution with lives.

Still within the stanza, the poet presents a metaphor of the intractable condition of the world, "fractured chela". A chela is the pincer-like claw of a crustacean. It is impossible for the crustacean

or arachnid to carry out locomotion by which it forages if the claws are broken; in other word, its condition can never be helped, that is, “we cannot preserve” (stanza 2, line 10). Visualising that such a sensitive and indispensable part of the creature, say a crab, is condemned, then the reader is on their way to assessing the intractability of the world’s sickness, which the poet calls “our century’s blight.”

The sickness of the twentieth century is the pollutant effect of scientific knowledge, imperialism, colonialism, slavery, war, political barbarism and such like which the poet describes as “blight”, a term which means the sickness of a plant in the visible browning of the leaves and subsequently, death. Now, all these grievous accounts are left to literature which is a body of knowledge that serves as the preservative of the human experiences.

The last stanza of *The Breasts of the Sea* focuses on the foster qualities of the sea, since it can wash itself clean of dirt and dump. This is the idea conveyed with the verb, “Throbbing” that opens the third stanza, which suggests the deathlessness of the sea.

The “sea’s breasts” consoling “some exiles” is the cessation of suffering for native lands who have agonised at the clamping effect of imperialism. Here, the reader is intimated on the story of Australia as a continent whose aborigines were marginalised though diseases, and conflict with the colonialists who explored it between early 17th century and late 18th century. Great Britain foisted six other colonies on the continent, having dominated it. Following this, the natives of Australia were “shut out” and only after the World Wars ended were they allocated sick portion of their own land, “the tired moon”, that is. It is the same for the Krio (creole) the first settlers of Sierra Leone who were marginalised on their own land by the dominating force that followed her independence. In spite of the consolation, Sierra Leone remains comfortless!

The poet’s pessimism about his native land follows that it has been devastated beyond repairs by a venomous war between 1991–2002, visiting untold hardship on women (rape as a major

war crime and strategy) and children (who are the most affected), and the vast majority of the masses.

Reforms and peace talks will not ameliorate the situation “despite her broken back” and “shredded garment”. These two metaphors suggest the ripping apart of Sierra Leone first by enslavement by Portugal for centuries, and second by war and the jutting consequences of inhumanity; that she is more like someone groping for a lost object in the dark.

Unlike the variant suffering exiles who will be consoled by “the sea’s breasts”, Sierra Leone will struggle hard to get back on her feet after the years of degradation. The last section of that stanza runs on to the end which raises a question about the sea having forgotten her ultimate mother function. The sea is personified as a mother who is responsible for raising children.

It is also striking that the use of “children” in this line is different from what we have in the first stanza. Here, “her children” suggests the destitute survivor of a plunder, degradation, exploitation of mineral and agricultural resources, the emancipated slaves, and all those who do not have a safe space to tend their destinies. Their “wounds” are both literal and figurative. The former is the visible marks of rapine after the years of pain and human suffering; the latter is psychological and mental. It is the trauma that the survivors may have to live with; the trauma that the world will experience as a result of the destructiveness of wars, and the uselessness of power craze.

Again, “the balm” is an ointment applied on an affected spot on the skin where one has sustained an injury. It is here a metaphor for a new dispensation where pains will be forgotten. But the poet is pessimistic, knowing fully well that the abuse of power is almost inevitable; he questions whether the sea will not continue to play host to her children’s turpitude because, as earlier established, the sea is a metaphor for the whole of humanity. We are all connected to one origin.

Tone

Tone is the writer's attitude towards the subject matter. The poet's attitude in the poem is that of reflection or meditation. The *Breasts of the Sea* reads like a non-verbal pondering on the human condition by which a whole century is blighted by series of war, colonialism, imperialism, environmental degradation, destitution and other painful experiences that undermine man's abuse of intellectual and physical power.

As a whole, *The Breasts of the Sea* is about the relationship between Europe and Africa in that both continents have experienced bloody phases in their histories. It also examines how Europe's abuse of Africa has intertwined with Africa's abuse of her own self to show power and freedom are too much with man.

Today, people are wont to denounce "knowledge is power" as a dead axiom; we have made it clichéd, warping our minds into a reconstruction quite antipodal to the standpoint of the matter. But no! The meaning so contained spans across the venomous impacts of imperialism. It also criticises the explosion of scientific knowledge as well as the unsolicited explorations across continents that led to colonialism, war, political instability and such concomitant episodes in history.

Mood

Mood is the feeling evoked by the reading of the work. *The Breasts of the Sea* is emotive of pessimism. Beginning from the first stanza, the poet does not readily envision a panacea to how much the world has been torn apart. The use of the concession, "even though the children of East Timor..." suggests his justifiable opposing view about any prospects of reformation.

His manner of recalling the destruction that the sea has hosted from the classical times to the contemporary is a subtle way of establishing his dubiety. The poet seeks to know which human force will make the same world man himself has marred beyond repairs. The sea here becomes a metaphor of life and death; building and destruction; exploration and exploitation; use and abuse; growth and retardation; in which the poet cannot vouch for the dignity of man's inner sense of freedom.

"SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY" BY LORD BYRON

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

ABOUT THE POET

George Gordon Noel Byron was born, with a clubbed right foot, in London on January 22, 1788. He was the son of Catherine Gordon of Gight, an impoverished Scots heiress, and Captain John ("Mad Jack") Byron, a fortune-hunting widower with a daughter, Augusta.

ABOUT THE POEM

"She Walks in Beauty" is a famous poem by British Romantic poet Lord Byron, first published in 1815. The poem praises and seeks to capture a sense of the beauty of a particular woman. The speaker compares this woman to a lovely night with a clear starry sky, and goes on to convey her beauty as a harmonious "meeting" between darkness and light. After its discussion of physical attractiveness, the poem then portrays this outer beauty as representative of inner goodness and virtue.

“She Walks in Beauty” Summary

speaker compares a beautiful woman—who is walking—to a clear night sky full of bright stars. The finest light and darkness come together in harmony in this woman's appearance, particularly within her eyes. This gentle and delicate play of light is heavenly—indeed, heaven usually refuses to grant this supernatural light to the showy daytime.

A touch more shade or even one ray of light would have greatly diminished the woman's beauty. This beauty, which is hard to put into words, shows itself in every strand of the woman's hair, and gently falls on her face. Her sweet, angelic emotions play out on her face, revealing how pure and precious this woman is. On the woman's cheek and forehead—softly and calmly, but noticeably—appear winning smiles and a glowing skin tone. These features reveal that the woman spends her days virtuously, that she possesses a peaceful mind, and that she has an innocent, loving heart.

"She Walks in Beauty" Themes

Beauty and Harmony

As its title might suggest, “She Walks in Beauty” is a poem that praises a woman’s beauty. More specifically, it presents that beauty as a kind of harmony that is as perfect as it is rare. Indeed, that’s the main point of the poem—that this particular woman’s beauty is practically unparalleled because of the exquisite harmony and visual balance of her looks. Beauty, the poem thus suggests, is perfection achieved through harmony. And as the poem progresses, it makes clear that this harmony is delicate and fragile—potentially altered by even the smallest of changes.

The poem begins by establishing a sense of the speaker’s wonder at the woman’s majestic beauty. The speaker doesn’t say that the woman walks beautifully—but that she walks in beauty. This unusual construction helps with the sense that the woman’s beauty is truly remarkable, so vast and impressive that it seems to surround this woman like an aura or cloud. The poem quickly reveals what it believes to be the source of such beauty: the woman’s physical appearance brings together “all that’s best of dark and bright.” This suggests that beauty is a harmony between distinct elements—darkness and light. Beauty takes the “best” of these elements and places them in a delicate balance.

The poem then expands on this marriage of light and dark in stanza 2. Here, beauty is presented as almost beyond language, a “nameless grace.” The complex and intensely beautiful interplay between light (“ray[s]”) and dark (“shade”) is made possible only by the shape and contours of the woman’s physical appearance. This reinforces the idea that beauty is a kind of perfection achieved through harmony.

Part of the power of beauty is in its rarity. As lines 5 and 6 make clear, the woman’s harmonious beauty is not an everyday occurrence—this interplay of light and dark is the exclusive preserve of “heaven,” not the “gaudy day[s]” of life on earth. Beauty, then, also has an air of the divine or supernatural that contributes to this sense of rarity—comparable to sighting a comet or eclipse, perhaps. Furthermore, beauty is all-the-rarer because the harmony required for it to exist is so fragile. In the second stanza, the speaker outlines how even one shade—or one ray—out of place in the interplay of light and dark on the woman’s hair would upset her beauty; indeed, it would be “half impaired.” It’s also worth noting that the common literary associations of darkness tend to be mystery and fear (in the works of Edgar Allan Poe, for example). Contrastingly, light is often linked to purity, beauty, and love (e.g., Carol Ann Duffy’s “Valentine” or Shakespeare’s “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”) The beauty in “She Walks in Beauty” depends on both light and dark, bringing them together in harmony. Accordingly, the woman’s beauty is all the more powerful and uncommon. “She Walks in Beauty,” then, is a poem that cherishes physical beauty and perfection. In the figure of the woman that it addresses, it sees an unparalleled example of perfect beauty and seeks to explain it, even though it may prove impossible to characterize its “nameless grace,” as a type of rare harmony that brings together light and dark.

Inner Beauty vs. Outer Beauty

While “She walks in Beauty” primarily focuses on physical beauty, it also explores the relationship between inner beauty and outer beauty. It portrays these concepts as closely interconnected. Indeed, the woman’s outer appearance is read as a sign of her inner serenity, peacefulness, and innocence.

The poem develops a sense of physical beauty before introducing the idea that this type of beauty is linked to a person's interior state. Lines 1-10 help the reader grasp just how rare and powerful this woman's beauty is, which is further presented as a delicate—near impossible—balance between light and dark.

The poem then shifts, however, and begins to discuss the relationship between this outer loveliness and the woman's inner self. The woman's face is portrayed as the site on which her thoughts are “expressed.” These thoughts, in turn, are characterized as “serenely sweet”; the poem maps the harmoniousness of the woman's beauty onto her presumed inner state (that is, since she is so lovely, her thoughts must also be lovely). Indeed, the expression of her thoughts on her face serves to reinforce the purity and “deariness” (preciousness) of their “dwelling-place.” This could be interpreted as the thoughts reinforcing the woman's outer beauty, or perhaps they speak of a kind of beauty that incorporates both physical appearance and personality/character.

The third stanza picks up on the development of lines 11 and 12, focusing on the relationship between inner and outer beauty. The speaker lists the woman's fine features—her “cheek,” “brow,” “smiles,” and “tints” (skin)—and suggests that they express an inner goodness. In other words, her good looks are the sign of good virtues: the speaker believes that woman spends her days in “goodness,” has a peaceful mind, and a loving, innocent heart.

Outer beauty, then, becomes a symbol of inner beauty. Indeed, this inner beauty enhances the outer beauty because, if the outer beauty is linked to the woman's facial expressions, these expressions are the result of inner emotions. Her outer beauty and inner “goodness” are in a kind of feedback loop, each intensifying the other.

Of course, it's up to the reader to decide how much this idea convinces them. The poem spends most of its time focusing on physical beauty, and the reader learns little about the woman other than what the speaker tells them. Regardless, in the speaker's opinion at least, outer beauty is a reflection of inner beauty—and indeed, both are in harmony with one another.

Structure and Form

'She Walks in Beauty' by Lord Byron is a three-stanza poem, each stanza of which contains six lines. This is the poetic form that is mostly used for hymns and thus associated both with simplicity and with chasteness. In fact, the poem itself, although a type of love poem, does not really refer to passionate or sexual love. The poem follows a rhyme scheme of ABABAB.

The poem's meter is also written in iambic tetrameter. This means that the lines contain four sets of two beats, the first of which is an unstressed syllable and the second of which is a stressed syllable. These two syllables together make one iamb.

The speaker's awe at the woman's beauty comes across as just that: the awe that one would feel for a lovely painting or a picture of nature. It is an especially unusual choice coming from Byron, given that he was mostly known for his lascivious affairs.

Literary Devices

Throughout this poem, the poet makes use of several literary devices. These include but are not limited to:

Alliteration: occurs when the poet repeats the same consonant sound at the beginning of multiple words. For example, "Which waves" in stanza two and "serenely sweet" later on in that same stanza. The latter is also an example of sibilance.

Juxtaposition: a contrast between two opposites. For example, "all that is best of dark and bright."

Enjambment: can be seen when the poet cuts off a line before its natural stopping point. For example, the transition between lines one and two of the first stanza as well as lines five and six of that same stanza.

Imagery: occurs when the poet uses particularly interesting descriptions that trigger the reader's senses. For example, "Which waves in every raven tress, / Or softly lightens o'er her face;"

"THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE" BY GEOFFREY CHAUCER

A WIDOW poor, somewhat advanced in age,
Lived, on a time, within a small cottage
Beside a grove and standing down a dale.
This widow, now, of whom I tell my tale,
Since that same day when she'd been last a wife,(5)
Had led, with patience, her straight simple life,
For she'd small goods and little income-rent;
By husbanding of such as God had sent
She kept herself and her young daughters twain.
Three large sows had she, and no more, 'tis pain,(10)
Three cows and a lone sheep that she called Moll.
Right sooty was her bedroom and her hall,
Wherein she'd eaten many a slender meal.
Of sharp sauce, why she needed no great deal,
For dainty morsel never passed her throat;(15)
Her diet well accorded with her cote.
Repletion never made this woman sick;
And no wine drank she,—either white or red;
Her board was mostly garnished, white and black,
With milk and brown bread, whereof she'd no lack,(20)
Broiled bacon and sometimes an egg or two,
For a small dairy business did she do.
A yard she had, enclosed all roundabout
With pales, and there was a dry ditch without,
And in the yard a cock called Chanticleer.(25)
In all the land, for crowing, he'd no peer.
His voice was merrier than the organ gay
On Mass days, which in church begins to play;
More regular was his crowing in his lodge
Than is a clock or abbey horologe.(30)
And when fifteen degrees had been ascended,
Then crew he so it might not be amended.
His comb was redder than a fine coral.
And battlemented like a castle wall.
His bill was black and just like jet it shone;(35)
This noble cock had in his governance
Seven hens to give him pride and all pleasance,
Which were his sisters and his paramours
And wondrously like him as to colours,
Whereof the fairest hues upon her throat(40)
Was called the winsome Mistress Pertelote.
Courteous she was, discreet and debonnaire,
Companionable, and she had been so fair
That truly she had taken the heart to hold
Of Chanticleer, locked in every limb;(45)
He loved her so that all was well with him.
But such a joy it was to hear them sing,
Whenever the bright sun began to spring,
In sweet accord, "My love walks through the land."
So it befell that, in a bright dawning,(50)

As Chanticleer 'midst wives and sisters all
Sat on his perch, the which was in the hall,
And next him sat the winsome Pertelote,
This Chanticleer he groaned within his throat
Like man that in his dreams is troubled sore.(55)
And when fair Pertelote thus heard him roar,
She was aghast and said: "O sweetheart dear,
What ails you that you groan so? Do you hear?
You are a sleepy herald. Fie, for shame!"
And he replied to her thus: "Ah, madame,(60)
I pray you that you take it not in grief,
By God. I dreamed I'd come to such mischief,
Just now, my heart yet jumps with sore affright.
I dreamed, that while I wandered up and down
Within our yard, I saw there a strange beast(65)
Was like a dog, and he'd have made a feast
Upon my body, and have had me dead.
His snout was small and gleaming was each eye.
Remembering how he looked, almost I die;
And all this caused my groaning, I confess."(70)
"Aha," said she, "fie on you, spiritless!
Alas!" cried she, "for by that God above,
Now have you lost my heart and all my love;
I cannot love a coward, by my faith.
For truly, whatsoever woman saith,(75)
We all desire, if only it may be,
To have a husband hardy, wise, and free.
How dare you say, for shame, unto your love
That there is anything that you have feared?
Have you not man's heart, and yet have a beard?(80)
Alas! And are you frightened by a vision?
Dreams are, God knows, a matter for derision.
Visions are generated by repletions
And vapours and the body's bad secretions."
"Lo, Cato, and he was a full wise man,(85)
Said he not, we should trouble not for dreams?
Now, sir," said she, "when we fly from the beams,
For God's love go and take some laxative;
On peril of my soul, and as I live,
I counsel you the best, I will not lie.(90)
Be merry, husband, for your father's kin!
Dread no more dreams. And I can say no more."
"Madam," said he, "gramercy for your lore.
Nevertheless, not running Cato down,
Who had for wisdom such a high renown,(95)
And though he says to hold no dreams in dread,
By God, men have, in many old books, read
Of many a man more an authority
Who say just the reverse of his sentence,
And have found out by long experience(100)

That dreams, indeed, are good significations,
As much of joys as of all tribulations
That folk endure here in this life present.
There is no need to make an argument;
The very proof of this is shown indeed.”(105)
“One of the greatest authors that men read
Says thus: That on a time two comrades went
On pilgrimage, and all in good intent;
And it so chanced they came into a town
Where there was such a crowding, up and down(110)
Of people, and so little harbourage,
That they found not so much as one cottage
Wherein the two of them might sheltered be.
Wherefore they must, as of necessity,
For that one night at least, part company;(115)
And each went to a different hostelry
And took such lodgment as to him did fall.
Now one of them was lodged within a stall,
Far in a yard, with oxen of the plow;
That other man found shelter fair enow,(120)
As was his luck, or was his good fortune,
Whatever ’tis that governs us, each one.”
“So it befell that, long ere it was day,
This last man dreamed in bed, as there he lay,
That his poor fellow did unto him call,(125)
Saying: ‘Alas! For in an ox’s stall
This night shall I be murdered where I lie.
Now help me, brother dear, before I die.
Come in all haste to me. ’Twas that he said.
This man woke out of sleep, then, all afraid;(130)
But when he’d wakened fully from his sleep,
He turned upon his pillow, yawning deep,
Thinking his dream was but a fantasy.
And then again, while sleeping, thus dreamed he.
And then a third time came a voice that said(135)
(Or so he thought): ‘Now, comrade, I am dead;
Behold my bloody wounds, so wide and deep!
Early arise tomorrow from your sleep,
And at the west gate of the town,’ said he,
‘A wagon full of dung there shall you see,(140)
Wherein is hid my body craftily;
Do you arrest this wagon right boldly.
They killed me for what money they could gain.’
And told in every point how he’d been slain,
With a most pitiful face and pale of hue.(145)
And trust me well, this dream did all come true;
For on the morrow, soon as it was day,
Unto his comrade’s inn he took the way;
And when he’d come into that ox’s stall
Upon his fellow he began to call.”(150)

"The keeper of the place replied anon,
And said he: 'Sir, your friend is up and gone;
As soon as day broke he went out of town.'
This man, then, felt suspicion in him grown,
Remembering the dream that he had had,(155)
And forth he went, no longer tarrying, sad,
Unto the west gate-of the town, and found
A dung-cart on its way to dumping-ground,
And it was just the same in every wise
As you have heard the dead man advertise;(160)
And with a hardy heart he then did cry
Vengeance and justice on this felony:
'My comrade has been murdered in the night,
And in this very cart lies, face upright.
I cry to all the officers,' said he(165)
'That ought to keep the peace in this city.
Alas, alas, here lies my comrade slain!'"

"Why should I longer with this tale detain?
The people rose and turned the cart to ground,
And in the center of the dung they found(170)
The dead man, lately murdered in his sleep."
"O Blessed God, Who art so true and deep!
Lo, how Thou dost turn murder out away!
Murder will out, we see it every day.
Murder's so hateful and abominable(175)
To God, Who is so just and reasonable,
That He'll not suffer that it hidden be;
Though it may skulk a year, or two, or three,
Murder will out, and I conclude thereon.
Immediately the rulers of that town,(180)
They took the carter and so sore they racked
Him and the host, until their bones were cracked,
That they confessed their wickedness anon,
And hanged they both were by the neck, and soon.
And therefore, pretty Pertelote, my dear,(185)
By such an old example may you hear
And learn that no man should be too reckless
Of dreams, for I can tell you, fair mistress,
That many a dream is something well to dread.
Upon this point I say, concluding here,(190)
That from this vision I have cause to fear
Adversity; and I say, furthermore,
That I do set by laxatives no store,
For they are poisonous, I know it well.
Them I defy and love not, truth to tell."(195)

"But let us speak of mirth and stop all this;
For when I see the beauty of your face,
You are so rosy-red beneath each eye,
It makes my dreadful terror wholly die.
For when I feel at night your tender side,(200)

I am so full of joy and all solace
That I defy, then, vision, aye and dream.”
And with that word he flew down from the beam,
For it was day, and down went his hens all;
And with a cluck he them began to call,(205)
For he had found some corn within the yard.
Regal he was, and fears he did discard.
He looked as if he were a grim lion
As on his toes he strutted up and-down;
He deigned not set his foot upon the ground.(210)
He clucked when any grain of corn he found,
And all his wives came running at his call.
Thus regal, as prince is in his hall,
I'll now leave busy Chanticleer to feed,
And with events that followed I'll proceed.(215)
Since March began, full thirty days and two,
It fell that Chanticleer, in all his pride,
His seven wives a-walking by his side,
Cast up his two eyes toward the great bright sun.
“The sun, my love,” he said, “has climbed anew.(220)
My lady Pertelote, whom I adore,
Mark now these happy birds, hear how they sing.
And see all these fresh flowers, how they spring;
Full is my heart of revelry and grace.”
But suddenly he fell in grievous case;(225)
For ever the latter end of joy is woe.
God knows that wordly joys do swiftly go.
But now I must take up my proper theme.
A brant-fox, full of sly iniquity,
That in the grove had lived two years, or three,(230)
Now by a fine premeditated plot
That same night, breaking through the hedge, had got
Into the yard where Chanticleer the fair
Was wont, and all his wives too, to repair;
And in a bed of greenery still he lay(235)
Till it was past the quarter of the day,
Waiting his chance on Chanticleer to fall.
O Chanticleer, accursed be that morrow
When you into that yard flew from the beams!
You were well warned, and fully, by your dreams(240)
That this day should hold peril damnably.
But that which God foreknows, it needs must be.
Whether the fact of God's great foreknowing
Makes it right needful that I do a thing
(By needful, I mean, of necessity);(245)
Or else, if a free choice he granted me,
To do that same thing, or to do it not,
Though God foreknew before the thing was wrought;
Or if His knowing constrains never at all,
Save by necessity conditional.(250)

I have no part in matters so austere;
My tale is of a cock, as you shall hear,
That took the counsel of his wife, with sorrow,
Now women's counsels oft are ill to hold;
A woman's counsel brought us first to woe,(255)
And Adam caused from Paradise to go,
Wherein he was right merry and at ease.
But since I know not whom it may displease
If woman's counsel I hold up to blame,
Pass over, I but said it in my game.(260)
Read authors where such matters do appear,
And what they say of women, you may hear.
These are the cock's words, they are none of mine;
No harm in women can I e'er divine.
All in the sand, a-bathing merrily,(265)
Lay Pertelote, with all her sisters by,
There in the sun; and Chanticleer so free
Sang merrier than mermaid in the sea
(For Physiologus says certainly
That they do sing, both well and merrily).(270)
And so befell that, as he cast his eye
Among the herbs and on a butterfly,
He saw this fox that lay there, crouching low.
Nothing of urge was in him, then, to crow;
But he cried "Cock-cock-cock" and did so start(275)
As man who has a sudden fear at heart.
For naturally a beast desires to flee
From any enemy that he may see.
He would have fled but that the fox anon
Said: "Gentle sir, alas! Why be thus gone?(280)
Are you afraid of me, who am your friend?
Now surely, I were worse than any fiend
If I should do you harm or villainy.
I came not here upon your deeds to spy;
But, certainly, the cause of my coming(285)
Was only just to listen to you sing.
For truly, you have quite as fine a voice
As angels have that Heaven's choirs rejoice.
Save you, I never heard a man so sing
As did your father in the grey dawning;(290)
Truly 'twas from the heart, his every song.
And that his voice might ever be more strong,
He took such pains that, with his either eye
He had to blink, so loudly would he cry,
A-standing on his tiptoes therewithal,(295)
Stretching his neck till it grew long and small.
And such discretion, too, by him was shown,
There was no man in any region known
That him in song or wisdom could surpass.
I have well read, in Dan Burnell the Ass,(300)

Among his verses, how there was a cock,
Because a priest's son gave to him a knock
Upon the leg, while young and not yet wise,
He caused the boy to lose his benefice.
But, truly, there is no comparison(305)
With the great wisdom and the discretion
Your father had, or with his subtlety.
Now sing, dear sir, for holy charity,
See if you can your father counterfeit."
This Chanticleer his wings began to beat,(310)
As one that could no treason there espy,
So was he ravished by this flattery.
Alas, you lords! Full many a flatterer
Is in your courts, and many a cozener,
That please your honours much more, by my fay,(315)
Than he that truth and justice dares to say.
Go read the Ecclesiast on flattery;
Beware, my lords, of all their treachery!
This Chanticleer stood high upon his toes,
Stretching his neck, and both his eyes did close,(320)
And so did crow right loudly, for the nonce;
And Russel Fox, he started up at once,
And by the gorget grabbed our Chanticleer,
Flung him on back, and toward the wood did steer,
For there was no man who as yet pursued.(325)
O destiny, you cannot be eschewed!
Alas, that Chanticleer flew from the beams!
Alas, his wife recked nothing of his dreams!
This simple widow and her daughters two
Heard these hens cry and make so great ado,(330)
And out of doors they started on the run
And saw the fox into the grove just gone,
Bearing in his mouth the cock away.
And then they cried, "Alas, and weladay!
Oh, the fox!" and after him they ran,(335)
And after them, with staves, went many a man;
Ran Coll, our dog, and Talbot and Garland,
Ran cow and calf and even the very hogs,
So were they scared by barking of the dogs
And shouting men and women all did make,(340)
They all ran so they thought their hearts would break.
And now, good men, I pray you hearken all.
Behold how Fortune turns all suddenly
The hope and pride of even her enemy!
This cock, which now lay in the fox's mouth,(345)
In all his fear unto the fox did clack
And say: "Sir, were I you, as I should be,
Then would I say (as God may now help me!),
'Turn back again, presumptuous peasants all!
A very pestilence upon you fall!(350)

Now that I've gained here to this dark wood's side,
 In spite of you this cock shall here abide.
 I'll eat him, by my faith, and that anon!"'
 The fox replied: "In faith, it shall be done!"
 And as he spoke that word, all suddenly(355)
 This cock broke from his mouth, full cleverly,
 And high upon a tree he flew anon.
 And when the fox saw well that he was gone,
 "Alas," quoth he, "O Chanticleer, alas!
 I have against you done a base trespass(360)
 Inasmuch as I made you afeared
 When I seized you and brought you from the yard;
 But, sir, I did it with no foul intent;
 Come down, and I will tell you what I meant.
 I'll tell the truth to you, God help me so!(365)
 "Nay then," said he, "beshrew us both, you know,
 But first, beshrew myself, both blood and bones,
 If you beguile me, having done so once,
 You shall no more, with any flattery,
 Cause me to sing and closeup either eye;(370)
 For he who shuts his eyes when he should see,
 And wilfully, God let him ne'er be free!"
 "Nay," said the fox, "but God give him mischance
 Who is so indiscreet in governance
 He chatters when he ought to hold his peace."(375)
 But you that hold this tale a foolery,
 As but about a fox, a cock, a hen,
 Yet do not miss the moral, my good men.
 For Saint Paul says that all that's written well
 Is written down some useful truth to tell.(380)
 Then take the wheat and let the chaff lie still.
 And now, good God, and if it be Thy will,
 As says Lord Christ, so make us all good men
 And bring us into His high bliss. Amen.

Summary

A very poor widow lives in a small cottage with her two daughters. Her main possession is a noble cock called Chaunticleer. This rooster is beautiful, and nowhere in the land is there a cock who can match him in crowing. He is the master, so he thinks, of seven lovely hens. The loveliest of these is the beautiful and gracious Lady Pertelote. She holds the heart of Chaunticleer and shares in all his glories and all his problems.

One spring morning, Chaunticleer awakens from a terrible dream of a beast roaming in the yard trying to seize him. This beast's color and markings were much the same as a fox. Lady Pertelote cries out, "For shame . . . Fie on you / heartless coward" ("Avoi (coward) . . . fy on you, herteless") and tells him that being afraid of dreams is cowardly and that, by showing such fear, he has lost her love. She tells him he dreamed because he ate too much and that it is well known that dreams have no meaning; he simply needs a laxative. Chaunticleer graciously thanks Lady Pertelote, but he quotes authorities who maintain that dreams have a very definite meaning and insists that he does not need a laxative.

Later, Chaunticleer catches sight of a fox named Don Russel, who is hiding near the farmyard. Chaunticleer begins to run, but the fox gently calls out that he only came to hear Chaunticleer's beautiful voice. Hearing this, the vain cock shuts his eyes and bursts into song. At that moment, the fox races to the cock, grasps him about the neck, and makes off with him. The hens in the barnyard make such a terrible commotion that they arouse the entire household. Soon the widow, her two daughters, the dogs, hens, geese, ducks, and even the bees, are chasing the fox.

Chaunticleer suggests to the fox to turn around and shout insults at his pursuers. The fox, thinking Chaunticleer's idea a good one, opens his mouth, and Chaunticleer nimbly escapes to a treetop. The fox tries once again to lure Chaunticleer down by compliments and flattery, but the rooster has learned his lesson.

At the conclusion of the tale, the Host praises the Nun's Priest. Observing the Priest's magnificent physique, he comments that, if the Priest were secular, his manhood would require not just seven hens, but seventeen. He thanks "Sir Priest" for the fine tale and turns to another for the next tale.

Analysis

The Nun's Priest's Tale is one of Chaucer's most brilliant tales, and it functions on several levels. The tale is an outstanding example of the literary style known as a bestiary (or a beast fable) in which animals behave like human beings. Consequently, this type of fable is often an insult to man or a commentary on man's foibles. To suggest that animals behave like humans is to suggest that humans often behave like animals.

This tale is told using the technique of the mock-heroic, which takes a trivial event and elevates it into something of great universal import. Alexander Pope's poem *The Rape of the Lock* is an excellent example a mock-heroic composition; it treats a trivial event (the theft of a lock of hair, in this case) as if it were sublime. Thus when Don Russel, the fox, runs off with Chaunticleer in his jaws, the chase that ensues involves every creature on the premises, and the entire scene is narrated in the elevated language found in the great epics where such language was used to enhance the splendid deeds of epic heroes. Chaucer uses elevated language to describe a fox catching a rooster in a barnyard — a far cry from the classic epics. The chase itself reminds one of Achilles' chasing Hector around the battlements in the *Iliad*. To compare the plight of Chaunticleer to that of Homer's Hector and to suggest that the chase of the fox is an epic chase similar to classical epics indicates the comic absurdity of the situation.

The mock-heroic tone is also used in other instances: when the Nun's Priest describes the capture of the Don Russel and refers to the event in terms of other prominent traitors (referring to the fox as "a new Iscariot, a second Ganelon and a false hypocrite, Greek Sinon") and when the barnyard animals discuss high philosophical and theological questions. For Lady Pertelote and Chaunticleer to discuss divine foreknowledge in a high intellectual and moral tone in the context of barnyard chickens is the height of comic irony. We must also remember the cause of the discussion of divine foreknowledge: Lady Pertelote thinks that Chaunticleer's dream or nightmare was the result of his constipation, and she recommends a laxative. Chaunticleer's rebuttal is a brilliant use of classical sources that comment on dreams and is a marvelously comic means of proving that he is not constipated and does not need a laxative. Throughout the mock-heroic, mankind loses much of its human dignity and is reduced to animal values.

The Nun's Priest's ideas and positions are set up in his genially ironic attitude toward both the simple life of the widow and the life of the rich and the great as represented by the cock, Chaunticleer (in Chaucer's English, the name means "clear singing"). The Nun's Priest's opening lines set up the contrast. A poor old widow with little property and small income leads a sparse life, and it does not cost much for her to get along. The implication is that living the humble Christian life is easier for the poor than for the rich, who have, like Chaunticleer, many obligations and great responsibilities (after all, if Chaunticleer does not crow at dawn, the sun cannot rise).

The Nun's Priest contrasts the two human worlds of the poor and the rich in the description of the poor widow and the elegant Chaunticleer. The widow's "bour and halle" (bedroom) was "ful sooty," that is black from the hearth-flame where she had eaten many a slim or slender meal. Notice the contrast: The term "bour and halle" comes from courtly verse of the time and conjures up the image of a castle. The idea of a "sooty bower" or hall is absurd: The rich would never allow such a thing. Yet soot is inevitable in a peasant's hut, and from the peasant's point of view, the cleanliness fetish of the rich may also be absurd. A slender meal ("sklendre meel") would of course be unthinkable among the rich, but it is all the poor widow has. Likewise, the widow has no great need of any "poynaunt sauce" because she has no gamey food (deer, swan, ducks, and do on) nor meats preserved past their season, and no aristocratic recipes. She has "No dayntee morsel" to pass through her "throte," but then, when Chaucer substitutes the word "throat" ("throte") for the expected "lips," the dainty morsel that the image calls up is no longer very dainty. The aristocratic disease gout does not keep the widow from dancing, but it's unlikely that she dances anyway. Dancing is for the young or rich. As a pious lower-class Christian, she scorns dancing of all kinds. In short, the whole description of the widow looks ironically at both the rich and the poor.

When the Nun's Priest turns to Chaunticleer, he begins to comment on the life of the rich in other ironic ways. Chaunticleer has great talents and grave responsibilities, but the cock's talent (crowing) is a slightly absurd one, however proud he may be of it. (In middle English. as in modern, "crowing" can also mean boasting or bragging.) And Chaunticleer's responsibility, making sure the sun does not go back down in the morning, is ludicrous. His other responsibilities — taking care of his wives — are equally silly. Part of the Nun's Priest's method in his light-hearted analysis of human pride is an ironic identification of Chaunticleer with everything noble that he can think of. His physical description, which uses many of the adjectives that would be used to describe the warrior/knight (words such as "crenelated," "castle Wall," "fine coral," "polished jet," "azure," "lilies," and "burnished gold," for example) reminds one of an elegant knight in shining armor.

The reader should be constantly aware of the ironic contrast between the barnyard and the real world, which might be another type of barnyard. That is, the "humanity" and "nobility" of the animals is ironically juxtaposed against their barnyard life. This contrast is an oblique comment on human pretensions and aspirations in view of the background, made clear when Don Russel challenges Chaunticleer to sing, and the flattery blinds Chaunticleer to the treachery. Here, the tale refers to human beings and the treachery found in the court through flattery. Chaunticleer's escape is also effected by the use of flattery. Don Russel learns that he should not babble or listen to flattery when it is better to keep quiet. And Chaunticleer has learned that flattery and pride go before a fall.

GLOSSARY

The equinoctial wheel imaginary band encircling the earth and aligned with the equator. The equinoctial wheel, like the earth, makes a 360-degree rotation every 24 hours: Thus, fifteen degrees would be the equivalent to one hour. It was a popular belief in the time of Chaucer that cocks crowed punctually on the hour.

azure a semi-precious stone, today called lapis lazuli. In the description of Chaunticleer, the use of azure reinforces his courtly appearance.

humors (humours) in Chaucer's time and well into the Renaissance, "humors" were the elemental fluids of the body — blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile — that regulated a person's physical health and mental disposition.

Cato Dionysius Cato, the author of a book of maxims used in elementary education (not to be confused with the more famous Marcus Cato the Elder and Marcus Cato the Younger, who were famous statesmen of ancient Rome).

tertian occurring every third day.

lauriol, centaury, and fumitory herbs that were used as cathartics or laxatives.

Kenelm a young prince who, at seven years old, succeeded his father but was slain by an aunt.

Macrobius the author of a famous commentary on Cicero's account of The Dream of Scipio.

Daniel See Daniel vii.

Joseph See Genesis xxxvii and xxxix-xli.

Croesus (Croesus) King of Lydia, noted for his great wealth.

Andromache wife of Hector, leader of the Trojan forces, who one night dreamed of Hector's death.

In principio / Mulier est hominis confusio a Latin phrase meaning "Woman is the ruin of man." Chaunticleer plays a trick on Lady Pertelote and translates the phrase as "Woman is man's joy and bliss."

Taurus, the bull the second sign of the zodiac.

Lancelot of the lake the popular knight of King Arthur's legendary Round Table.

Iscaiot, Judas the betrayer of Jesus to the Romans.

Ganelon, Geeniloun the betrayer of Roland, nephew of Charlemagne, to the Moors in the medieval French epic The Song of Roland.

Sinon a Greek who persuaded the Trojans to take the Greeks' wooden horse into their city, the result of which was the destruction of Troy.

Physiologus a collection of nature lore, describing both the natural and supernatural.

Don Brunel the Ass a twelfth-century work by the Englishman Nigel Wireker. The tale refers to a priest's son who breaks a rooster's leg by throwing a stone at it. In revenge, the bird declines to crow in the morning of the day when the priest is to be ordained and receive a benefice; the priest fails to wake up in time and, being late for the ceremony, loses his preferment.

Geoffrey reference to Geoffrey de Vinsauf, an author on the use of rhetoric during the twelfth century.

Pyrrhus the Greek who slew Priam, the king of Troy.

Hasdrubal the king of Carthage when it was destroyed by the Romans. His wife screamed so loudly that all of Carthage heard her, and she died by throwing herself upon Hasdrubal's funeral pyre. The comparison to Lady Pertelote is apropos.

Nero A tyrant who, according to legend, sent many of the senators to death accompanied by the screams and wailing of their wives. Thus, Lady Pertelote will be similar to the Roman wives if she loses her husband, Chaunticleer.

Jack Straw a leader of the riots in London during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

DIGGING BY SEAMUS HEANEY

Digging

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked,
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

ABOUT THE POET

Seamus Heaney is widely recognized as one of the major poets of the 20th century. A native of Northern Ireland, Heaney was raised in County Derry, and later lived for many years in Dublin. He was the author of over 20 volumes of poetry and criticism, and edited several widely used anthologies. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995 "for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past." Heaney taught at Harvard University (1985-2006) and served as the Oxford Professor of Poetry (1989-1994). He died in 2013.

SUMMARY OF THE POEM

I hold a short pen between my fingers, where it fits tightly, like a gun. Outside my window I hear the clear sound of a shovel working the pebbly earth. It's my father out there, digging.

Looking down, I see my father straining as he bends low to tend to the flowerbeds. When he comes back up, I think of him twenty years in the past, bending down in a steady rhythm to dig in the neat rows of potatoes.

His booted leg is placed sturdily and comfortably on the shovel, the shaft of which is secured against the inside of his knee. He pulls potatoes up from the ground, and then digs deeply into the ground again. This time he's replanting all the potatoes that we'd help him pick. We loved feeling how hard and cool they felt in our hands.

My God, my old man was incredible with a shovel. So was his father.

No one could beat my grandfather when it came to cutting turf on the swampy land that he worked. I remember once bringing him milk in a bottle, which I'd sealed messily by using some crumpled up paper as a cork. He stood up straight and drank it all, and then got back to his work right away. He cut neat slices in the turf, throwing the heavy surplus earth over his shoulder, digging deeper and deeper to get to the best stuff.

I remember the chilly smell of the potato mould and the squishing sound of the wet earth. Those memories are still alive in my mind. Unlike my father and grandfather, though, my labor doesn't involve a shovel.

I hold a short pen between my fingers. It's my tool—this is what I'll dig with.

Themes

Labor and Craft

Most simply, “Digging” is a poem about work. As the speaker, a writer, holds a pen in one hand, he hears his father, a former farmer, working the ground outside. The speaker admires his father for his determination to work tirelessly and the skill with which he uses a spade. Though the speaker metaphorically digs for words rather than into the earth, he still draws inspiration from the work ethic and expertise of his father (and grandfather). The poem, then, elevates manual labor by imbuing it with a sense of craft and artistry, while also insisting on the act of writing itself as a kind of work.

In the opening of “Digging,” the speaker is poised to start writing, his pen hovering above the page. But when he hears the sound of his father digging in the flowerbeds beneath the speaker's window, it brings back memories of his father digging potatoes many years before. Though to some people digging might seem like a pretty dull and repetitive task, the speaker presents it as a kind of artistry. He focuses admiringly in minute detail on his father's technique, while also acknowledging the physical difficulty of the work.

Digging is presented as a complex and technical process, one involving neat “potato drills” (the rows of potatoes in the ground), the strength to send a shovel deep into the earth again and again, and the knowledge of how and when to scatter crops. “By God, the old man could handle a spade,” the speaker says, emphasizing the expertise required of his father's labor.

Thinking about all this prompts the speaker to reflect on his grandfather too. Like the speaker's father, the older man provides an example of how best to approach work: through determination and skill. The speaker recounts how he once took some milk to his grandfather while he was digging—the grandfather drank the milk and got straight back to work, demonstrating his total commitment to the job at hand. Through the memory of these two men, then, the poem shows appreciation for dedication and effort—seeing the physical act of digging as an inspiration for writing poetry.

That's why the first and last stanzas are very different, even though they are almost identical on first look. Both focus on the same image—the speaker holding a pen above a page—but it's in the final stanza when he resolves to actually write. Except he doesn't say "write"; he says "dig." His father and grandfather provide a model for a way for the speaker to approach his work. And though the two types of work—manual and imaginative—are very different, writing is presented as its own kind of labor—one that that, though it may not require blood, sweat, and tears, certainly requires commitment and effort.

- **Where this theme appears in the poem:** Lines 1-2, Lines 6-9, Lines 10-14, Lines 15-16, Lines 17-24, Line 28, Lines 29-31

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- **Family and Tradition**

- "Digging" explores the relationship between three generations: the speaker, his father, and the speaker's grandfather. The speaker lives a very different life to his forebears—he's a writer, whereas his father and grandfather were farmers. But even though he isn't a digger of the earth, the speaker realizes that he can still honor his heritage by embracing the values of his elders. The speaker's life and art are shaped by his history, and in that history he sees a model for how to approach his own craft. In doing so, the poem argues, the speaker is in fact paying tribute to his father and grandfather. One doesn't have to follow in their ancestors' footsteps exactly to honor and preserve their heritage.

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- The speaker's father worked the earth, just like his father before him. Both men used a spade skillfully and were engaged in tough manual labor. Between those two men, then, there's an obvious sense of continuity, of skills and heritage being passed down from one generation to the next. The speaker, however, represents a break with this tradition. Though he remembers the "squelch and slap" of "soggy earth" and the "cold smell of potato mould," he either can't or doesn't want to follow his elders into the same kind of work. Instead, he is a writer—something that, on the surface at least, is about as far removed from physical labor as is possible.
- The speaker acknowledges this—he knows he has "no spade to follow men like them." But just because he is breaking with tradition in a literal sense, in another way he resolves to embody the values of that tradition. Hard work, grit, concentration, persistence—all of these are traits that the father and grandfather figures have taught to the speaker, who can now use them in his own way. This shows that the speaker is a part of his family tradition, just in a different way, and also demonstrates that the people someone grows up with can have a huge impact on how they see the world in later life (even if they led very different lives).

Accordingly, the poem ends on a plain-sounding expression of the speaker's intent: "The squat pen rests. / I'll dig with it." Just as the speaker's father and grandfather approached their work with diligence, the speaker will do the same in his writing. The use of "dig" as the main verb here makes it clear that the lessons the speaker learned from his father and grandfather will have a great role to play in what is to come—ensuring that tradition, in one way or another, is honored.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 3-31

"Digging" Symbols

- **Handheld tools**
- Handheld tools in the poem represent power and potential. Both spades (a.k.a. shovels) and pens are presented as important tools for labor—be it the manual labor of the speaker's father and grandfather, or the speaker's own labor of writing. The pen is the speaker's version of a spade, which is the poem's metaphorical way of saying that the speaker will use the pen just as his ancestors used their spades: to dig. But whereas the speaker's father and grandfather dug the earth to plant potatoes and find "good turf," the speaker will figuratively dig through his memories to inspire his writing. His digging involves remembering and honoring the values of his ancestors, and embodying those values even as his life's work ultimately follows a very different path.
- It's also worth noting that there is, arguably one other tool in the poem: the gun of line 2, which is part of a simile the speaker uses to describe the feel of the pen in his hand. A gun is a weapon, of course, and its presence in the poem creates some tension. It suggests that the speaker has within him a great potential power, that writing itself is a weapon of sorts. Against what? Perhaps against time itself—against the loss of heritage and familial tradition. And indeed the speaker does have the ability to preserve his family's heritage in words (i.e., via poetry) if not in actions. To "fire" the gun, metaphorically, is to write—which, again, has already been compared to "digging." Both the speaker's writing and his forebear's manual labor, then, are equated with a powerful preservation of Irish heritage and identity.
- **Where this symbol appears in the poem:** Line 2: "pen," "gun", Line 15: "spade", Line 30: "pen"

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- **"Digging" Poetic Devices & Figurative Language**

- **Alliteration**

- Alliteration is used frequently in "Digging." The first example is in the first stanza: Between **my** finger and **my** thumb, The **squat** pen rests; **snug** as a gun.
- Here, the alliteration is working alongside consonance and assonance to create a "snug" sounding stanza. That is, all the sounds themselves seem to fit perfectly together, just as the pen fits right in the speaker's hand (and the spade in his father's).

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The second stanza also uses alliteration:

... a clean rasping **s**ound

When the **s**pade **s**inks into **g**ravelly **g**round:

My father, **d**igging. I look **d**own

The alliteration here is used to convey the physical effort of digging a spade into the earth. The prominence of the alliterating syllables draws the reader's attention to speaking as a kind of physical effort, involving the muscles of the mouth (indeed, even reading silently involves some muscle movement too).

The fourth stanza uses alliteration to a similar effect:

He rooted out **t**all **t**ops, **b**uried the **b**right edge deep

To scatter new **p**otatoes that we **p**icked,

Loving their cool **h**ardness in our **h**ands.

Again, these syllables have a sort of firmness or toughness that mirrors the effort of digging. The plosive, air-stopping consonants—the /t/, /b/, and /p/—are followed by the breathy exhale of the /h/, evoking, via sound, the physical intensity of this work. It's also as though the speaker is himself digging into the language, bringing up crops of consonance.

Next up is the /d/ sound in lines 23 and 24. Here "**d**own and **d**own" alliterates with "**D**igging," linking these words together conceptually. That is, by digging, the person doing the digging goes further and further into the earth. This also carries the same meaning as in the previous two examples.

The greatest concentration of alliteration of saved for lines 25 and 26):

The **c**old **s**mell of **p**otato mould, the **s**quelch and **s**lap

Of **s**oggy **p**eat, the **c**urt **c**uts of an edge

The onomatopoeic quality of these lines is covered in the corresponding section of this guide. But it's worth noting how the numerous /s/ sounds seem to convey the dampness of the earth in which the speaker's father (and grandfather) would dig.

Where alliteration appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "my," "my", Line 2: "squat," "snug", Line 3: "sound"
- **Line 4:** "spade sinks", Line 5: "digging," "down", Line 8: "drills"
- **Line 9:** "digging", Line 12: "tall tops," "buried the bright"
- **Line 13:** "potatoes," "picked", Line 14: "hardness," "hands"
- **Line 22:** "slicing," "sods", Line 23: "down and down", Line 24: "Digging", Line 25: "smell", Lines 25-26: "squelch and slap / Of soggy", Line 26: "curt cuts", Line 28: "spade", Line 29: "my," "my"

Form, Meter, & Rhyme Scheme of "Digging"

• Form

- "Digging" doesn't follow a conventional poetic form. Instead its eight stanzas vary in length, some as short as two lines, while the longest, the sixth, has eight lines. The first effect of this is visual—notice how the text actually looks on the page. Considering the poem's main metaphorical idea—that writing is a kind of labor, like digging—it's tempting to view the different chunks of text on the page as representing the clumps of earth upturned by a spade. Like clumps of earth, the stanzas are made out of the same material—language—but they come in all shapes and sizes.
- The poem has a nearly circular form, starting and ending with almost identical stanzas. In between, the speaker goes deeper and deeper into his memory, conjuring an image of his father and then his grandfather—and finding inspiration in both figures. There is one difference between the first and last stanzas, however, and it's crucial. Having mentally revisited his forebears, the speaker resolves in the last stanza to "dig" with his pen (whereas the first stanza is an image of inaction). This shows the importance of the memories in giving the speaker a kind of model for how to proceed.

• Meter

- "Digging" doesn't have a strict meter; it's written in free verse, reflecting the freely flowing memory of the speaker and the way one image will inspire another in his mind. That said, some lines do fall into an iambic pattern (da DUM). The first line, for example, scans perfectly as iambic tetrameter (meaning there are four poetic feet of unstressed-stressed syllables):
- **Between | my fin- | ger and | my thumb**
- The neatness of the sound here suggests the "snug" way in which the pen fits the speaker's hand—and how he has found his chosen craft.
- The first two lines of the third stanza also use meter to great effect:
- Till his **straining rump among the flowerbeds**
- **Bends low**, comes **up twenty years away**
- Notice how the stresses help convey a sense of physical effort, with great weight landing on "strain" and "Bends low." This reminds the reader of the physicality of manual labor, and helps build a picture of the father as a determined worker.
- Interestingly, the final stanza is again fully iambic (though "pen" could be viewed as stressed too):
- **Between | my fin- | ger and | my thumb**
- The **squat | pen rests.**
- I'll **dig | with it.**
- The tight meter here could be read as a metaphor for poetry itself—that is, the speaker shows his commitment to his craft by intensifying the poetic sound of his words.

Rhyme Scheme

- "Digging" doesn't have a rhyme scheme, but it does use rhyme here and there. Both examples come at the beginning: ... my **thumb**, ... a **gun**.
- ... clean rasping **sound**, ... gravelly **ground**; ... I look **down**
- "Thumb" and "gun" are slant rhymes based on vowel sound, while "sound" and "ground" rhyme fully. The first rhyming pair contribute to a highly patterned opening stanza, in terms of sound. This helps suggest the idea of "snugness"—the way in which the pen fits perfectly in the speaker's hand.
- The next three rhymes have a more hypnotic effect, perhaps suggesting that the speaker is falling under a kind of spell of memory. These rhymes pull the speaker—and the reader—into the speaker's childhood, and it's here that the speaker finds inspiration in the figures of his father and grandfather.

“Digging” Speaker

- The first-person speaker doesn't define who he is, but this is generally taken to be Heaney himself (indeed, that's how it comes across in Heaney's interviews about the poem). The poem opens with a picture of the speaker in a state of inaction, his pen hovering over the page. Already, the reader gets the impression that the speaker is a writer—or at least an aspiring writer.
- This is important, because what follows could be interpreted as an invocation. An invocation is an address to deity or muse that asks for help in the following poetic composition (John Milton's "Sing heavenly muse" in *Paradise Lost* is a good example). This poem comes at the start of Heaney's first collection, *Death of a Naturalist*, and it's fair to say that the poem does work as a kind of mission statement, with the speaker committing to honor his forebears through dedication, hard work, and craftsmanship. Indeed, much of this collection draws on Heaney's own childhood memories, suggesting that, perhaps, it is the past that functions as Heaney's muse/deity. Either way, the speaker is inspired by his father and grandfather to "dig" with his pen—to write.

“Digging” Setting

- The poem opens with the speaker at a desk, suggesting he's inside a room of some sort. He's sitting by a window, outside of which he can hear his elderly father working in the flowerbeds. This sound might be real or imaginary; either way, it prompts the speaker to delve into his memories—introducing a new setting to the poem. Here, he admires the way that his father and grandfather work the land—which is distinctly Irish because of the reference to "potatoes" and "turf."
- In a sense, then, the poem takes place in the speaker's mind—but his memories are firmly rooted in the rural Irish landscape. Indeed, part of the poem's aim is to bring that world to life—through, for example, the onomatopoeic sounds in the penultimate stanza. Ultimately, the poem returns to the present, the final stanza almost identical to the first. Except this time, however, the speaker turns to the future—inspired by his father and grandfather, he resolves to write.

"STILL I RISE" BY MAYA ANGELOU

Still I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may tread me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

ABOUT THE POET

Born in Missouri in 1928, Maya Angelou had a difficult childhood. Jim Crow laws segregated blacks and whites in the South. Her family life was unstable at times. But much like her poem, "Still I Rise," Angelou was able to lift herself out of her situation and flourish. She moved to California and became the first black—and first female—streetcar operator before following her interest in dance. She became a professional performer in her twenties and toured the U.S. and Europe as an opera star and calypso dancer. But Angelou's writing became her defining talent. Her poems and books, including *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, brought her international acclaim.

Background of Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou was an American author, poet, memoirist, actress, screenwriter, dancer, and civil rights activist. She was also the first female inaugural poet in U.S. presidential history and read a poem in 1993 for President Bill Clinton's inauguration. She spent most of her childhood and youth mute, but found her voice in poetry.

The main themes that can be found in her writing include African American experiences, love, loss, music, discrimination, family, identity, racism, struggle, and slavery. The purpose of her work was to show the inequality between blacks and whites in America. Angelou wanted to enlighten blacks and uplift society with her work.

In the "And Still I Rise" volume, there are three sections, comprising a total of 32 poems, which cover different feelings and themes. The sections are as follows:

Part One: "Touch Me, Life, Not Softly"

This first part is considered joyful and talks about the strength of being a woman and a lover. It includes the following poems: "A Kind of Love, Some Say," "Country Lover," "Remembrance," "Where We Belong, A Duet," "Phenomenal Woman," "Men," "Refusal," and "Just For A Time."

"Still I Rise" Summary

Maya Angelou uses her poem "Still I Rise" to celebrate self-love and self-acceptance. Through the different themes and emotions, the poet praises her inner strength and her ability to overcome any obstacle.

Still I Rise" Analysis

Throughout this poem, the speaker's tone is playful, defiant, and angry. She uses this to address slavery and oppression and to accuse society of its actions. The poem, stanza by stanza, shows the following:

Stanza 1 and 2: Referencing historical memories and records, the narrator shares her story and states that what history has laid out are only lies. Angelou states that, with the help of her sassiness, she will not be stopped and will not let others get to her.

Stanza 3 and 4: There is hope here that things will get better and the future will be brighter. She believes that others, like society and/or the community, want to see her in a weakened state. They do not like seeing her strength, but Angelou stands tall against them.

Stanza 5 and 6: Talk of upsetting the audience and readers here can be seen, but Angelou states that she doesn't care if her audience gets offended because she has to stay true to herself. Angelou will remain joyous and full of laughter as she confronts her audience.

Stanza 7 and 8: Sexuality is covered here and Angelou doesn't care if readers are offended by that too. She talks about her African American heritage and how she will not let her story just be about how she continues to overcome this legacy of subordination.

Stanza 9: The final stanza covers everything again that was in stanzas 1-8, but with a deeper meaning. Angelou is showing a transition from darkness into the light, going from being oppressed to standing up to oppression.

Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" Meaning

"Still I Rise" is about civil rights, the assertion of dignity, the power of resilience, and oppression. Angelou wrote this poem in the late 1970s, during the Post-Civil Rights Movement Era, and the black feminist movement was also gaining strength at this time. This is what fueled her to write, along with the death of Martin Luther King Jr. She uses her words to state people should overcome oppression, and it resonates with so many people, even today.

Themes of "Still I Rise"

There are many themes seen in "Still I Rise", like strength, resilience, and confidence. Each of these is explained below:

Strength

This poem is not only a proclamation of her own determination to fight oppression and rise above society, but also a call to others that they should do the same. She saw the effects slavery had on society and the African American people and used her strength, through words and actions, to fight back.

Resilience

This poem is about racial legacy, struggle, and overcoming obstacles. Angelou talks about being born in oppression and how she never gave up and stood resilient against her oppressors. The frequent use of the words "I'll rise" show her determination and resilience.

Confidence

Angelou talks about overcoming anything that is put in her path by her self-esteem. She felt like nothing could get her down, and she made sure of that. She refused to let society use her skin color, or anything else, against her.

African Heritage and Experience

Maya Angelou found hope and courage from learning about the stories of her African ancestors. Slavery in America stripped men and women not only of their freedom, but of their culture and identity as well.

'Still I Rise'

The title poem, 'Still I Rise,' is typical of Angelou's work, both in format and in theme. The opening stanza introduces the central theme of strength and resiliency in the face of extreme difficulties:

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Now considering the final stanza of the poem, notice how the line 'I rise' is repeated five times total, with the thrice-repeated final lines driving home her simple and powerful message of flourishing as an African American woman:

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,

POETIC DEVICE

Repetition

Repetition plays an important role in “Still I Rise.” The speaker repeats the phrase “I rise” many times throughout the poem, establishing a defiant refrain that underscores her strength and resilience. This refrain initially appears at the end of the first stanza, when the speaker announces: “But still, like dust, I’ll rise” (line 4). The phrase appears again at the end of the third and sixth stanzas. Then, in the eighth stanza, a simplified version of the phrase begins to interrupt the quatrain form (lines 29–34):

Out of the huts of history’s shame
I rise
Up from a past that’s rooted in pain
I rise
I’m a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

The refrain of “I rise” becomes even more prominent in the poem’s final stanza, which concludes with three iterations of the same phrase: “I rise / I rise / I rise” (lines 41–43). The repetition of this phrase doesn’t simply emphasize the speaker’s message about resilience. It also sets the overall tone of defiance in the face of an oppressive society.

Parallelism

Closely related to the speaker’s use of repetition is her use of parallelism. Parallelism is a rhetorical technique that coordinates separate ideas through the repetition of similar wording or phrasing. The mere repetition of words and phrases can produce any number of effects. By contrast, parallelism specifically helps to bring a sense of order and balance to the arrangement of ideas. Such a sense of order and balance helps demonstrate the relations between ideas, which in turn can have a persuasive effect. For one example, consider the poem’s third stanza (lines 9–12):

Just like moon and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I’ll rise.

This passage creates a parallel structure through the repetition of the phrase “Just like.” This phrase opens two sequential dependent clauses, establishing a two-part simile that the speaker resolves with the independent clause in the final line: “Still I rise.” The use of parallel structure in this stanza sets up a pleasing effect of tension and resolution that helps persuade the reader of the confidence the speaker has in her own resilience.

Simile and Metaphor

Throughout the poem, the speaker employs simile and metaphor to describe the various ways in which she will rise above oppression. Recall that a simile (SIH-muh-lee) is a figure of speech that explicitly compares two unlike things to each other. A metaphor (MEH-tuh-for), by contrast, makes a more implicit comparison between two unlike things. The opening stanza offers a useful example of how the speaker makes use of both figures of speech to similar effect (lines 1–4):

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

In these lines, the speaker addresses the tendency of her oppressive society to misrepresent the history of her people. At first, she develops a metaphor that implicitly likens the experience of misrepresentation to being “trod . . . in the very dirt.” However, just as dust floats into the air when you try to stomp it down, the speaker will rise above the attempt to suppress her or the history of her people. The speaker makes this point through the more explicit simile that appears in the final line of the quoted passage: “But still, like dust, I’ll rise.” Comparable metaphors and similes appear throughout the poem.

Rhetorical Questions

Of all the poetic devices used in the poem, perhaps the most prominent is the rhetorical question. The speaker asks no fewer than eight rhetorical questions, each of which she addresses to an unspecified “you.” Generally speaking, rhetorical questions aren’t meant to be answered. Rather, writers use them to make a point or to create a dramatic effect. In the case of “Still I Rise,” the speaker uses rhetorical questions to establish her attitude of defiance. She directs her questions toward an oppressive society that expects Black women to be quiet and submissive. In response to these expectations, she exudes a defiant sense of irony. Consider these lines (lines 3–16) from the fourth stanza:

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

In these and other lines throughout the poem, the speaker uses rhetorical questions in a twofold way. On the one hand, she acknowledges the oppressive expectations her society has of her. On the other hand, by framing these expectations as rhetorical questions, she implicitly rejects them. What she’s really saying in these lines is that she isn’t broken, burdened by shame, or overcome by sadness. On the contrary, she’s whole, confident, and strong.

"TELEPHONE CALL" BY FLEUR ADCOCK

The Telephone Call

They asked me 'Are you sitting down?
Right? This is Universal Lotteries,'
they said. 'You've won the top prize,
the Ultra-super Global Special.
What would you do with a million pounds?
Or, actually, with more than a million—
not that it makes a lot of difference
once you're a millionaire.' And they laughed.

'Are you OK?' they asked—'Still there?
Come on, now, tell us, how does it feel?'
I said 'I just . . . I can't believe it!'
They said 'That's what they all say.
What else? Go on, tell us about it.'
I said 'I feel the top of my head
has floated off, out through the window,
revolving like a flying saucer.'

'That's unusual,' they said. 'Go on.'
I said 'I'm finding it hard to talk.
My throat's gone dry, my nose is tingling.
I think I'm going to sneeze—or cry.'
'That's right,' they said, 'don't be ashamed
of giving way to your emotions.
It isn't every day you hear
you're going to get a million pounds.

Relax, now, have a little cry;
we'll give you a moment . . . 'Hang on!' I said.
'I haven't bought a lottery ticket
for years and years. And what did you say
the company's called?' They laughed again.
'Not to worry about a ticket.
We're Universal. We operate
a Retrospective Chances Module.

Nearly everyone's bought a ticket
in some lottery or another,
once at least. We buy up the files,
feed the names into our computer,
and see who the lucky person is.'
'Well, that's incredible,' I said.
'It's marvellous. I still can't quite . . .
I'll believe it when I see the cheque.'

'Oh,' they said, 'there is no cheque.'
'But the money?' 'We don't deal in money.
Experiences are what we deal in.
You've had a great experience, right?
Exciting? Something you'll remember?
That's your prize. So congratulations
from all of us at Universal.
Have a nice day!' And the line went dead.

ANALYSIS OF THE "THE TELEPHONE CALL"

ABOUT THE POET

Fleur Adcock, (born February 10, 1934, Papakura, New Zealand), New Zealand-born British poet known for her tranquil domestic lyrics intercut with flashes of irony and glimpses of the fantastic and the macabre.

"The Telephone Call" appears in Fleur Adcock's collection *The Incident Book* (1986). It describes a mysterious phone call from "Universal Lotteries," an organization claiming that the speaker has won their grand prize. When the callers finally admit the speaker hasn't won any money, they claim the true "prize" was the memorable "experience" of the call itself. The poem can be read as a miniature fable about ordinary disappointment, suggesting that human experience always falls short of our wildest hopes. Metaphorically speaking, we never win the lottery; at best, we get to entertain the fantasy for a while.

"The Telephone Call" Summary

A group identifying themselves as "Universal Lotteries" calls the speaker's phone and asks if they're sitting down (i.e., ready to hear major news). The callers claim the speaker has won the "Special" grand prize in their "Global" lottery. The callers ask how the speaker might spend the prize, which is a million British pounds. They clarify that it's over a million pounds, noting with amusement that the distinction doesn't matter much when the amount of money is so huge.

The callers ask if the speaker is feeling all right and if they're still on the phone. They urge the speaker to share their emotions. The speaker stammers that they're in disbelief. The callers say that everyone reacts that way and urges them to continue. The speaker says they're as lightheaded as if the crown of their head has flown off through the window, spinning like a spaceship.

The callers note that this is a strange feeling and ask the speaker to continue. The speaker says that they're getting choked up, that they have dry mouth, and that their nose itches as if they're about to sneeze or burst into tears. The callers assure the speaker that they shouldn't be embarrassed to let their feelings show; after all, it's rare to hear that you're about to become a millionaire.

The callers urge the speaker to let their tears flow for a minute. But the speaker tells them to wait, objects that it's been years since they entered a lottery, and skeptically asks the callers to repeat the name of their organization. Amused, the callers say it doesn't matter that the speaker hasn't entered a lottery lately. Their organization's name is "Universal," and they use a retroactive system ("Module").

Most people have entered a lottery at some point, and they're all eligible for Universal's prize, because Universal purchases all past lottery entries and uses a computer program to draw a winner from them. The speaker expresses wonderment but says they won't fully believe their luck until they've received their prize check.

The callers say they won't be sending any prize check. When the speaker asks about the monetary award, the callers say their lottery doesn't actually hand out money: it hands out "Experiences." The callers claim the phone call itself has been an incredible, thrilling, memorable experience; that's what the speaker has won. The callers congratulate the speaker, add a pleasant goodbye, and hang up.

"The Telephone Call" Themes

Hope and Disappointment

In "The Telephone Call," a group of mysterious callers claims that the speaker has won the lottery and become a millionaire. The speaker is skeptical, since they haven't entered a lottery recently, but they display some joy and hope even as they question the callers. Eventually, the callers admit it's all a hoax; instead of "money," they explain, they provide "Experiences," and they've given the speaker a memorable one. By this time, the speaker has fallen for the fantasy just enough to make the reality a bitter anticlimax. The poem illustrates, then, how easy it is to give into unrealistic hopes—and how doing so can make inevitable disappointment all the more crushing.

Even though the speaker suspects their amazing luck is too good to be true, they get partly swept up in hope—and correspondingly disappointed. On hearing that they've won "the top prize" in the lottery, the speaker's first response is, "I just... I can't believe it!" The stammering exclamation suggests they're already feeling happy, even if skepticism prevents them from being overjoyed. When the callers urge the speaker to "giv[e] way to your emotions," the speaker gets choked up and feels as if they might "cry." Throughout the call, the speaker remains a little doubtful—"I'll believe it when I see the cheque"—so when there turns out to be no cheque, they're at least partly prepared. Yet joy has started to overtake their rational doubts. The fact that they indulge in some irrational hope shows that even skeptics are liable to do so.

The poem casts this cycle of guarded hope and predictable disappointment as universal: part of the "experience" all humans share. When the speaker's initial reaction is "I can't believe it!" the callers reply, "That's what they all say." This might suggest that it's common to distrust amazing news, since most people know firsthand that such news is often false. But "I can't believe it!" is also a joyous exclamation that betrays some desire to believe—and this, too, is part of human nature.

Similarly, the hoaxers claim that the speaker must have entered a lottery sometime: "Nearly everyone's bought a ticket / In some lottery or another, / Once at least." Metaphorically, this claim implies that we all indulge wild hopes at some point, and can feel stung by their failure to come true even when we're no longer young and optimistic. The company's name, "Universal Lotteries," hints at this same idea. The callers even say, "We're Universal," as if implying that everyone goes through the roller coaster of hope at some point.

Joyous hope followed by a letdown may not be "Exciting," as the callers claim, but the poem suggests that it is a kind of universal "prize." It's something we're all dealt as players in the game of life—even if the circumstances are usually more boring than a prank call from a fake lottery.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

Lines 1-48

Illusions vs. Experience

After revealing that the speaker hasn't won any money in the lottery, the callers in "The Telephone Call" claim that the real "prize" was "a great experience." This phrase evokes an age-old literary theme: the journey from ignorance, innocence, or illusion to experience, as in hard-won wisdom. In this case, however, experience is such an obviously anticlimactic "prize" (compared to the riches originally promised) that the poem ends up mocking its value. Experience, the poem implies, isn't inherently "great"; some illusions are even preferable to harsh lessons and painful memories.

Although the speaker never quite falls for the illusory lottery news, even their cautious hope clearly improves their mood. When asked to describe their emotions, the speaker feels as if their head has flown off "like a flying saucer," and the callers reply, "That's unusual." The news makes the speaker feel something remarkable, even if it's not full-blown euphoria. The callers then encourage the speaker to emote more, explaining: "It isn't every day you hear / You're going to get a million pounds." The speaker won't be getting that money, but just "hear[ing]" they will—just the brief illusion—has the power to produce an emotional high. In fact, while the speaker's better judgement continues to nag at them, they start to feel some giddiness ("that's incredible [...] It's marvelous") mixed in with their doubts.

By contrast, the "experience" the speaker wins as a "prize" is sourly anticlimactic—and reminiscent of more familiar forms of disappointment. After revealing their hoax, the callers ask: "You've had a great experience, right? / Exciting? Something you'll remember? / That's your prize."

The irony is clear: whatever innocent "Excit[ement]" the speaker may have felt has now been ruined by reality. And no one actually enjoys "remember[ing]" a major letdown! The "prize" of "experience" is not only far worse than a million pounds, it's worse than the speaker's unassuming pre-phone-call state. Rather than share their feelings about their supposed prize, the speaker says nothing to the callers, then flatly reports, "the line went dead." Metaphorically, this detail may suggest that their emotions have gone dead: whatever happiness they were feeling has evaporated. Experience hasn't left them happier or wiser, just numb and silent (the poem ends here).

Cruel as the letdown is, it's also, in a sense, perfectly ordinary. The disappointed speaker is no worse off financially than they were before the phone call and no worse off than millions of lottery losers. For most people, not winning the lottery—literally or metaphorically—is an "every day" event, even if they don't get the news via telephone! In that sense, the speaker's harsh "experience" is just a heightened or allegorical version of normal human experience.

In short, the poem's closing ironies show that "experience" has no inherent positive value. Though the callers chirp, "Have a nice day!" it's clear that the speaker's day would have been better without this "experience." If anything, the "Call" calls attention to the relative poverty of a life the speaker had been basically content with. (They mention that they "[hadn't] bought a lottery ticket / for years and years.") Even when experiences are memorable, they can be disappointing and deadening.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

Lines 9-48

Line-by-Line Explanation & Analysis of "The Telephone Call"

Lines 1-4 They asked me ..., ... Ultra-Super Global Special.

The opening of "The Telephone Call" grabs the reader's attention by jumping right into a dialogue. All but the last words of the poem will consist of a conversation between the callers, who identify themselves as "Universal Lotteries," and an unidentified speaker. As in fiction and other prose narratives, the dialogue in this narrative poem serves multiple purposes: it propels the story forward, provides exposition, and illustrates the personalities of the characters speaking.

There's no initial scene-setting, so it's not clear where the speaker is receiving this call. However, given the nature of the call (a notification about supposed lottery winnings), a home setting is likely. The pronoun "They" may indicate that there are multiple callers on the other end—a faux prize committee, perhaps—or "They" may refer to "Universal Lotteries" as a collective, to a single caller whose gender isn't known/revealed, etc. (This guide will refer to callers in the plural.)

The callers begin by asking if the speaker is sitting down—a common way of prefacing big news. (Presumably, the recipient of the news will need to steady themselves for a shock.) After identifying themselves as a lottery company, the callers claim that the speaker has won their "top prize," called "the Ultra-Super Global Special." Both "Universal" and "Global Special" suggest that this is a large, international company and that the speaker has won a huge prize out of a large field of participants—in other words, the speaker has truly hit the jackpot.

These names will gain other implications, too, as the poem goes on. Since lotteries are symbols of chance and fortune, "Universal Lotteries" may suggest that the company symbolizes the cosmic workings of fate itself. The name may also hint that there's something "universally" relatable about the experience they give the speaker: a surge of hope followed by disappointment. Lines 5-8 What would you millionaire." And they laughed. Lines 9-13 "Are you OK?" us about it." Lines 14-20 I said "I to sneeze—or cry." Lines 21-26

"That's right" they you a moment..." Lines 26-32 "Hanson!" I said. .

... retrospective Chances Module. Lines 33-37 Nearly everyone's bought lucky person is." Lines 38-42 "Well, that's incredible" deal in money. Lines 43-48 Experiences are what ..., ... line went dead.

"The Telephone Call" Symbols

The Lottery

Lotteries are games of chance, so they're often symbols of chance, luck, and fate in general. This poem's (fake) lottery is no exception. On receiving the phone call from "Universal Lotteries," the poem's confused speaker says, "I haven't bought a lottery ticket / for years and years." Symbolically, this suggests that they've long since accepted their fate in life; they've stopped taking risks or entertaining their wildest dreams. They no longer imagine themselves winning the lottery in the idiomatic, metaphorical sense: that is, stumbling into success and happiness by a stroke of good fortune.

"Universal Lotteries" holds out—and then withdraws—the hope that fate has somehow smiled on them anyway. Even the name "Universal" suggests that this is a cosmic lottery, representing the larger forces of fate. It's as though fate itself is promising the speaker an amazing life, only to admit in the end that the promise was an illusion; all the speaker has really gained is the wisdom of "experience." Figuratively speaking, fate disappoints most people in similar fashion—only without informing them by phone. To put it another way: mere "experience," as opposed to blissful happiness, is all that most of us ever win from the "lottery" of life.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

Lines 2-4: "This is Universal Lotteries," / they said. "You've won the top prize, / the Ultra-Super Global Special."

Lines 27-37: "'I haven't bought a lottery ticket / for years and years. And what did you say / the company's called?' They laughed again. / 'Not to worry about a ticket. / We're Universal. We operate / A retrospective Chances Module. / Nearly everyone's bought a ticket / in some lottery or another, / once at least. We buy up the files, / feed the names into our computer, / and see who the lucky person is.'"

Lines 42-47: "'We don't deal in money. / Experiences are what we deal in. / You've had a great experience, right? / Exciting? Something you'll remember? / That's your prize. So congratulations / from all of us at Universal.'"

"The Telephone Call" Poetic Devices & Figurative Language

Irony

The poem's narrative hinges on a simple situational irony. The protagonist is led to believe they've won the lottery, only to find out there's a major catch: the top prize awarded by "Universal Lotteries" turns out to be the mere "experience" of a memorable phone call, not "more than a million" pounds (as the "Universal" callers initially imply). This ironic reversal of expectations ends the poem on a note of anticlimax and bitter disappointment.

Technically, the callers never lie; that is, they never directly promise the speaker a large sum of money. In the first stanza, they say, "You've won the top prize," then ask, "What would you do with a million pounds?" This strongly implies that the prize is monetary, but the statement and question don't have to be related—and in fact, the "prize" turns out to be very different.

Later, the callers remark, "It isn't every day you hear / you're going to get a million pounds"—but again, this is subtly different than stating that they will get the money. These technicalities make the irony even crueler; they suggest that "Universal" has misled the speaker on purpose.

Even the callers' wording at the end is loaded with irony:

You've had a great experience, right?
Exciting? Something you'll remember?

Clearly, the phone call was "great" until it wasn't! And it's "Something" the speaker will "remember" only because it's disappointing. No one would prefer a disappointing "experience" to a million pounds! The callers almost seem to be mocking the speaker, right down to their final "Have a nice day!"

Where irony appears in the poem:

Lines 11-12: "I said "I just... I can't believe it!" / They said "That's what they all say."

Lines 41-48: "'Oh," they said, "there's no cheque." / "But the money?" "We don't deal in money. / Experiences are what we deal in. / You've had a great experience, right? / Exciting? Something you'll remember? / That's your prize. So congratulations / from all of us at Universal. / Have a nice day!"

Rhetorical Question

Where rhetorical question appears in the poem:

Lines 44-45: "You've had a great experience, right? / Exciting? Something you'll remember?"

Repetition

Where repetition appears in the poem:

Line 2: "Universal Lotteries"

Line 5: "a million pounds"

Line 6: "a million"

Line 8: "millionaire"

Line 10: "tell us"

Line 13: "Go on," "tell us"

Line 17: "Go on"

Line 19: "My," "my"

Line 20: "cry"

Line 24: "a million pounds"

Line 25: "cry"

Line 26: "I said"

Line 27: "lottery ticket"

Line 28: "years," "years"

Line 30: "a ticket"

Line 31: "Universal"

Line 33: "a ticket"

Line 34: "lottery"

Line 38: "I said"

Line 40: "cheque"

Line 41: "cheque"

Line 42: "money," "money"

Line 43: "Experiences"

Line 44: "experience"

Line 47: "Universal"

Dialogue

Where dialogue appears in the poem:

Lines 1-48

Cliché

Where cliché appears in the poem:

Line 1: "Are you sitting down?"

Line 11: "I can't believe it!"

Line 12: "That's what they all say."

Line 23: "It isn't every day"

Line 25: "have a little cry"

Line 48: "Have a nice day!"

Form, Meter, and Rhyme Scheme of "The Telephone Call"

Form

The poem consists of six octaves, or eight-line stanzas. It's written in free verse, meaning that it has no meter or rhyme scheme, but its lines are of approximately even length (seven to ten syllables).

These formal choices make the poem extremely approachable and easy to read. The lack of rhyme and meter helps the language sound natural and conversational—well suited to a poem that mostly consists of dialogue. The equal-sized stanzas break this plain language into smaller, manageable units, much like paragraphs in a work of prose. (In general, this poem reads like a very short story; it's narrative rather than lyric.) The poem's form makes it easy to digest, even as the "experience" it describes leaves a bitter aftertaste.

Meter

The poem is written in free verse; it doesn't follow a regular meter. At the same time, its line lengths stay very consistent, ranging between seven and ten syllables. (Line 6 might be eleven, depending on how you count.)

The lack of meter gives the poem a loose, conversational quality—after all, it describes a conversation. In general, the combination of unadorned speech, even stanza lengths, and fairly even line lengths makes the poem's language extremely smooth and approachable. The poem tells its story straightforwardly, in easily digestible segments, without any elaborate formal tricks getting in the way.

Rhyme Scheme

As a free verse poem, "The Telephone Call" has no rhyme scheme. It narrates a simple, colloquial conversation as straightforwardly as possible. Traditional poetic effects like rhyme and meter would detract from that conversational quality.

The phrase "million pounds" does occur at the ends of two lines (5 and 24), and the word "cheque" ends two consecutive lines (40 and 41). Though these aren't really rhymes, the repetition of these money-related terms helps drive home what's at stake in the narrative (a lot of money!).

A few other words/phrases recur at the ends of lines, too: "cry" (lines 20 and 25), "I said" (lines 26 and 38), and "ticket" (lines 27, 30, and 33). Again, these don't register as rhymes, but they provide subtle links between stanzas while drawing attention to some of the poem's key words. (For example, "cry" underscores the high emotion of the moment, and "ticket" recurs because the way this lottery supposedly works becomes an important point in the narrative.)

"The Telephone Call" Speaker

The poem provides almost no identifying information about the speaker; their name, age, gender, etc. are never revealed. Presumably, they're an adult (someone old enough to buy lottery tickets) residing in the UK (or another country that uses "pounds" as its currency). They're not fabulously wealthy, since the prize of "more than a million" pounds would substantially impact their life. Also, they've apparently entered "some lottery or another, / once at least," since they accept this as their qualification for winning the grand prize.

Otherwise, they could be just about anyone—and that's the point! The poem presents a universally relatable scenario, as the name "Universal Lotteries" playfully suggests. All but the most hardened skeptics would feel some hope if they got a phone call claiming they'd won a fortune. And it's true that most adults have entered a lottery of some kind, at some point, in countries that offer them. ("Nearly everyone[]" might be an exaggeration, but for example, about 50% of American adults play state lotteries each year.) In a metaphorical sense, too, everyone hopes to win the lottery—that is, hopes their wildest dreams will come true.

The generic speaker makes this already relatable poem even easier to identify with. Unless they've already achieved all their dreams, any reader can picture themselves in the speaker's place.

"The Telephone Call" Setting

The poem doesn't specify a setting. However, it describes a "Telephone Call" in the age before cell phones, most likely made to a personal/home number. (Lotteries have sometimes contacted winners via home phone—as have scams pretending to be lotteries!—but it would be quite unusual for them to reach out via other numbers.) So this is almost certainly a domestic setting, complete with an old-school landline.

Like the generic speaker, the lack of a defined location makes the poem's scenario seem as "Universal" as the fake lottery itself. ("Universal Lotteries" claims to be a "Global" operation, drawing from lotteries played worldwide.) The poem spins a tale of raised hopes and stinging disappointment that almost anyone, anywhere, can relate to.

"STONE" BY WILFRED WILSON GIBSON

The Stone

"And will you cut a stone for him,
To set above his head?
And will you cut a stone for him—
A stone for him?" she said.

Three days before, a splintered rock
Had struck her lover dead—
Had struck him in the quarry dead,
Where, careless of a warning call,
He loitered, while the shot was fired—
A lively stripling, brave and tall,
And sure of all his heart desired . . .
A flash, a shock,
A rumbling fall . . .
And, broken 'neath the broken rock,
A lifeless heap, with face of clay,
And still as any stone he lay,
With eyes that saw the end of all.

I went to break the news to her:
And I could hear my own heart beat
With dread of what my lips might say;
But some poor fool had sped before;
And, flinging wide her father's door,
Had blurted out the news to her,
Had struck her lover dead for her,
Had struck the girl's heart dead in her,
Had struck life, lifeless, at a word,
And dropped it at her feet:
Then hurried on his witless way,
Scarce knowing she had heard

And when I came, she stood alone—
A woman, turned to stone:
And, though no word at all she said,
I knew that all was known.

Because her heart was dead,
She did not sigh nor moan.
His mother wept:
She could not weep.
Her lover slept:
She could not sleep.
Three days, three nights,
She did not stir:
Three days, three nights,
Were one to her,
Who never closed her eyes
From sunset to sunrise,
From dawn to evenfall—
Her tearless, staring eyes,
That, seeing naught, saw all.

The fourth night when I came from work,
I found her at my door.
"And will you cut a stone for him?"
She said: and spoke no more:
But followed me, as I went in,
And sank upon a chair;
And fixed her grey eyes on my face,
With still, unseeing stare.
And, as she waited patiently,
I could not bear to feel
Those still, grey eyes that followed me,
Those eyes that plucked the heart from me,
Those eyes that sucked the breath from me
And curdled the warm blood in me,
Those eyes that cut me to the bone,
And cut my marrow like cold steel.

And so I rose and sought a stone;
And cut it smooth and square:
And, as I worked, she sat and watched,
Beside me, in her chair.
Night after night, by candlelight,
I cut her lover's name:
Night after night, so still and white,
And like a ghost she came;
And sat beside me, in her chair,
And watched with eyes aflame.

She eyed each stroke,
And hardly stirred:
she never spoke
A single word:
And not a sound or murmur broke
The quiet, save the mallet stroke.

With still eyes ever on my hands,
With eyes that seemed to burn my hands,
My wincing, overwheeled hands,
She watched, with bloodless lips apart,
And silent, indrawn breath:
And every stroke my chisel cut,
Death cut still deeper in her heart:
The two of us were chiselling,
Together, I and Death.

And when at length my job was done,
And I had laid the mallet by,
As if, at last, her peace were won,
She breathed his name, and, with a sigh,
Passed slowly through the open door:
And never crossed my threshold more.

Next night I laboured late, alone,
To cut her name upon the stone.

ANALYSIS OF THE POEM "THE STONE BY WILFRED WILSON GIBSON

ABOUT THE POET

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson (2 October 1878 – 26 May 1962) was a British Georgian poet, who was associated with World War I but continued publishing poetry into the 1940s and 1950s. Wilfrid Wilson Gibson in *The Bookman* Vol 57, December 1919.

THE STONE BY W W GIBSON

Introduction

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson is best known today as a leader of the Georgian poetry movement, even though most of his best work was produced after this movement had faded in prominence. Gibson's prosody was not creative or skilled – Robert Frost recalls Gibson admitting to a gathering of Chicago academics in 1917 that he "didn't know one kind of verification from another" without shame. His poem, on the other hand, has directness, simplicity, and a strong sense of sarcasm, and it tells captivating stories in a compact and dramatic manner.

Gibson was born on October 2, 1878, in Hexham, near Newcastle, in England's far north. He resided there until 1912. He was homeschooled and never went to college. He was primarily a calm and secluded guy, evoking such adjectives as "lovable" from D.H. Lawrence and "simple and kind" from Rupert Brooke, despite his reputation as a poseur.

Story

A young woman's sweetheart died at a stone quarry, according to the poem. The tragic news of her lover's death left her speechless. She exudes a strong sense of bereavement. The poem starts out with a bang. It all begins when two people are having a chat. In the first line, the woman approaches the poet and requests that he cut a stone.

A large boulder had struck her lover at a stone quarry three days previously. He was lingering and full of vigor notwithstanding the warning and shot fired. Suddenly, a boulder fell, and he was discovered beneath it. His eyes sensed his demise as he spotted the rock. When the poet noticed this, he knew he had to tell his sweetheart. He was terrified, and his words were carefully chosen. But before he could say anything, he noticed she was frozen in place since some miserable soul had already delivered her the news. The man flung open the door and informed her of her lover's death, oblivious to the consequences, leaving the woman lifeless.

By glancing at the woman's expression, the poet can deduce what would have transpired. Her heart was lifeless, and she stood like a stone. She didn't scream or whimper in pain. The mother of the boy was crying, but she didn't cry for three days and nights. She remained still.

From sundown till daybreak, she never closed her eyes. She didn't weep, but her eyes were wide open. When the poet returned from work on the fourth day, he noticed the lady waiting for him at his door and said, "And would you cut a stone for him?" The woman said nothing and just followed the poet. She was merely looking at the poet's face as he sat in the chair. She was patiently waiting. The poet felt as if her grey eyes were pulling his heart and taking his breath from him when he noticed them looking at him.

The poet could no longer wait and rose up to begin cutting the stone into a square. She sat alongside the poet while he worked, monitoring everything at all hours of the day and night. She was watching each stroke as he carved the name of her lover, but she didn't say anything. Her stillness was broken by the stroke.

Her gaze remained fixed on my hands. Her lips were bloodless when she looked at me. Her heart was wounded deeper with each chisel stroke. It appeared as if she was dying on the inside. She uttered his name and went through the open door with a sigh, never to be seen again when the poet finished his work.

The poet worked late the next night because he was carving her name into the stone.

As a result, the lady portrays the image of silence and sadness, as well as how she was so in love with her beloved that she couldn't bear the grief of his death and died after cutting his stone.

Stone- Themes

Love: The love that is discussed in this poem is not an ordinary love but a genuine passionate one. The love is between the young woman and her lover. The woman so loves her man that she loses her mind the moment she hears about his death. She is shocked and for three days couldn't sleep, cry or utter any statements.

To show the depth of love, the first thing she thought of was cutting a stone for his lover. That is why she ran to the poet's house and made sure the tombstone was cut.

The woman showed her satisfaction when the poet was done with the stone. It was then she breathed his name and left the poet's house.

"And when at length my job was done
And I had laid the mallet by,
As if, at last, her peace were won,
She breathed his name, and, with a sigh
Pass slowly through the open door:"

Despite her condition, she still thought of cutting the stone for her love. Since that was the only thing she could do to give him the last respect.

The death of the woman on the second day shows that her life is meaningless without her lover. It shows the type of love between the two lovers.

Tragedy: "The Stone" is a tragic poem because of the death of the young woman's lover and the circumstances that surround his death.

Also, the news of the death of the lover drains the woman and it eventually leads to her death.

From the moment she hears about the death of her lover, she runs out of her mind and her body chemistry changes. It was a tragic situation for her, hence she eventually died of the shock.

The fact that the man still have a mother makes the incident a tragic one.

It is a sad occurrence for a mother to mourn her children. We are told in the poem that the mother of the lover wept.

Careless Talk: This theme added to the tragic occurrence already on ground in the poem.

After the death of the man, some people the poet described as “pure fool” have gone ahead to tell the woman about the unfortunate incident.

They didn’t think of the consequences of the senseless act, they delivered the message and left immediately.

The message turned the woman into a different being; she couldn’t talk, cry or sleep. The suddenness of the message gave her a shock and she died eventually.

Carelessness: The lover in the poem died due to carelessness on his part. He wouldn’t have died if he had yielded to the warning earlier given in the quarry about the impending blast. He wouldn’t have delayed running to safety after the warning.

“Had struck him in the quarry dead,
Where, careless of a warning call,
He loitered, while the shot was fired”

Fear: After the man was crushed to death by the rock, the poet prepared to go and break the ugly incident to the man’s lover.

But the fear of what to say and how to present it gripped him. He later discovered that the news has been broken to her.

“I went to break the news to her:

And I could hear my own heart beat
With dread of what my lips might say:”

Another instance of fear in the poem is when the woman goes to the house of the poet on the fourth night. She goes there to request the poet to cut a stone for her lover.

She follows the poet inside and sits on a chair, fixing her grey eyes on the poet. But, because of her faint appearance and the grey eyes, the poet entertains fear to look at her straight in the eyes.

“But followed me, as I went in,
And sank upon a chair;
And fix her grey eyes on my face,
Will still, unseeing stare
And, as she waited patiently,
I could not bear to feel
Those still, grey eyes that followed me,
Those eyes that plucked the heart from me”

Death: Two deaths are recorded in this poem and one leads to the other. It is so because the two are lovers. The first one is a man, a lover who died carelessly in a stone quarry.

The man was crushed to death by a rock despite the warning calls from the operators. He was loitering about when the shot was fired.

The second death is a woman; the lover of the man killed by the rock. The way the news of the death of her lover was delivered to her was sudden.

She was immediately out of her mind and went into a shock which she never came out of until she died.

The Stone- Poetic Devices

Rhetorical Questions: This is an expression put in the form of a question. We have this in stanza one where the woman requests from the poet to cut a stone for her lover.

“And will you cut a stone for him,
To set above his head?”

It is also in stanza 6, line 52 to be specific. On the fourth night, the woman goes to request the poet to cut a stone for her lover. It is the same request as we have in the first stanza.

Alliteration: This device is used in poems for sound effects; it is a figure of sound. In alliteration, a consonant is pronounced at the beginning of two or more words in a line of a poem.

We have this in lines 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 41, 43, 44, 46, 49, 50, 53, 57, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 71, 77, 80, 84, 87, 92, 95, 96.

Metaphor: This is a direct comparison of two things without the use of “as” and “like.”

A metaphor doesn't liken something to another but says this is this and that is that. Metaphor is in lines;

16- A lifeless heap, with face of clay. (This describes the man's dead body).

32 – A woman turned to stone.

92- As if, at last, her peace were won,

Simile: This literary device compares two things with the use of “like” or “as.” It is used in lines;

17- And still as any stone he lays

64- And cut my marrow like cold still.

72- And like a ghost she came.

Personification: In this literary device, the inanimate is given the attributes of the animate. This brings more life to poems or any literary text. We have it in lines;

35- Because her heart was dead, (describing the changes in the woman after receiving the news.

60- Those still, grey eyes that followed me,

61- Those eyes that plucked the heart from me

62- And cuddled the warm blood in me,

63- Those eyes that cut me to the bone.

These personifications are used to describe while the poet could not look the woman in the eyes.

Personification is also in line;

87- Death cut still deeper in her heart: (This describes how the woman dies gradually).

Hyperbole: This literary device is otherwise known as exaggeration. This is when an event or occurrence is exaggerated more than necessary. We have it in line;

82- With eyes that seemed to burn my hands. (This describes the eyes of the woman).

Oxymoron: This is a literary device, where two contradictory words are placed side by side in an expression. It is used in "The Stone" in line 27.

"Had struck life, lifeless, at a word,"

The poet is describing the effects of the sudden news of the death of the lady's lover on her.

This is after the "pure fool" delivered the shocking news to her. It means that the news made the living woman lifeless.

Antithesis: This is the use of two contradictory expressions side by side in an expression. A good example of this is in line 49 of the poem.

"That seeing naught, saw all."

This describes the bereaved woman's vision when the poet went to break the news to her.

Mood: The mood of the poem is sad and very tense. The poem is a tragic one because of the sudden death of the man.

The way the unfortunate incident was relayed to the lover made the mood more tense.

The woman was in total shock the moment she received the news. She wore a sad mood that she couldn't talk, cry or sleep for three days.

The Poetic Meanings of Some Difficult Words and Expressions in the Poem

Cut a stone for him- Make a tombstone for him

To set above his head- To put on his tomb

He loitered- Still hanging around

Blurted out the news- Delivered the news without thought

Sank upon a chair- Sat on a chair

Save the mallet stroke- Except the sounds of the mallet

Overwearyed hands- Weaken hands

Death cut still deeper in her heart- She is dying.

REFERENCE

www.google.com



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bolanle Rebecca Shotala hails from Ogun State in Nigeria. She had taught in some Secondary schools and also lecture some graduating students.

She had her Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) from Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education and bagged her degree from Ekiti State University where she studied English Education. She is also a certified and registered member of Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). She is the author of Words in Words Poems and Word Perfect Literature in English textbook.

She also has Masters in Data Analytics.

ABOUT THE BOOK

This book comprises of analyses of the recommended textbooks and poems by the West African Examinations Council for 2026-2030 Literature in English Examination.