



CHALIMBANA UNIVERSITY

SECONDARY TEACHERS' DEGREE

DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE AND LANGUAGES

E 1300

**INTRODUCTION TO WRITING SKILLS AND LITERATURE: PROSE FICTION, POETRY
AND DRAMA**

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AIM OF THE COURSE

1. Introducing the students to different kinds of literary works (*genres*).
2. Introducing the students to the structural elements of a literary work.
3. Giving the students the basic skill for appreciating and analyzing a literary work.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Students should be able to give examples of literary works belonging to certain genres (Poetry, Fiction, Drama)
2. Students should be able to characterize the structural principles governing each literary genre.
3. Students should be able to dissect (break down) a literary work into its smaller aesthetic elements.
4. Students should be able to infer the central idea (theme) of a literary work.
5. Students should be able to interpret, appreciate, and to some extent, criticize as well as give the arguments about the quality of a literary work

UNIT 1: DEFINING LITERATURE

1.0 Introduction

What is literature? How would you answer this question? You may bring out a number of answers or explanation. Do you realise that you can bring out a number of aspects from what literature is.

Learning Outcomes

As you work through this unit, you be able to:

- interpret the various definition of literature
- elucidate the various functions of literature
- indicate how pleasurable literature is.

1.1 Problems of Defining Literature

People have attempted to define the term literature with so many answers emerging that all seem correct without realizing the motivation for the answers. In attempting to answer the question “what is literature”, various interesting answers emerge that include:

- Literature is collection of poems
- Literature is a reflection of life
- Literature is sculpture
- Literature is any novel or Fiction
- Literature is a language
- Literature is art of doing things
- Literature is a look of someone
- Literature is imaginative works
- Literature is buildings
- Literature is the Bible
- Literature is the minds/ psychology

The above answers are assumed to be correct although the means in which they have been arrived at is not clear. Consider the approaches to defining literature below.

1.1.1 The imitation Theory

Literature is a mimesis (imitation of something) or re-creation. The mimetic theories judge a literary work of art in terms of imitation. This theory is the earliest way of judging any work of art in relation to reality whether the representation is accurate or not. For this purpose, people define literature based on what they see and reproduce it. For example, painting, poetry, music, dancing, and sculpture are all imitations according to Plato's philosophical views. That is the reason people define literature in the manner they do. The above answers are reflection or mirror of society hence defining literature in the manner they do.

1.1.2 The Expressive Theory

The other approach one would use to define literature is to use expressive theory. Expressive theory means criticism that treats a literary work primarily in relation to the author. This theory defines literary works especially poetry as an expression, or overflow, or utterance of feeling, or as the products of poet's feelings. This means that literary works expresses the author's feelings and emotion. For instance, Wordsworth defines "Poetry as a spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling". This means that expressive answers in defining literature are still welcome.

1.1.3 The Effective Theory

Effective theory is another approach one would use to define and understand Literature. Effective theory proposes to describe certain sets of observation, but explicitly without the claim or implication that the mechanism employed in the theory has a direct counterpart in the actual causes of the observed phenomena to which the theory is fitted. This means that effective theory triggers literature to arouse a particular emotion, or affect the perceiver's minds to define it in their ways. In anyway, Literature should induce (the reader) an emotional state that leads to an action.

1.1.4 The Objective Theory

Some scholars have used objective theory to define literature and it proposes that we can divide any work up into four areas of study. The first one is the relationship between the universe as a whole and the work itself. The second one is between the audience and the work. The third one is between the author and the work, and the last one is within the work itself. The New critics look over these options and decide that what must be studied are the work and only the work, because there is no correspondence between the universe and the

work, and we cannot know the true nature of either the audience or the author. The only thing left to study then is the work. It is because of this approach that literature is seen as an autonomous object, self-contained entity, self-surpassing entity and isolated study from other external elements.

Having exposed these approaches to understanding and defining literature, scholars have defined Literature as anything in print (written). This means that, literature is used in broad sense to mean “*compositions that tell stories, dramatize situation, express emotions, and analyse and advocate ideas*” as rightly pointed by Roberts and Jacobs (2007). Indeed, literature is a kind of entertainment. However, it is also something much more. By reading about the lives and challenges of other people, one may come to understand more about his/her own life. Others have compared literature like a house with a great number of windows in which we can see a different part of the world. As we learn about the world, we learn about ourselves.

People create literature to express their emotions and ideas about life. Since literature comes in several forms, writers must decide which form of literature to use. One writer may create a story, while another may compose a poem, a piece of nonfiction, or a drama all on the same idea. It must be noted that each literary form offers writers different opportunities to express what they have to say. The critical point is that, what is the purpose of studying literature?

Activity 1.1

Go through the various approaches to defining literature and come with a suitable definition of literature. Share with your colleagues.

1.2 The Nature and Functions of Literature

Have you ever dreamed of being a critical thinker? Have you wondered and admired the wisdom some intellectuals display in public? What of the great writers you have come across? Wow! Literature takes care of all those concerns through its functions. Some of the functions of literature are listed below. Literature helps us to:

- grow both personally and intellectually.
- Open doors for us.
- stretch our minds.
- develop our imagination.

- increase our understanding.
- enlarge our power of sympathy.
- see beauty in the world around us.
- link with cultural, philosophical, and religious world of which we are part.
- recognise human dreams and struggles in different places and times.
- develop mature sensibility and compassion for all living beings.
- nurtures our ability to appreciate the beauty of order and arrangement-gifts that are also bestowed by well structured song, beautifully painted canvas, or a well-chiselled piece of sculpture.
- See worthiness in the aims of all people.
- exercise our emotions through interest, concern, sympathy, tension, excitement, regret, fear, laughter and hope.
- encourage, assist creative and talented people who need recognition and support.
- shape our goals and values by clarifying our identities both positively, through acceptance of the admirable in human beings, and negatively through rejection of the sinister
- develop perspectives on events occurring locally and globally and thereby it gives us understanding and control.
- shape our influence of life
- make us human

There is no doubt that functions of literature are simultaneously useful and pleasurable to human being. The pleasure of literature is not one preference among a long list of possible pleasure, but is “a higher pleasure” a pleasure in a higher kind of activity.

Activity 1.2

As a teacher of Literature in English at secondary school level, a learner approaches you to find why they must study literature. Give an explanation of how you would answer the learner justifying the importance of studying literature.

Summary

The unit has brought out a number of aspects as regards the definition and functions of literature. We hope you are now able to formulate a definition of literature as well as outlining some of the functions of literature.

UNIT 2: LITERARY GENRES

2.0 Introduction

A genre is any stylistic category in literature that follows specific conventions. Examples of genre in literature include historical fiction, satire, zombie romantic comedies (zom-rom-com), and so on. Many stories fit into more than one genre. The conventions that works follow to be a part of a certain genre change over time, and many genres appear and disappear throughout the ages.

Learning Outcomes

As you work through this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the term genre
- identify the different genres of literature
- analyse the various genres of literature according to their structural elements
- compose any of the types of literature for your learners

2.1 Genres (types) of Literature

There are four types of literature, or literary forms:

- ❖ Prose fiction
- ❖ Poetry
- ❖ Drama
- ❖ Nonfiction prose

2.1.1 Poetry

Poetry is one of the four genres of literature captured above. How it arose is alleged to be a matter of controversy but there is no doubt about its age and universality. Poetry is found in all societies, whether literate or illiterate. There is an adage in poetry that “most primitive people have used it, and the most civilized have cultivated it”.

2.1.1.1 Definition

Like in other areas of literature, there is no single accepted definition among literary scholars

- (i) One definition is that poetry is a beautiful statement of some truth. In other words, poetry is a beautiful packaging in which truth is hidden. This definition is inadequate.

While it is true that beauty is important in poetry, it is not the only thing. The beauty of form that this definition emphasises has to be coupled with the beauty of message or the ideas being put across. This however, is not stressed in this definition.

- (ii) Cleanth Brooks and Roberts Warren defined poetry as a statement in verse in which we find poetry inheres. In other words, the techniques used by the poet are the instruments which create a poem. In short a poem is technique. Recognising this problem of definition, David Lodge has come with a definition which tries to reconcile the different positions. He asserts that poetry is the combination of ideas, figurative language and rhythm. In other words, poetry has the message, the ideas, figurative language and rhythm.

2.1.1.2 Types of Poetry

- (a) **Narrative poetry** – refers to poems whose main purpose is to tell a story in poetry form. They may be short or long but the main point to remember is that they are composed mainly for storytelling. There are several subtypes of narrative poetry namely popular ballad, metrical tale, epic and mock epic.
- (b) **Lyric** – refers to that type of poetry that tries to share an experience with the audience such as how it feel like to be in love, how it feels like to lose a loved one, and how it feels to be hungry and so on. Lyrical poems usually express intense personal feelings and is short and concentrated but has enough clues within it for its understanding.
- (c) **Dramatic poetry**- refers to poetry that is really dramatic in the sense that there is a speaker in the poem addressing an audience. In other words, poetry involves the dramatic situation of speaker and audience. It involves a performance. However, dramatic poetry is distinguished by the fact that the speaker in the poem is clearly identified maybe even with a name.

2.1.1.3 Language and Author's voice

The language is usually in verse form and condensed in nature that creates vivid images in the minds of the audience of the things the poet wants to communicate. In doing so the author's voice becomes direct in the voice of dramatic personae.

2.1.1.4 Structural Element

Poetry's structure revolves around

- Speaker
- Plot of thought
- Tone of voice (mood, rhyme, meter, figurative language- simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, Irony, paradox, imagery and symbols).

Activity 2.1

Choose one type of poem, say lyric, especially in a Zambian language, and then analyse it according to the structural elements discussed above.

2.2 PROSE FICTION

A fiction is a story based in the imaginations of authors. Most stories are short enough to be read in one sitting. In that brief time of reading, a story can amaze you. This means that stories can take us into thrilling adventures because of recount of sequence of events or action. The events recounted in a story can show a reader truth about human nature.

2.2.1 Types of Prose Fiction

- (a) **Novel** – refers to a fictitious prose narrative of book length, typically representing character and action with some degree of realism. These include: story, tale, narrative, romance,
- (b) **Short story** – refers to a story with a fully developed theme but significantly shorter and less elaborate than a novel.
- (c) **Novella** – refers to a short novel or long short story.

2.2.2 Language and Author's voice

The language style refers to the writer's use of language. The writer selects language to fit his or her purpose. If the writer wants to communicate with masses the language is flexible or accessible. If on the other hand s/he wants to communicate to the learned masses the language is amplified to the level of their status. Generally the language of the writer in prose fiction is prosaic and dialogue in nature. This means that, the author's voice is at times hidden in a character's narration and in some instance it is easily noticeable.

2.2.3 Structural Elements of Prose Fiction.

Every story has several important elements that include:

- **Characters or characterisation-** is used in two ways in literature. Character refers to traits of behaviour of a person or it can refer to one of the participants in the action of a story. In the latter case the characters can be human or animals, they can be life-

like or drawn from fantasy; they can be fully individualised or stock characters who stand for many others. One does not prescribe the type of characters a writer should use in a narrative – it depends on the purpose of his writing. Generally if he is writing in a realist mode or way, we expect his characters not to be exaggerated and inflated. The writer creates the standard or expectations with which to judge him or her.

There are usually minor and major characters in any narrative, the technical term we use for story in literature. Minor characters are usually unchanging in the story. In other words, they tend to be flat. They seem to be a personification of things such as goodness, greed, lust, envy, to name a few. Where their character has close resemblance to a personality in society, we say those characters are caricatures.

Minor characters are mainly used in four ways. They may be used to provide the human context in which the story takes place. A believable story cannot occur in a vacuum; it needs a human context and this may be provided by the minor characters.

A minor character may also be used for humour in the story, to provide light moments or comic relief. For example, in **The Tongue of the Dumb** by Mulaisho there is a character Cumba, who does a lot of mischief in the story just to amuse the reader. Even the name Cumba has a funny meaning in Nsenga, it means a barren person. Minor characters may also be used as foils in a story. A foil is a character who is used to reveal in a sharper light the character of another. This is usually achieved by closeness to the character, posing the appropriate questions and passing appropriate comments on the character. For instance, in **Things Fall Apart**, Obierika, can be said to be a foil to Okonkwo. He asks Okonkwo questions that bring out quite clearly Okonkwo's unreasonable rigidity of character. By his behaviour Obierika gives us an example of a balanced personality something which Okonkwo could become if he wanted to survive in the new era.

Sometimes, a narrator can be drawn from the minor characters. The minor character tells us the story in which he or she is a participant. This narrator, in telling the story performs three key functions: Firstly, by establishing a close relationship, with the reader to the extent that the reader develops trust in this narrator. Secondly by guiding the reader, through the story. Thirdly by providing commentary on the action in the story.

Major Characters

These are characters who take up most of the narrative space. They may be so important in shaping the course of the action that even the narratives are named after them such as **Maru**. In general, they tend to be fully individualised, life like, a mixture of good and evil and contradictory due to failure to fully understand themselves. In long prose works, the major characters also tend to grow in the story, either by becoming more noble or deteriorating.

In the past the main characters were referred to as heroes and heroines but this has changed. In this pessimistic and cynical age people feel there are no heroes and heroines. Mankind is just too steeped in evil to produce heroes anymore.

Others called the main characters as protagonists but this too has lost favour due to the associations with Greek tragedy where the protagonist was the leading actor. In this egalitarian age people feel all major characters ought to be accorded the same attention.

Thus, we are left with simply referring to the major characters as merely the central or main characters.

Characters are usually known through the following ways:

- (i) By what the author writes about them
 - (ii) By what the narrator tells us about them
 - (iii) By their thoughts and feelings or inner life
 - (iv) By their speech
 - (v) By their actions
 - (vi) By what other character say about them
 - (vii) By the type of people they associate with
 - (viii) By their dress.
- **Setting of place and time**- refers to the place and time where the story is taking place. While it is true that the world the author creates is imaginary, it shares a close resemblance with our own world. It is important to identify the setting of the story if you have to appreciate the themes. In order to understand the setting, ask yourself: could this story be happening anywhere, or could it have happened anywhere? If you

understand the setting, it will be possible for you to understand the characters and get to know why they act the way they do.

- **Plot-** refers to the sequence of incidents or events of which a story is composed. Plot consists of sequence of related actions. It outlines the conflicts and the clash of ideas desires and wills. It enables us to visualise the **protagonists'** struggles against the **antagonist**. The conflict in the novel may be physical, mental emotional or emotional or moral. As you study "*Maru, Silas Marner, Three Theban Player and The Odyssey*" take note of the types of conflicts presented. The central character in fiction is called the protagonist while forces events and characters arrayed against him or her are called antagonist.
- **Point of view-** refers to the angle from which the story is told by the narrator. Traditionally, narratives have been told from the viewpoint of an all knowing, all seeing, Omni present narrator. The narrator knows everything about the characters, their entire inner lives, their thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears, their dislikes and hates, everything and doles it out to the reader as he/she wishes. This is the omniscient point of view. This has been challenged. Modern man feels it is unrealistic for a narrator to have such powers. So there is a movement towards limited point of view, where the narrator tells the story from a narrator's angle. Where the story is told by a single character who is a participant in the story we say we have first person narration. We only see, hear and feel what happens to this narrator. He merely describes the outward actions of the other characters. He does not attempt to describe their inner lives. Many people seem to favour limited narration which takes several forms. There is a feeling that it is more authentic.
- **Style-** refers to a writer's use of language. Some people think language is always used in a neutral way. This is not so in literature. A writer always selects language to fit his/her purpose. It is one of the most important choices he/she has to make. If a writer wants to communicate with the masses the language will tend to be accessible but if on the other hand he/she wants to commune with the learned the language will tend to be difficult. In saying this we have also alluded to the two basic styles, the direct and complex. The direct style is generally characterised by the use of short words from the Anglo Saxon root of English, short sentences in active voice and short paragraphs. Its main use is to create a sense of immediacy.

The complex style on the other hand is marked by the use of long abstract and learned words from the Latin root of English, long passive sentences and long paragraphs steeped in reflective language.

Being free spirits with literary license writers usually combine the two styles in their narratives. This is why readers have to be alert to the use of language at all times. Changes are to be expected. You cannot simply label the use of language as direct or complicated. Examine the language in a deep and profound way at each stage. Questions that might help are:

1. Is the language used similar to that used in everyday usage or is it strange and difficult?
2. Is subordination and co-ordination used widely or sparingly?
3. Are the verbs that are used mostly transitive or intransitive?
4. Is the dominant voice, active or passive?
5. Are the words used simple or learned and abstract?

Dominance of strange and difficult language use of subordination and co-ordination, intransitive verbs, passive voice and learned and abstract words suggests the complex style. The dominance of the other elements suggests the direct style.

In addition, the examination of style in African fiction calls for other standards as well. Critics ask about the extent of the domestication of the western languages so as to effectively express African speech patterns, African rhythms, and African ideology or philosophy. Some African writers such as Bessie Head in *Maru* tend to write in Standard English. But writers like Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* have tried to domesticate the English language. Achebe uses Ibo words, Ibo sayings of the wise to express the Ibo way of thinking.

- **Theme** - refers to the central idea in a narrative. In most cases, this is usually implied and not stated clearly. It is mostly in propaganda works where the theme is stated in a blunt way. A work may have sub themes but in most cases these will be related to the central theme. In this way, the work will still be unified despite having a number of sub themes.

While theme has been at the centre of narratives, increasingly, modern works are not being created on the basis of theme. In some modernist works it is difficult to discover a theme; the work seems to be too random and disorganised. The aim in such works is

not really to show a central idea in the traditional sense but to be a metaphor of the alleged randomness and confusion of the world.

Activity 2.2

Given a short story told in your community, analyse it using the elements of fiction outlined above.

2.3 Non fiction Prose

Nonfiction is the genre of literature with factual prose writing. Unlike fiction and poetry, nonfiction always tells us about incidents that really happened and people who actually lived. However, writers of nonfiction give us more than the facts about their subjects. They choose, arrange, and interpret these facts in a certain way and thus revealing their own opinions about their subjects. Sometimes they also reveal their own personalities and ways of looking at the world.

2.3.1. Types of Nonfiction

- (a) **News reporter** – refers to people who gather news and information to keep the public informed about important events. They obtain their information through a number of sources.
- (b) **Editorials** – refers to a newspaper article expressing the editorial opinion on a topic issue
- (c) **Essays** – refers to a short piece of writing on a particular subject or topic
- (d) **Feature article** – refers to a newspaper or magazine article that deals in depth with a particular topic
- (e) **Textbooks** – refers to a book used as a standard work for the study of a particular subject
- (f) **Historical and biographical works** – refers to a story of a person's life written by someone else.
- (g) **Autobiography** – refers to a story of a person's life written by that person.

2.3.2 Language and Author's Voice

Like earlier stated, language style refers to the writer's use of language. The writers of nonfiction works use formal language because the goal of nonfiction is to present truths and conclusion about factual world. The preference for formal language is because of various techniques such as relating to facts, providing details, and examples that should not be distorted at all. The voice of the speaker is direct and half hidden.

2.3.3 Structural Elements of Nonfiction Prose

The elements for nonfiction include:

- Speaker -
- Style -
- Central purpose -
- Central idea -

Activity 2.3

Write a short biography about someone you admire in your life or do short write of your auto biography.

2.4 DRAMA

Drama is the form of literature that presents stories meant to be performed for audience. The roots of drama reach far back to human history, to the period of Oral literature, when stories and songs were spoken rather than written down. Imagine what life was like when few people could read. Occasionally an individual might be gifted with a wonderful memory and ability to tell stories. Whenever such a person would begin to tell a tale, others would gather around them to be entertained. In time, other persons gifted as mimics might begin to act out parts of the story, presenting lifelike scenes in front of the audience.

2.4.1 Types of Drama

- Tragedy** – refers to a play dealing with tragic events and having an unhappy ending, especially one concerning the downfall of the main character.
- Comedy** – refers to a play characterised by its humorous or satirical tone and its depiction of amusing people or incidents, in which the characters ultimately triumph over adversity.
- Tragicomedy** – refers to a play or novel containing elements of both comedy and tragedy.
- Melodrama** – refers to sensational dramatic play with exaggerated character and exciting events intended to appeal to emotion.
- Opera** – refers to a dramatic work in one or more acts set to music for singers and instrumentalist.

2.4.2 Language and Author's Voice

Since drama presents its action through actors on stage before an audience there is free way to use some words that are not exactly the authors'. Therefore, language in drama keeps varying from formal to informal which in literature is called dialogue.

2.4.3 Structural Elements of Drama

- Characters / characterisation
- Scenery or setting of place and time
- Plot
- Theme (costumes, lighting system, and sound system)

Activity 2.4

In your study group with your colleagues, analyse a play of your choice, bringing out what type of drama it is as well as the structural elements contains in it.

Summary

The genres or types of literature have been outlined clearly in this unit. Be sure to give or come up with each of the genres and analyse them according to the structural elements of it. We hope you are now able to comprehend the concept of literature by connecting the definitions and its genres.

UNIT 3: CONSTRUCTING A LITERARY ESSAY

3.0 Introduction

Welcome to unit three. By now you should be able to give an explanation of what literature is. You also by now understand the four genres or forms of literature by considering the types of each genre, language and author's voice and structural in elements therein. In this unit, we introduce you on how to construct a literary essay to enable you write good academic papers.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit students should be able to:

- interpret instruction words in essays
- state the procedure for preparing a literary essay
- demonstrate an ability to write a detailed essay plan
- distinguish between an expository and argumentative essay
- state the most important elements of an introduction in an essay
- construct restricted, unified and precise theses for their argumentative essay
- state the type of language of a formal essay
- state the format of a literary essay
- show ability to document a literary essay
- be able to write references and bibliographies of literary essays.

3.1 General remarks about work in literature

- (i) Have the right attitude – one of seeking pleasure first. Try to enjoy whatever you read. Literature is meant to be enjoyed. It is an aesthetic object like Rhumba, Celine Dion R and B to name a few.
- (ii) Be prepared to read a book at least three times before you begin any analysis. Comprehension is the mother of analysis. The reading has to be slow, no scanning.
- (iii) Only read when your mind is able to concentrate, this is usually in short spurts or periods.
- (iv) To aid concentration, read in a quiet place and have a pencil and paper with you.
- (v) A dictionary should be nearby to help you in comprehension.
- (vi) Take down notes as you read. For each of the chapters, write down summaries under the following headings..

- (a) plot – the unfolding of the events in the conflict
 - (b) setting – where the action is taking place
 - (c) theme – what ideas or issues are introduced.
- (vii) Don't be a minimalist – one who merely sticks to the set books. Read widely. If you have no time to read supplementary books then you have the wrong attitude.
- (viii) Don't generalise about an author on the basis of reading only one work by that author. You have to read at least three works by the author to begin to say you know him or her.

3.2 General remarks about written work in literature

When you are given an assignment topic, follow this procedure:

- (a) Analyse the question carefully to ensure that you know what you are required to do in answering it. If the question is not clear you can consult your tutor for clarification.
- (b) Think about the book in terms of the question. Consult any notes you have made while reading or listening to a lecture which might be related to the question.
- (c) Before you begin to write you should have a plan or outline to follow.
- (d) Be careful not to include any points not directly relevant to the question asked – answers should be brief and to the point since you only have a maximum of five pages in which to develop them.
- (e) Avoid points which are not supported by proof.
- (f) Never tell the story for its own sake.
- (g) Proof read your work before submitting it for marking.
- (h) Give specific examples from the texts to support any general statement you make.
- (i) Do not under any circumstances merely repeat what has been said or discussed on the book in lectures, tutorials or seminars – prove in your paper that you have considered the book independently. Originality is of great importance.
- (j) Do not be afraid to making mistakes. People learn from their mistakes.

3.3 Interpretation of instruction words in essays

It is important for you as a scholar to read the question carefully when given a task in a literary work in order to understand what you are required to do. To achieve this, you have to pay attention to the instruction words in a given task. Instruction words include the following:

- (i) Describe – give a description of: represent in words to enable the reader to form an idea of object, idea incident etc.
- (ii) Give an account of – write an explanatory description or narration.
- (iii) Discuss – Expound the various views held upon or the various factors to be considered and reach a conclusion as to which interpretation is the most valid in your opinion or which aspects are the most important.
- (iv) Consider – Examine with a view to acceptance or rejection; weigh the merits of...
- (v) Criticise – write a judgement of the merits of ... especially pointing out the faults.
- (vi) Amplify – enlarge upon, add to.
- (vii) Exemplify – Give example of, illustrate.
- (viii) Support your decision – Bring factors or examples to confirm, substantiate, bear out or back up.
- (ix) Classify – Arrange in classes or groups.
- (x) Emphasize – Lay stress on.
- (xi) Correlate – Establish a relationship between.
- (xii) Illustrate - Give specific examples of; make clear by examples. Explain.
- (xiii) Elucidate- Make clear, bring out the meaning; throw light on; explain.
- (xiv) Analyse – Examine closely, find, and show the essence of something asks for a fairly detailed study.
- (xv) Examine – Investigate, scrutinize, and inquire into a subject theory or statement.
- (xvi) Assess - Weigh up, measure, estimate the value of, considering for and against, and reach a conclusion.
- (xvii) Evaluate – Examine, find the worth, desirability, importance accuracy, merits or validity of a statement, idea argument.
- (xviii) Specify – Identify, state definitely or exactly the details or aspects of something.
- (xix) Contrast – Bring out the differences between two or other relationship between or more ideas or things.
- (xx) Distinguish between – Bring out the essential features of things or ideas which make each distinctive from the other.
- (xxi) Explain – Account for, make the reasons for or cause of an event etc intelligible, make them known in some detail.
- (xxii) Indicate – Show, make known, identify, make understood.
- (xxiii) Define – Say precisely what is comprised in or meant by.

- (xxiv) List – Enter in a catalogue or inventory; state in order, decidewhether to begin with the most or the least importantfactors.
- (xxv) Survey – Make a quick inspection of: make a general account (asopposed to a detailed one).
- (xxvi) Enumerate – Specify item by item in order of consideredimportance.
- (xxvii) Summarize – Make a brief account of, give a resume, summary.
- (xxviii) Write an essay on – Make a personal appreciation – this is leaving the approach to you; it is an open subject.
- (xxix) Comment on – Make explanatory remarks or criticism upon: pickout the most important or interesting features asyou see them.

Activity 3.1

For each of the following essay topics or questions define or explain exactly what is meant or required by the questions. Do not attempt to write the answers. Merely interpret the instructions in this format.

Topic or question:

Explanation:

1. *Give an account of your recent trip to Independence Stadium*
2. *Compare life in Botswana with that in Zambia*
3. *Explain what you have done so far in this exercise*
4. *Account for your presence at this University*
5. *List the things that interest you about Wiza's character*
6. *Outline the plot of Quills of Desire*
7. *Enumerate the main features of oral literature*
8. *Write an essay on characterisation in Bessie Head's Maru*
9. *Comment on the rate of corruption in Zambia*
10. *Criticise Silas's character*
11. *Classify the African novels*
12. *Emphasize the importance of symbolism in poetry*
13. *Correlate the rate of unemployment and the crime rate in Zambia*
- 19 *Elucidate the nature of dictatorship.*

- 20 *Support your decision to come to Chalimbana University.*
- 21 *Specify the courses you will be following next year*
- 22 *Illustrate the problems of greed as portrayed in African prose fiction*

How did it go? Now go ahead and share your answers with your colleagues in your study group. Well done!

3.4 ESSAY WRITING

As you may be aware, there are various valid styles of essay writing, but we are providing a version which is fairly acceptable in the literature section. It is not even valid for the department as a whole. So far there is no departmental position on essay writing. At school level too, there is no school position.

Secondly, we are aware too that many of you are already well established essay writers and teachers of essay writing skills but we all need to review what we know so that we move together as a group.

Before starting to write, have a clear vision of what you are going to do in the essay. Even in a question requiring you to discuss, that is, to weigh various factors or points of view held on a subject, you have to make a clear stand. You will not get marks for sitting on the fence, for being non committal. Neither will you get marks for presenting the views and making lightweight comments on each. Let your stance come out. Let your vision come out. Let your purpose come out. If you find yourself sitting on the fence, then you have not arrived at your vision yet.

It is true that the purpose is to a large extent determined by instruction words in an essay but you still need to reflect, to think in a deep and penetrating way, to let the ideas simmer in your head until you reach a moment where everything becomes clear when you reach it. You begin to see clearly when you reach the moment of realisation.

Purpose is being stressed for mainly three reasons. It gives a clear direction of the paper. It determines the manner and style of the paper. These are all crucial elements in writing an essay.

Essays are basically of two types – the expository and the argumentative essay.

The expository essay

(i) Definition – This is an essay whose main goal is to explain an idea, thing or phenomena.

(ii) Assumptions underlying exposition:

- (a) The ideas that are expressed should not be controversial, they should be universally accepted by other people who are engaged in a similar activity. If some of these people do not agree then it is an argumentative essay. For instance, if readers are asked to comment on a character it is very likely that different opinions will be expressed by the readers. Such a question is therefore argumentative rather than expository.
- (b) The need to know should be there in the target audience. The information should be new to the listeners or readers.
- (c) The writer should know more about the subject than his/her audience

(iii) Ways of expositing:

There are many ways of expositing:

- (a) Illustrating where the writer explains an idea by the use of examples that are understood by the audience.
- (b) Definition – is where the writer explains an idea by defining it in the language that can be understood by the target audience.
- (c) Comparison - is explaining an idea by comparing the new to what the audience knows, something that is similar to what they already know.
- (d) Analysis - is explaining an idea by breaking up something into its constituent parts so as to make the whole clear.
- (e) Another way is explaining an idea by enumerating details of it in the hope that the audience will grasp the new. Also you may exposit by taking a historical approach, by tracing the origins of something to make the audience understand in a better way what the new thing is.

Lastly, expositing may be achieved by the clever use of comparison and contrasts.

It must be admitted though that since expositing is a creative and dynamic process various techniques will usually be used in a single work of exposition.

The Argumentative essay

This is an essay in which a writer seeks to defend a proposition which does not have the universal support of the audience.

Argumentation type of writing is more common in academic life. Since we have said every new student of literature is expected to contribute to new knowledge, this can only be done by not only presenting this new view point but also criticizing the current popular notions held on the subject, by arguing. In other words, the new viewpoints have to come out through arguments for an intellectual.

A suggested way of dealing with an argumentative essay

When you are given a topic which requires you to argue, which is most of the time, spend lots of time on:

- (a) Understanding the question. Find out what it requires you to do in a literal way. Do not read your assumptions about the tutor into the question. Just have a literal interpretation.
- (b) Thinking about the question to come up with two tenable positions or two hypotheses.

If you can immediately arrive at these positions from your initial readings of the book and the notes, then go back to the book armed with the question. Review your thoughts, readings if it is a question which does not require you to discuss. So come out with position A and position B.

Jot down points in support of A

Jot down points in support of B

The selected points should be the strong ones not lightweight.

Evaluate the two positions, the one with more points is the one to be selected. Write a short coherent statement that summarises the position. On a question asking you whether Odysseus is an effective leader, the short statement could be Odysseus is indeed an effective leader. This statement which is actually the conclusion of the paper is called the thesis.

The other position is not discarded. You are supposed to take the strongest arguments of the side on the same subject, think seriously about them and refute them as convincingly as possible so that position A still remains without any inconsistency. Don't merely parade the view of position B in the essay without pointing out the faults of this position. If you do this you will be accused of being contradictory and you will lose many marks for this. When you include the opposing views to your thesis, ensure, at all times, that you refute them. Don't hide under other people. State categorically what the faults of the position are from the bottom of your heart as a living thinking individual.

Let us begin this exercise by tackling a subject that is not literary. The essay topic reads, '*Should Teenage marriages be encouraged in Zambia today?*' After serious thought we can come up with two positions.

- A. Yes they should be encouraged
- B. No, they should not be encouraged

Position A: Points to support:

1. If people marry young, the risk of aids may be reduced since they will have a reduced number of sexual partners before marrying.
2. If people marry young, the chances of developing long lasting relationships due to evolving a similar personality are high.
3. If people marry young, the chances of producing healthier children are higher since they will be producing them when their bodies are stronger and healthier.

Position B – Discouraged for the following reasons:

1. Partners usually do not have the money to run their homes.
2. Development as individuals is normally seriously disturbed – e.g. if at school,forced to terminate prematurely.
3. Emotional immaturity leads to break ups. Teenagers for instance tend to be excessively jealous.
4. Teenage girls are more prone to maternal deaths due to insufficient development of their reproductive systems.
5. Teenagers generally find it hard to cope with the pressures coming from the

extended family system.

After this, one can see that position B is stronger and is therefore adopted as the position of the paper.

We now come to writing a detailed essay plan on the topic.

PLAN

Paragraph 1 – Introduction

- (a) Thesis – teenage marriages should be discouraged in Zambia today.
- (b) Definitional matter – by teenage marriages we mean those which are contracted by partners who are both teenagers.
- (c) Summary of the points to support the thesis.
 - (i) Partners do not have the money
 - (ii) Emotional immaturity
 - (iii) Danger of maternal deaths
 - (iv) Stunted personal development
 - (v) Problems in coping with extended family
- (d) Presenting and refuting the opposing views
 - (i) It is said early marriages may reduce aids but not true since research has shown that most youths are sexually active even before their teens.
 - (ii) It is said that the chances of teenagers producing healthier children is higher. While this may be generally true, research also shows that there are more maternal deaths among teenagers.
- (e) The order – the points in the essay will be tackled in the order given above.

Paragraph 2: Partners usually do not have the money to run a home.

- (i) Prof.Kabwe in Sociology writes in the sociology journal that many youths have no money.
- (ii) Youths interviewed by the author confess that they are having problems in running homes due to lack of money.

Paragraph 3: Development as individuals is stunted:

- (i) Prof.Harworth at Chainama has discovered this.
- (ii) Dr.Machungwa also found this in his study of teenage marriages in the police.

Paragraph 4: Emotional immaturity leads to break ups:

- (i) The Catholic church in Lusaka has found this to be the main cause of the divorces among teenagers.
- (ii) The women for Change in their study of divorces in Lusaka have also identified this cause.

Paragraph 5: Failure to cope with pressures from extended family.

- (i) A prominent sociologist, Dr.Kapungwe found this in his reasearch.
- (ii) Dr. Chama in a survey also found this.

Paragraph 6: Presenting and refuting opposing views:

- (i) It is said early marriages may reduce aids but not true since Dr.Mambwe in his research findings has shown that most youths are sexually active even before their teens.
- (ii) It is also said that the chances of teenagers producing healthier Children is higher. While this is generally true Dr.Nsemukila in his book shows that there are more teenage maternal deaths in the country.

Paragraph 7: Indeed this paper maintains that teenage marriages should be discouraged in Zambia today.

This is the type of plan that we require from you on essay questions during the semester.

Supposing you were asked to discuss the question, what changes would be required? Firstly, a thesis would still be needed. We need a statement of your stand on teenage marriages. Secondly you would have to find faults in the views, give your misgivings about each stand. Thirdly, the section about refuting the opposing views would become redundant as the fault finding would have been done during the presentation of your arguments. Another variation where you do not necessarily need a section on refuting is where you have an inclusive thesis such as there are more disadvantages than advantages in having teenage marriages today. In this thesis, you go on to presenting the disadvantages in having teenage marriages today. Before presenting the advantages in a coherent and cohesive manner.

For those who are still not clear as to what to do in a discussion, reference is made to Unit 2 on defining. If the thesis 'literature is a form of knowledge which is dependant for its definition on the society and age which produces it', then the rest of lecture in the unit can largely be considered to be a discussion.

Activity 3.2

1. Write a detailed essay plan for the topic:

Is Joseph, the son of Jacob, a believable life-like character or not?

2. Read the Book of Genesis and write the plan which you should submit to the course coordinator.

This type of detailed outline must be produced for the essay type questions in this course. For the expository essay the change is in paragraph 1. Instead of having a thesis, an expository essay states the main purpose of the essay. There is a clear short statement of purpose as the bedrock of the introductory paragraph.

The beauty of having detailed essay plans lies in the fact that content is taken care of within the pre-writing period. Secondly, the structure of the paper is also taken care of. Thirdly, faults in the paper can be detected before writing.

The writing of the paper becomes easier with a detailed plan since the writer becomes more concerned with paying attention to language, punctuation and spelling rather than content and structure which are taken care of in the prewriting.

3.4.1 Manner and Style

The expository and argumentative essays are both written in a formal manner and tone. A chatty, conversational style which we are using in this batch to address you is not acceptable in a formal essay. You have to be impersonal and almost self-effacing. The austere style does not necessarily call for high flown language steeped in complicated jargon. Rather it calls for a plain transparent style since the essence is to communicate information without many impediments. In other words, you have to avoid glittering phrases. Be direct and

simple. Circumlocution has to be avoided. In any case, the space limitations do not allow circumlocution. What is needed is compact and connected writing which is clear and direct.

In addition you have to avoid repetitions. These are indicative of poor organisation, a weakness that may make you lose marks.

You should also avoid, the tendency to reproduce lecturers' ideas or articles. Remember that we are not interested in essays in which students are merely spurting out what the lecturer has given. You are an intelligent soul, show this through your own personal viewpoint. Bring out your own personal appreciation of materials. Admittedly, at the beginning, it may not be easy since some of you are used to a system of education at secondary level where emphasis is on spurting out what the teacher had taught.

Furthermore, avoid making unsupported allegations. Provide evidence for statements that you are making. Also avoid absolute statements since most of them are not correct. All policemen are violent. Clearly, this is not entirely true.

Rhetorical questions, abbreviations and splitting words at line ends has to be avoided in a formal academic essay.

You are also required to underline book titles in this course. It is literary convention that has to be respected by all literary scholars.

Leave 33 mm margins on either side for the tutor's comments. You should leave enough space for the tutors for their comments otherwise they will be forced to write on the body of the essay.

For quotations ran on, in the body of the essay, any quotations that are of one to four lines of your handwriting in the body of the essay. The quotation has to be within opening and closing quotation marks. The selected quote must be the best one to illustrate or support what the writer is putting across. For quotes that are longer than **four** lines, from five onwards, indent them. We shall show you later how to do this.

You should also write in a clear handwriting and leave generous gaps between lines. Use A4 white unlined paper and write on only one side. If your handwriting is poor submit typed scripts.

3.4.2 Format

The following is the accepted format for an academic essay:

- Title page
- Outline or plan page or pages
- Body of the essay
- Bibliography

3.4.2.1. TITLE PAGE

1. This must include the full title of the course.
2. The topic or assignment question in full.
3. The name of the tutor
4. The date due.

The outline page can in fact have several pages. It must have the detailed plan of the essay along the lines that have been suggested. **It is not numbered.**

Body of the essay. The numbering of the essay from 1 to 5, the maximum number of pages in this case, begins with the body of the essay. Don't forget to reproduce the contents of the first paragraph in the plan in the first paragraph of the body of the essay. The only difference is that in the body of the essay the ideas are stated in full grammatical sentences.

On the first page, the top margin should at least be 40 mm and 33 mm on subsequent pages. The left and right hand margins should be 30 mm on all the pages. It should appear to be very neat to show that it is academic work.

3.4.2.2 An Indention

For quotes that are **five** lines and more, you have to indent. Here is an example:

We have met here not to learn the theories of catching fish,
But we are mainly interested to catch fish. In other words we do

not want to labour on theories about course writing but to produce materials for our students. Some of the points I have raised will merely help us as we begin to write.

Note that in this indentation there are no opening and closing quotation marks. Secondly, the writing is centered leaving wide gaps on either side. Thirdly, the space between the quoted lines is narrower than in the rest of the body of the essay.

Points to remember:

Before you write an essay try to understand the question as fully as possible.

- Develop a detailed essay plan which is based on available data which supports the assertions you intend to put across.
- Use a formal style in writing the essay.
- When you use other people's ideas in your essay make sure you acknowledge this to avoid plagiarism.
- Provide sufficient rigour in your essays to avoid superficiality.
- Use the format that is approved by this university.
- Underlined book titles in your essay.

Activity 3.3

1. *What is prewriting and why is it important?*
2. *How does a clear, restricted and unified thesis help in writing an argumentative essay?*
3. *Why is a detailed essay plan useful in essay writing?*
4. *How would you explain the main differences between expository and argumentative essays.*
5. *Give some of the salient features of a formal style.*

Summary

The unit has presented a step by step explanation on how to construct a literary essay. We hope you have these steps and internalized them accordingly. We look forward to seeing and reading your well-constructed essays in literature. Ensure that you do practice with your colleagues in your study group for better results.

The next four (4) units will analyze selected novels. That is the branch of literature that deals with storytelling. Storytelling has always been with man. Historians tell us that all societies in the world have been fond of narratives. Initially, all these narratives were in the oral form and some still are but some became written down later. The stories existed basically in two forms; myths and legends. Myths are stories of origin whose truth is difficult to verify whereas legends are stories of great personalities drawn from the past. Wish you the very best as we start analysing the novels.

UNIT 4: BINWELL SINYANGWE - QUILLS OF DESIRE

4.0 Introduction

Welcome to unit 4 which analyses a Zambian novel *Quills of Desire* written by Binwell Sinyangwe. The story centres on a young and intelligent secondary school pupil called Wiza. He is ambitious, and seeks to use his education as a ticket out of poverty. His family holds the same dream for him and pushes him to succeed, hoping for him to follow in the footsteps of his older brother. Alas, pitfalls have stricken his ambition while in his final year at school. His road to success is marred with temperamental, idealistic and passionate as he provokes the hostility of the headmaster and the jealousy of less able colleagues. Finally they get the better of him and Wiza has to try and adapt either to a world he despises - a world of poverty and under privilege or to a world where traditional customs and values prevail.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the study you should be able to:

- demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the text of “*Quills of Desire*”.
- analyze the contents and Themes of the novel.
- apply the contents of the novel to everyday life

4.1 Synopsis of the Novels

Wiza is a respected and popular figure at school among his fellow students and teachers alike. And with his affable character comes a healthy dose of arrogance which to his detriment pits him against some of the more insecure students who see him a threat to their own comfort.

His father, Chambuleni, is a wise man of few words. He counsels Wiza to be more deliberate in his thoughts and actions. Chambuleni fears Wiza’s unpredictability and penchant for mischief may prove to be a barrier to future success despite his excellent school grades.

As the action progresses we see Wiza mature in some ways but held back in others by his own inner demons and the seeds of mistrust sown earlier that are eagerly cultivated by those with personal grudges. As he stumbles and falls, one would ache for his pain. To see his potential squandered is a loss, and no one feels it more acutely than Wiza himself. Forced to make difficult decisions about his future, he rebels against it not wanting to give up the dreams on which he has held for so long.

The cast of supporting characters add to the story and do not merely serve as a fluff. Wiza's parents though not very educated are not simply village illiterates who worship the ground their sons walk on. They provide guidance, wisdom and love which are qualities you look for from parents regardless of their position in life. His school chums are also entertaining to follow as most of the readers would be reminded of their own boarding school experience.

4.2 THEMES

This refers to central or dominant idea in literary work. It is the abstract concept that is made concrete through its representation in person, action or image in the work of art. It is the basic or general idea expressed in the book or novel.

4.2.1 Conflict

The theme of conflict is exploited in this novel at an advanced level. These conflicts include Wiza going against the government officials, antagonism between Wiza and the head teacher, letters of warning and expulsion, and daughter of the Primary Head teacher Mr Mpongwe. This theme is heightened when Wiza was forced to marry a village girl (Gelina) that he did not like in preference to Evi. In Wiza's mind he had a fixed idea that if he were to marry, it had to be Evi the girl of his dream. He was not ready to compromise his idea. Similarly, Wiza had the conflict within himself with regard to jobs. He was frustrated that after the expulsion he did not accept his position in life as he kept on ditching many jobs that included conductor of a bus and fisherman as he felt they were below his standard.

On the other hand conflict in Wiza is seen because of his fixed idea that school was the only vehicle to his success against his father's plea that "school is something but it is not everything." It is because of these conflicts that Wiza fails to recognise other things and this leads him to fail in whatever he touches.

Activity 4.1

1. *One would safely say Wiza was to blame for his failure following the events of his life in the novel. Critically, discuss how this notion is exploited?*
2. *Discuss whether conflict are there to build our lives or to destroying us?*

4.2.2 Men and God

All over the world, people have different beliefs and ways in which they worship their gods. In Africa, societies have their religions that are concerned with topics such as God, spirits, human life, magic, the hereafter and so on as rightly observed by Mbiti (1991:11). In the light

of the above observation, the novel “Quills of Desire” depicts Wiza Chambuleni deep rooted in African belief of worshipping the gods. As a little boy of eight, Wiza had prayed to the gods to let him go as far as standard six. Halfway through primary school, Wiza had started appealing to the gods and ancestral spirits to let him go to secondary school.

On the day before the beginning of the final primary school leaving examinations he had bravely gone alone to the home of Kuzuke, the god of prosperity and the future. It is known that Kuzuke existed in the shape of a large python whose home was a scary undergrowth of creepers, south of the homestead. There, the little boy Wiza had knelt on the ground, a little distance from the undergrowth. With his head in a bowed position and hands resting on his thighs, he praised the god of Kuzuke for his kindness (Pg 5).

The boy humbly requested the god to light his way and let him pass the coming examinations well enough to let get a place at secondary school. He also informed the god that for placement, his first choice was Kenneth Kaunda Secondary School in Chinsali. That night he slept facing the roof. According to the narrator of the story, it was important to sleep like that because the ancestral spirits might want to tell him something about tomorrow’s examination while he was asleep (Pg 5). Surprisingly, Wiza managed the exams with the help of his mother’s concoction that was to make his eyes and brains shaper during the examination. It is observed that when the results came, Wiza’s were the best and he had been awarded a place at the respected Kenneth Kaunda Secondary School, the school of his choice.

Activity 4.2

1. *By closely referring to the events in the novel, discuss the influence of the gods in the life of Wiza?*
2. *How effective is African religion in the people’s lives?*

4.2.3 Theme of Determination and Hard work

This theme is prominent in this novel and is evidenced through Wiza Chambuleni who is determined to pass to Kenneth Kaunda Secondary School and later get to the university. He worked very hard and produced impressive results. His hard work was noticed by his fellow pupils and teachers except for the head teacher Mr. Dasgupta and his allies. Wiza’s determination is first seen when he woke up before sunrise ready to start the usual three-kilometre journey through the bush to Polo Primary School for readiness of the morning examination. When Wiza arrived at school there was no single soul as it was too early.

The examination he was to write that day “Special Paper One” had obsessed him so much that he had not noticed that daytime was still far away. After gazing at the wall clock of the head teacher’s office through his window Wiza realised it was three a.m. Determined to write the exam while relaxed he went in the examination room and slept on one of the benches at the back of the room. He was awakened by Mr Mpongwe the school head teacher who was taking a walk around the school. Upon seeing him, Mr Mpongwe asked “why are you here so early Wiza Chambuleni?” the old man asked perplexedly. “And I can see you came a long time ago.” “The moon deceived me.” “You are a determined and courageous child, Wiza Chambuleni.” (Pg 6). There is no doubt that Wiza showed the signs of determination and courage and thus the head teacher took him to his house where he ate breakfast with him.

Not only was Wiza’s determination seen at Primary level but also at Secondary level where he was academically sound. At KK, Wiza’s name was popular among the teachers and pupils for his intelligence attributable to his hard work. If Wiza was not number one in class then he was number two. This fact was attested in the report forms his father was receiving termly. For example, when Wiza was accused of spoiling the school maize by Yona, Wiza performed exceptionally well despite the head teacher’s bad comments. The report form confirmed his hard work in the following grades:

Geography 94%, second position in class; Mathematics 80%, second position in class; Biology 81%, fourth position in class; Physical Science 87%, first position in class; Literature in English 72%, third position in class; English 68%, second position in class; and Bemba 90%, third position in class (Pg67).

Wiza’s determination and hard work was amazing. In second term of his final year he was busy seventy percent of the time with activities of the science club, working on the project he was to exhibit at the provincial fair, or doing administration work for science club. The administration work usually meant issuing equipment and other requisites to the club members from the storerooms of the laboratories. Further, he needed to monitor the attendance and punctuality of members and the progress on their projects. This meant that each member would report to him in the physics laboratory where he worked on his project called Aricom. Aricom was an electrical device for carrying out simple arithmetical calculations by answering in round figures between -250 and +250. The Aricom project required undivided attention to be successful of which Wiza did just that.

During the exhibition judges from the University of Zambia took time to inspect an amazing project Wiza had made. They inspected the project with serious examination, like no-nonsense criminal investigators but they found Wiza alert. He confidently answered question after question and had fought the battle courageously, with the shield and cudgel of his intelligence, and with social tact that was in advance of his years (Pg 97). His wisdom coupled with intelligence was seen in this good answer:

“For genuine development to take place in any nation, the citizens of the nation must go to school first and rid themselves of illiteracy through formal education” Wiza answered enthusiastically to a question on the relevance of Aricom to the theme of the fair which was: Development Through Your Own Resources (Pg 97).

When Wiza was asked to operate it for the judge to see it, he switched it on and performed a few functions to the satisfaction of the judges. When the results were announced the first position was given to the owner of the most remarkable exhibit called Aricom project for Wiza Otoni Chambuleni. Everyone at that time burst into acclamation confirming Wiza was the most respected scientist of the event. His hard work earned KK the first position of the show and won the main trophy. Everyone agreed that the young man took honour to KK. Others took note of his role he played in organising the success of the fair in his capacity as a general secretary of the science club.

Activity 4.3

1. *Following the events in the novel, write a detailed essay stating whether Wiza was truly a hard working pupils or not. Support your position by referring to the novel.*
2. *Is Wiza’s hard work enough to ignore all his weakness? Critically argue out his weakness in the development of the story?*

4.2.4 The Role of Parent-hood

The story revolves around Mr Chambuleni and his eight children. He is determined to have a successful family, especially for his children when they are grown up to have their homes. That is the reason why Mr. Chambuleni is patient enough to offer valuable advice to his children when need arises. This action is to guide the children through family values and ethos. The narrator of the novel tells us that Mr. Chambuleni is blessed with eight children.

Of his older children, Kocha the first born, Leya the second born, Wiza the third born, Chakonta the fourth born are very prominent in the novel (Pg 7).

All the four children except Wiza have been straight without giving his father any problems from the time they have been mere 'puppies' to the present. His first born is reported to be studying overseas at one of the universities in his final year without any single stain on his name. Laya and Chakonta are believed to have failed to make it to the secondary school but it was obvious that they would be successful in life as they are upright.

Wiza on the other hand is believed to be the odd one, as well as being most unpredictable, despite being intelligent of Mr Chambuleni's children. Mr. Chambuleni wished Wiza could go as far as Kocha had gone in school to give the family a more solid pillar of two well educated sons. In his heart he was always daunted by the fear of what might become of Wiza in defiance of his precious dreams for him for Wiza was unpredictable.

As soon as Wiza had gone to school, Mr Chambuleni had begun handling problems he had never experienced in the school life of Kocha and Leya. Every now and then, parents would storm into his homestead with their children, Wiza's schoolmate, whom they would say Wiza had injured or beaten. Those parents would bring evidence with them to prove Wiza's atrocities. In turn, the parents would leave the homestead saying that had it not been for Chambuleni, they would have done something bad (Pg 7-9).

For the love of his son, Mr.Chambuleni would do everything possible to defend his son, but often the case against Wiza would be so straight. If the case against Wiza is so straightforward Mr. Chambuleni would not have any other option but to confess that his son was in the wrong and promise that he would deal with him. True to his words Mr Chambuleni was a tough man on his erring children. He believed that his love for his children was supposed to be coupled with severe discipline. He would beat and admonish, but his beating was unforgettable (Pg 8).

His parental hood had tough tests from Wiza who recorded uncounted number of beatings. Wiza would shake the whole family with his strange behaviour of refusing to eat or he would go missing from home for several days until his temper cooled down. Upon seeing this unbecoming behaviour of his son, Mr Chambuleni had resorted to admonishing Wiza in preference to taking a whip. He feared his own son as much as he loved him and wanted him

disciplined (Pg 8). His love for Wiza did not end here but defended him by standing by his side till his death.

Activity 4.4

1. *As a potential parent of a defiant son like Wiza, Do you think Mr Chambuleni's role as a parent is enough to guarantee the future of his son?*
2. *Critically, outline thirty (30) qualities of a good father?*

4.2.5 Teacher/Parent Concerted Efforts to disciplining pupils

This aspect of life is evidenced when Mr.Chambuleni and Mr Mpongwe met to discuss Wiza's misfit. While Wiza was in standard one, the teacher brought a report that Wiza had written a letter to Mr Mpongwe's daughter and because the girl did not respond favourably to it, Wiza was harassing her every day, threatening to beat her up. Upon discovering this ordeal, the head teacher decided to consult Mr. Chambuleni on the step the two would take towards their child. The parental/ teacher step made by Mr Mpongwe to handle Wiza's unbecoming behaviour can be compared to that of Mr Dasgupta whose aim was to destroy the intelligence of the pupil. Mr Mpongwe's action proves him to be a true and genuine teacher committed to his cause. Unlike Mr Dasgupta, Mr Mpongwe chose a civilised route that would build confidence between the parents and teachers at large. His wisdom is seen in the following words:

You are an enlightened parent; you are not like most of these other parents who don't understand the problems of a teacher and who defend their children blindly. I exercise patience because I know your son is the way he is out of his own nature and not because of bad influence from his parents. Your other children who came to Polo Primary School have been excellent-Kocha especially. ... I really do not know what to do about Wiza. We must find a solution. That is why we are here. Personally I promise never to throw him out of school. He is very intelligent and to me that is more important than anything else. It is better for me to keep him in school than to keep a well behaved pupil who gets zeroes in class (Pg 9).

Mr Mpongwe's words were full of wisdom and his role as a teacher may be seen to be good. Mr. Mpongwe's desire to educate and finding lasting solution to stubborn pupils can be contrasted to that of Mr Dasgupta whose action was regarded as harsh. Mr Dasgupta argued

that Wiza was a bad element that was not needed at school. He argued that criminals of Wiza's calibre would in turn use the chemistry they passed with flying colours, to ruin the country, instead of moulding future leaders. In Mr Dasgupta's minds he saw Wiza as a social misfit whose good performance on the academic side was barely enough to compensate for his delinquency. His determination to get rid of Wiza yielded results when he finally expelled him from the school despite the pupil's exceptional intelligence.

Activity 4.5

1. *Would one blame Mr.Dasgupta for the stance he takes against Wiza? State why you think in that line?*
2. *Compare and contrast the two head teachers' actions towards the learner. Were their actions justifiable?*

4.2.6 True friendship

Humphrey was Wiza's best friend at KK. He lived to shield and protect Wiza against trouble. One day Humphrey as a prefect discovered that Wiza's name was among the other pupils' names to be submitted to the head teacher for looting the school Maize. Without hesitation Humphrey approached his friend to inquire the truth from him. Arriving at the sick-bay from the dormitories where the message had been delivered to him, Wiza found Humphrey busy writing prescriptions for his clientele. While his third year pupil was giving out the medicine dressing wounds, Humphery found time to talk to his friend. This action alone goes to show that Humphrey was a dedicated friend to Wiza.

Let's stand there "he said, pointing at the deserted open space between the office of the bursar and the staff room. Wiza, anxious followed the neat stocky figure of his friend which, as usual, was garbed in the spotlessly white dust coat. "Humphrey sighed uneasily and said: "where were you yesterday evening between five and six o'clock?" "You mean out of school ground?" "Yes." "I was with Teddy, taking a walk; we went to the cook's compound and football ground." "You didn't go to the school farm?" Wiza hesitated. "We did", he then said staring at his friend with question "what's up?" in his eyes (Pg 12).

Wiza had now half-understood what the matter was. He could guess it had to do with the crime of pupils sneaking into the maize field, eating the maize stalks and throwing away cobs. The headmaster was very upset about it and recently, he had warned that any culprit

who was reported to him would be severely dealt with. Upon getting the truth from his friend Humphrey scratched his forehead lightly, looking something between worried and relieved. At that point Wiza queried his friend. “After lessons I passed by the prefects’ room before going to the sick-bay and discovered that Yona had written your name on the list of the offenders. I got worried when I heard your name mentioned. I feared Yona might have met you in the wrong place. You know Yona, especially with you; he would not even bother with the fact that you are fifth grade.” (Pg 13).

Further, true friendship between Humphreys’ was evidenced when he defends Wiza’s changed behaviour. He argues that:

As everybody must have noticed, he said, from the time Wiza had almost been expelled after the incident involving the government official, Wiza had conducted himself very well, and had not caused any trouble worth talking about. In many ways Wiza had changed and, unless the headmaster and his allies had based their arguments on incidents from his first and second years, there hand’t been anything in Wiza’s conduct in the past year to explain his disqualification from becoming a prefect. But was it fair, he questioned, to remember the mistakes of junior days considering a student of Wiza’s standing for the position of prefect? Were not some pupils made prefects because of the very fact that they had changed?

Humphrey spoke sincerely. Wiza had changed. He had changed greatly and for the better. These days he exercised a lot of restraint, and he was generally far less volatile than he had been during form one and two. The way Wiza was taking the injustices was just another testimony of how much he had changed. If it had been those early days, KK would have been talking of something else by now. But there he was, calm and accepting about everything.

Truly, going by Humphrey’s deliberations he know what he was talking about his friend better than any other person at KK. Humphrey was true and real to status quo of friendship with Wiza.

Activity 4.6

1. *Write an essay that describes who the true friend is?*

2. *By closely reading the events of the novel would Humphrey's friendship with Wiza described to be true? Support your answer with critical examples from the novel.*

4.2.7 Rage and Hatred

The theme of hatred is at the centre of conflicts in the novel "Quills of Desire". This theme is first seen with rivalry enmity between Wiza and Yona Sumbukeni a prefect at KK. Yona's enmity with Wiza had begun when the two were in form one at KK. The source of that hostility had to do with Wiza's performance in school. During the first term of his first year at KK, Yona had been in the same class as Wiza: Form one blues- the form for the best first year pupils. Whilst Wiza soon established himself as one of the best pupils in the class, Yona failed to achieve any good results. In time, it became clear that Yona's place was at the tip of the tail of the class. After the first term, he was transferred to Form One Orange, which was the equivalent of Form 1B. After the second term he was further relegated to One Yellow equivalent of Form 1C (Pg 38).

Yona's failure to make it in the class of the best first year pupils and constant relegating from one class to another created playful talk on sensitive issues, such as academic performance with which the pupils spiced day-to-day school life. The talk took the form of jocular observations about certain people who came to school when they were already old enough to be parents; people who had spent centuries repeating the final primary school year before they made it to secondary school; people who always demanded silence in class but were noisier than an empty tin when outside classroom; people who studied hard but always seemed to revise work which never came up in examinations and test, and were stuck with poor results (pg38).

Clearly, this talk was neither malicious nor directed at any specific person, but was part of the general gossip and wealth of jokes that kept the business of the schooling more lively. However, some students took it to heart and believed certain remarks were directed at them. For example, Yona Sumbukeni was one of those pupils, and for some reason, his anger was vented towards Wiza. He believed that Wiza was the principal character who championed that malicious talk about him doing badly in class. He hated Wiza for that. Similarly, Wiza disliked Yona for failing to understand why he picked on him out of so many pupils. With time, their enmity was worsened by other controversies and incidents in their interaction.

In grade twelve term one the head teacher was very upset about pupils who were entering the main field and eat stalks that had good maize cobs. He instructed Yona to write down the

names of the culprits that were looting school maize. With enmity between the two, Yona seized the opportunity and wrote Wiza's name on the list of pupils found in the main maize field, beyond the free zone. Surprisingly, Wiza's name was the only name comprising of senior pupils among the names of the juniors. Through, Humphrey we are made to understand that Wiza did not enter the main school field and he was not alone on the material day. He was with one of the classmate called Teddy taking a walk through the cook's compound and the football ground. The narrator of the story explains that Wiza and Teddy met Yona just as they were entering the free zone from football ground. Prefects that included the head boy and his deputy attempted to have Wiza's name removed from the list but did not yield any results as Yona had submitted the names to the head teacher Mr. Dasgupta.

Mr. Dasgupta's reaction upon seeing Wiza's name leaves much to be desired. His reaction gives a room to speculate that he had so much hatred against Wiza despite his intelligence. His hatred can be viewed through these words:

“take a sit”, the headteacher invited. Wiza sat down on one of the three visitors' chair which were arranged, opposite the head master, on the other side of the table. “So you are here again,” sneered Mr. Dasgupta... “I knew it”. What else are you the greatest at, apart from trouble-making? Eh? “Mr Trouble Chambuleni-Wiza Chambuleni the Terrible!” ...“The only form five pupil out of fifteen! What do you say to that, Mr Wiza Chambuleni? The rest are from form one and form two. I expect problems from the younger boys, but this train you are also boarding! You, a form five pupil. Cassius Clay, Muhammad Ali beating innocent people in my school. Idi Amin harassing the good and respected government officials visiting my great school. No, Charles Manson, you are also ravaging innocent maize at the farm like wild pig. In my school! Are you not ashamed sir?” Wiza fidgeted, mute with bitterness, humiliation and embarrassment. “you don't have to say anything”, Mr. Dasgupta said. “There is no need. I am not going to whip you like the others. I just want to tell you that I have written a letter to your father. You will see it at the end of the term when you go home. I have explained in the letter what you and your father should do before I accept you back to this school. No discussion. You can go” (Pg 62-3)

Analysing from Mr. Dasgupta's reaction one may conclude that the head teacher's reaction was that one controlled by hatred and anger. Being a father and teacher of his calibre, one

expected him to handle the case of Wiza with level headedness. He needed to get the side of the story from Wiza as well before he could react. His reaction makes any critical reader to conclude that Mr. Dasgupta was a judge ready to condemn the victim without hearing. This reaction does not surprise us because Mr. Dasgupta had from the beginning been against Wiza for apparent no reason. During the selection of prefects, Wiza's name was amongst the first five on the list of the nominees. Some prefects suggested his name for consideration for the post of deputy head boy. But when the list was presented to the head teacher and a selected panel of teachers and prefects, Mr. Dasgupta saw to it that Wiza's name was dropped from the list.

The efforts of those teachers and prefects who felt strongly about Wiza's abilities argued that he be given a lesser position at least, such as that of student-in-charge of the film shows. That proposal too had been fiercely challenged. The head teacher and his allies saw to it that all the smaller posts were given to other pupils, and that nothing went to Wiza. One should see the shock the whole school got into upon hearing Wiza's name was not among the selected names. The surprise, carried questions about why they had left the:

- I. Greatest wizard in mathematics
- II. School's most logical and formidable polemicists in English Language
- III. Respectable member of the debating society who often represented the school in debating competition
- IV. Pillar of the science club
- V. Hero of KK who had brought honour to the school by winning second prize in the senior physical science section of Provincial Science Fair.
- VI. School science club secretary general
- VII. Winner of first prize award in Aricom, and
- VIII. Scientist, an intellectual and revolutionary

The teachers, mature pupils, and Wiza himself were less shocked by the outcome. They had expected it considering the vicious campaign of the head teacher and his allies against Wiza's candidature. They nurtured a formidable level of animosity by the still fresh memories of last year's escapade involving Wiza and government official who had visited the school. They argued that although Wiza had exemplary academic record and was active in extra-curricular activities and was, therefore, outwardly suitable for a position of responsibility, he was not

dependable. It is beyond reasonable doubts that Wiza's stay at KK though temperamental is condemned like Sisyphus read in our founding exponent of the philosophy of existentialism.

In a sense, most of us live our lives "under the eyes of the others." Again without consciously or perpetually taking note of this fact, most of us live our lives with a feeling of constant condemnation if not persecution. Our freedoms are curtailed by the eyes watching us. Yet only the few dare devil 'revolutionaries' in their own right, have stood up to say 'no' to conformism. In the regular and routine scheme that we have accepted for our lives, we are therefore, simply, treading in the footsteps of Sisyphus. Sisyphus condemned by the gods to carry that boulder up to the summit of the mountain and upon arrival up there the rock rolling down to base of the mountain. Yet, like Sisyphus condemned, we have to pick up the rock again, and again and again! Unfortunately Wiza cannot stand the pickup rock of rage and hatred and his life is cut short. SAD!

Activity 4.7

- 1. Discuss the notion of hatred and rage. Are these notions healthy in the hearts of people created before the image of God?*
- 2. What would you say about the head teacher's behaviour in frustrating Wiza's name for being a school prefect?*

4.3 Characterisation

A character, by definition is a person in a story. A character may also be defined as representation of persona. Even when the characters are animals, they almost invariably represent human beings or exhibit human attributes.

4.3.1 Wiza

Wiza Chambuleni was a determined and courageous boy whose early life showed signs of success. Among Mr. Chambuleni's eight children, Wiza was the most intelligent. At the age of eight he managed a good name at Polo Primary School by passing the examination out rightly. His hard work moved on at Kenneth Kaunda Secondary school by winning himself a solid reputation of impressive year-to-year academic performance. Wiza's intelligence did not deem off after possessing first-division performance at junior secondary level. He embarked upon his final secondary year with growing impressive performance and dreams. He dreamt of getting to the university to get the first class engineering degree. Further, he was resolved to becoming a dedicated scholar who could write articles to engineering

journals and carrying on his research. However, Wiza's dream was threatened by his character that was full of his fiery temper and controversial mind that made him to fight other troubles.

4.3.2 Mr Chambuleni

Mr Chambuleni is Wiza's father who is determined to educate, advise, admonish and protect his child whenever need arose. His advice were timely especially when he advised his children to be patient in life as their turn would surely come. When the time comes you will be free to pick what please you. He was a patient man who did not act before time comes. He is described to us as a man who feared and hated failures. It is because of this point of view that Mr Chambuleni's children Kocha and Wiza were intelligent in class. Like every parent, Mr. Chambuleni's dream was that of respectable life for his children when they grow up to have their own homes. He was said to have eight children, and Wiza being the third born and the only one who had given him worst headache. His fatherly love did not cease despite Wiza's misfit as he defended his son over Mr. Dasgupta's first unfounded attempt to expel Wiza unceremoniously.

4.3.3 Mr Mpongwe

Mr. Mpongwe was the Head teacher at Polo Primary school, two streams and a ridge east of the homestead for Mr. Chambuleni. Mr. Mpongwe was the father to Alick a first year pupil at Kenneth Kaunda Secondary School. Mr Mpongwe informed Mr Chambuleni about Wiza's ordeal at school when the school authority almost terminated his schooling in what the Head teacher insisted on calling Wiza's unwholesome behaviour towards the Honourable Minister of State. He was old lean but energetic man who was a time honoured teacher.

4.3.4 Mr Dasgupta

Mr. Dasgupta was the head teacher at Kenneth Kaunda Secondary School. He is viewed to be negative towards Wiza despite the young boy's impressive performance. He accused the teachers that were defending Wiza of exploiting the educational system of the nation to rear sophisticated criminals. He argued that such criminals would in turn use the chemistry they passed with flying colours to ruin the country, instead of moulding future leaders. In Mr Dasgupta's minds he saw Wiza as a social misfit whose good performance on the academic side was barely enough to compensate for his delinquency. His determination to get rid of Wiza yielded results when he finally expelled him from the school.

4.3.5 Mr Stevenson

Mr. Stevenson was the deputy head teacher for Kenneth Kaunda Secondary School. He was one of the teachers that had seen strength and good in Wiza's attitude and associated it with intelligence, originality and creativity. He fought hard that Wiza was not expelled but his efforts were short-lived due to the head teacher's determination to get rid of Wiza at school. Mr Stevenson's open mind and support for intelligent pupils like Wiza was evident when Wiza got into confrontation with a State Minister. He felt proud of Wiza's intellectual and linguistic prowess. Being the teacher of English for Wiza he was happy that his pupil could use the word 'CONSISTENCY' which the boy had come across barely two weeks ago. In his thought he concluded that Wiza was a potential material for Oxford University as opposed to the head teacher who was against the boy.

4.3.6 Minister of State

The Minister of State was a government official who visited Kenneth Kaunda Secondary School while on an official duty tour of Chinsali District. His main subject of his address had been youth and the philosophy of humanism. In his address he talked about "the spirit of humanism", the government had done and what they were planning to do. He went on to talk about the philosophy of Zambian humanism explaining and illustrating its principle in his own fashion. In his address everything went on well up to the end, but for his tirade against Zambian youth, whom he attacked making the pupils wrong people to talk to. His speech concentrated on attacking pupils that they were drunkard, dagga smokers and womanisers. This infuriated the pupils and asked several defensive questions that he dismissed with contempt they deserved. The last question the Minister received was from Wiza Chambuleni who asked him the question that had embraced the principal subject of the minister's address. Wiza's question was the only one that had academic and philosophical touch to it but unfortunately the Minister seemed not to have understood it. Unfortunately, the minister reacted harshly against the innocent pupil leading to rage of hatred by the head teacher Mr.Dasgupta.

4.3.7 Everilda (Evi)

Evi was a pupil from Lwitikila Girls' Secondary School. She is described to us as simple, beautiful, and short, quite girl. She was small and dainty, with a smooth-textured, lit coppery complexion. Her cropped black hair was thick and well-cared for. She had a baby face with a look of innocence beyond age and imagination. In terms of her voice it was soft. Evi was the

dream of every pupil at KK. Her beauty that may be summed as coca cola bottled structure swept the nerve of every pupil and KK and her name was on every male tongue in the school.

At last Evi fell for Wiza and put the last nail on his head. She slept with Wiza in the sick bay to the discovery of the school authorities leading to expulsion. The two met each other for the first time at Daniel's home at the single-quarters in Nkana West in Kitwe, and the second time was at Martin's wedding. Kocha knew the family and it was through him that Wiza had met her. At the time of the wedding, Evi was still a young girl in her primary school but now was a big admirable lady. Upon seeing her, Wiza was convinced that Evi was the gloom that had been hanging over him as he melted by her presence and lyrical voice. The two clicked and their alchemy was a perfect match.

4.3.8 Kocha

Kocha was Wiza's elder brother studying in England and he loved him so much that he was his inspirational. Kocha was the first born child to Mr Chambuleni and he is said to be the typical example of the first born one would ever want to have. He has sailed his academic pursuit without a single stain on his name and in his final year of studies in university overseas.

4.3.9 Humphrey

Humphrey was Wiza's best friend at KK. He was the student-in-charge of the sick bay, for which he was nicknamed 'Doctor'. He had won this prestigious post when he was in form three on account of his notable performance in the first aid activities of the Boy Scout movement. Humphrey was a naturally dedicated and meticulous person. His work in any field ended up a perfect accomplishment. His notes, for instance, were the best of any student, being detailed, accurate and as neat as print. Soon after he had taken over the sick bay everybody accepted that things had changed for the better. There was more order and efficiency. His status in school acted as a shield of protection against trouble for his friend Wiza.

4.3.10 Milika

Milika was Wiza's mother. Although she hasn't got formal education, she is a typically successful mother of eight. Milika's love for her children cannot be overemphasised. She shares the husband's dream in having successful children. Like an adage saying "behind any successful man lies a successful woman". Like her husband, Milika was a disciplinarian. Her desire in having disciplined children was for their success. She supported her children in their

school endeavours. While Wiza was in his junior grade she prepared the watery concoction that Wiza needed to rub his face and arms to make his brain and eyes sharper during examination. She also advised Wiza to slide a pair of dry *mbulwe* sticks and one unused matchstick in his hair just above the forehead making sure the sticks were so hidden in his hair that no one could see them. When Wiza had come home on a first term holiday of grade twelve, her mother played a big role of comforting Wiza and advising him on how to go about his father regarding a letter from his school. She advised Wiza not to cross his father's path.

4.3.11 Yona Sumbukeni

Yona was Wiza's enemy number one at KK and was a deadly prefect. Yona is reported to have teamed with the head teacher when it came to matters of disciplinary matters. Further, Yona and the head teacher were united in their dislike of Wiza at school. Yona was one of the prefects assigned by the head teacher to write the names of pupils found in the main maize field beyond the free zone. Yona wrote the names and handed them to the head boy every Friday afternoon for the head teacher's action. Among the names submitted Wiza's name was there.

Summary

The unit has demonstrated that Wiza was prone to go against any authority going by his confrontational behaviour. This maybe exemplified by many warning letters he received that included near expulsion and later on the expulsion from school. His dalliance with the daughter of the Primary School Head teacher, and the brush with the government official are many scandals Wiza had committed. The sad thing is that he did not put the blame on himself but always put the blame most of times squarely on the shoulders of others like the head teacher Mr Dasgupta and Yona. Although, Wiza was said to be intelligent, he was undisciplined and it was this that worked against him while he did not recognise it and exacerbated his problem. His tragedy is recounted on his failure to realise that yes school was something but it was not everything for him. Like any other human endeavour, school was not meant for everybody. He needed to realise that "one does not become a failure in life just by proving to be a failure in hunting or farming. School is not different from these other human activities". The over expectations compelled him to end his precious life. SAD!

UNIT 5: BESSIE HEAD - MARU

5.0 Introduction

Welcome to unit 5 that analyses *Maru* written by Bessie Head. In this novel the author tackled an incipient but dangerous problem that Africans are not eager to confront but which had been the bane of the continent, stalling every development, fomenting and precipitating civil wars. Almost every crisis in Africa is either caused by this or acts as a catalyst. It led to the electoral crisis in Kenya, the genocide in Rwanda, the Liberian war, the Ivorian crisis and many more in Africa. Racism has been amongst us and has retarded our progress so much that had it being eliminated a larger portion of our problems would have been solved concomitantly. For instance, if there were no internal racism (mostly referred to as tribalism or ethnicism) most forms of corruptions would be no more.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the study you should be able to:

- demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the text of “*Maru*”.
- analyze the contents and Themes of the novel.
- apply the contents of the novel to everyday life

5.1 Critical Overview of the Story

Today in every country, there are those who think the country belongs to them and look upon all others (tribes) as inferior and squatters deserving only the crumbs. This problem had become pronounced due to the great diversity within Africa's gene pool so that in a country the variation among people is as much as there are of ethnic or tribal groups. And because politics is about power and numbers corrupt politicians have fallen on this whipping up sentiments, making ignorant and absolutely stupid ethically biased statements. In Botswana, the Masarwa tribe is one of those that have suffered extreme racial segregation. Even when the larger population were struggling against the western racialism they kept the Basarwa (or the Bushmen, their name itself deeply derogatory) as slaves. According to the Tswana people the Basarwa people cannot think, the very argument used against them by the western segregationists; they are considered not different from animals and are counted as part of the animals that inhabit the Kalahari. In this book, Bessie Head shows what a Basarwa (a girl in this case) can do when given the opportunity apart from hunting, gathering herbal medicine

and the art they are known for and the slaves they end up becoming. This is the subject matter of Bessie Head's novel *Maru*.

The story rises when a Basarwa woman dies after giving birth to a daughter. But because she is a Basarwa and an untouchable, the people called on Margaret Cadmore, a white teacher, to attend to the 'thing'. She also taught her several things including literature and art. Margaret took the daughter and named her after herself, having had no child of her own. The young Margaret had to endure discrimination at school and had it not been her adopted mother, who ensured that she put those who laughed at her in their proper places, life would have been highly unbearable for her. And even though her colour could have allowed her to blend and be passed for a half-caste a product of a black and white parents, which is itself considered as an abnormality but still above the Masarwa people, Margaret insisted on identifying herself with her people the first time she found out who she was and the meaning of the name of her people.

Fortunately for young Margaret she was a good student and with a British for a mother albeit adopted, her English and the tonality of her voice was excellent. After she completed training at college and her adopted mother left for her home country, young Margaret was posted to a Delipe to teach at the Leseding School. There she met Dikeledi, the late chief's daughter, also a teacher at the school; the two quickly struck acquaintance.

Dikeledi was in love with Moleka, a womaniser notorious for changing women like clothes and sending the rejects fleeing town or walking the streets talking to themselves. He had eight children with eight different women and there was no end in sight. Moleka found a place for Margaret. When Dikeledi got to know that Margaret was Masarwa, she was amazed and advised her to keep it quiet as no one would suspect it, but she would not hear of it. On the first day at school the head-teacher was all over himself, having already concluded that she was a half-caste, until he got to know that Margaret was a Masarwa and that was when the problem began. Afraid of parents revolting against this, of their children being taught by one of those things, he set out to devise a plan that would make life so much uncomfortable for Margaret so that she would leave by herself or get her sacked, regardless of the fact that she had the best grades.

Moleka had been taken in by Margaret's beauty, politeness, and mannerisms. He was now like a mad man. As a man of importance, he could not go out with one of the Masarwa people, what would people say about him? This dilemma glazed his eyes so much so that he saw through Dikeledi. The first thing he did was to release all his Masarwa slaves. When the head-teacher prepared Margaret's students to laugh at their teacher and ask her if she was a Masarwa, Moleka invited the head teacher into his house and invited him to eat with them all. This action included the recently released Masarwa slaves. Infuriated, the head-teacher left and fled the town.

Dikeledi's brother and heir-apparent, Maru, who had been away when Margaret made her entry into Dilepe was informed of all the happenings in the village by his spy, Ranko. Maru also worked on an elaborate plan that would entwine Dikeledi to Moleka and free him to whisk Margaret away. In the turn of events, Maru married Margaret exposing how the Masarwa people are treated. Though the means by which Margaret was married, without her explicit consent for she loved Moleka (because Maru never showed any sign of love), would bother the readers. The importance of this story lies in the fact that even today the Masarwa and other tribes in Africa are being discriminated against. There are stories of their total extinction and the loss of a culture, carefully preserved, because their lands have been found to contain diamonds.

Themes

This novel has so many themes such as racism, social class, male and female relationships, oppression, friendship, rivalry, jealousy, spirituality, love, and confusion. Bessie Head expresses all of these themes through her use of beautiful, poetic, and mystical language style.

Racial and tribal Prejudice

The novel *Maru* represents a group of people reduced through discrimination to nonhuman status. The white man looks down upon others who are different from him, but the chain of discrimination reaches far beyond that.

If the white man thought that Asians were a low, filthy nation, Asians could still smile with relief at least that they were not Africans. Similarly, if the white man thought Africans were a low, filthy nation, Africans in Southern

Africa could still smile at least and say they are not Bushmen.” As Head observes, there is no one to whom the Bushman can turn and say, “At least I am not a -.” (1971:7-8)

Bessie Head makes Margaret, the protagonist of *Maru*, the victim of such prejudices. By definition, "Masarwa is the equivalent of 'nigger' it is a contemptuous term and means, obliquely, a low filthy people or nation. Masarwas are the most down trodden and despised of all black people. They are even reduced to the status of non-human beings. They are at the bottom of the 'hierarchy', as rightly observed by Head's narrator in the above quoted excerpt.

The theme under discussion captures Margaret living in a society which keeps refusing her but she nevertheless survives, thanks to a powerful inner life which saves her from madness. Margaret's psychic wholeness is not so much affected by external factors; instead psychic instability corners through her encounters with people capable of touching her heart and affecting her psychological self. Ironically, Margaret's psychic wholeness is conversely threatened by the same people who help her that include: Dikeledi, who uses her friendship for Margaret; Moleka, by his marriage to Dikeledi; and Maru, by his harshness towards Margaret. On the other hand, Margaret herself will threaten Moleka's peace of mind, while Dikeledi will help it. Then Moleka in his turn will become a threat to both Maru's and Margaret's mental equilibrium.

Activity 5.1

1. *Write an essay that outlines how tribalism is cancerous in African societies?*
2. *What are the effects of tribalism?*
3. *As a teacher in School that has different pupils from different tribes, how would you help to promote the spirit of ones?*

Theme of Self Identity Syndrome

Margaret faces an identity problem that goes back to her childhood. Her adoption by Margaret Cadmore senior did not erase the fact that she belonged to the Masarwa society and beginning with her attendance at the mission school, people and children never cease to torture her. She quickly takes on the role of the victim and keeps that role all her life. She is a Bushman and therefore has no weapon of words or personality, only a permanent silence and a face which revealed no emotion. She does not understand her persecutors, especially when

in their mind the word Bushman means so much while in hers it does not. This word is also very important to Margaret Cadmore senior who burdens Margaret with the task of helping her people one day. Margaret's persecutors forced her into an ethnic group while in her heart she was a little bit of everything in the whole universe, because the woman who had educated her was the universe itself. It was hardly African or anything but something new and universal, a type of personality that would be unable to fit into a definition of something as narrow as tribe or race or nation.

Activity 5.2

1. *How would you advise your friend that suffers from the syndrome of self identity? Write an essay advising such a one.*
2. *As a literary scholar, would you support a policy in Zambia that compels all schools to teach one local language to all the pupils? Clearly, bring out the disadvantages and advantages in your arguments.*

5.1.3 Longing for Peaceful Stay and Life in Dilepe

Margaret longs for a peaceful job and life, and she is naive enough to believe that she will have both in Dilepe. She spends the three-hour journey to the village mentally shopping and she is amazed at the kindness of the driver who tells her not to be afraid of the world because people cannot harm her (pg 22). The truth is that she ought to be afraid because people have the right to oppress her and they can choose to be kind or wicked. The driver is probably respectful to her because she is a school teacher and he is unaware that she is a Bushman. Luckily for Margaret the first person in Dilepe to whom she confides her Masarwa origin is Dikeledi, a quiet but "drastic revolutionary" (pg25), who finally approves Margaret's decision about revealing her identity. Margaret is unable to lie and for her own sake and sanity it is better for her to reveal her real identity. But she fails to understand the complexity of the problem. When Dikeledi asks Margaret not to tell anyone that she is a Masarwa and to pretend that she is a coloured, Margaret answers that she has nothing to be ashamed of (pg24). It is not so much the shame Dikeledi has in mind but the trouble this revelation will cause in the village and it was not for her own sake either that Dikeledi drew in a sharp, hissing breath (pg 25).

Margaret eventually understands the situation when she endures the cruelty of the school's principal, Pete. But it is too late and she must receive the blows without, surprisingly, having

been prepared. When Moleka asks for the bed he lent her, she now realises that she can lose her job and be driven out of the village (pg 61). Her psychic wholeness as well as her life is endangered and her salvation is now in the hands of the people around her. Head depicts her as an eternal victim who is always fated to be saved.

Margaret's life and job in Dilepe are first of all saved and secured by the teachers and the villagers that include Dikeledi and Maru. When the principal of the school where she teaches coached a fourteen-year old boy to disrupt Margaret's classroom and disrespect her on the basis that she is a Bushman and therefore cannot be a teacher, Margaret is unable to react and remains at her desk staring at the students. She is fortunately supported by Dikeledi who manages to take control of the class. Dikeledi, in doing so, interferes with Pete's well-prepared plan. Then the teachers of the senior classes seize this opportunity to pull out 'their back-stabbing knives' and ridicule the principal for his failed attempt against Margaret. However, what really helps Margaret is public opinion. The next day, the people of the village notice that the "new mistress has dignity and respect for everyone" (pg 51). The villagers then swallow the shock about Margaret being a Bushman and begin debating the matter if they were trying to accustom their hearts to their children being taught by a Masarwa (pg 53). Moleka's reaction to Margaret's presence as a teacher is on the contrary, very clumsy and unhelpful to Margaret. He invites all his Masarwa slaves to sit with him at his table and shares a plate of food and a fork with one of them. Because he is of royal blood, Moleka's conduct frightens the villagers, for, if they are ready to make a concession to one Masarwa, they are not ready to do the same to all the Masarwas. Maru quickly understands the situation and adopts another strategy, which includes patience, lies and witchcraft.

Maru's first step is to placate public opinion and promote his own interest. Instead of improving the status of his Masarwa slaves, as Moleka does, he diminishes Margaret's privileged position by asking her to return the bed she had borrowed. Meanwhile he is ready to set off a number of "bombs" in the village; "some would explode soon, some a little later" (pg 60). His first "bombs" are to get rid of the people who can immediately harm Margaret, people like Pete, the principal; Seth, the education supervisor; and Morafi, Maru's younger brother. To do so Maru does not hesitate to use "witchcraft", which is in fact to employ superstition to induce psychological fear and terror in people's minds. Two of Maru's men threaten Pete and Seth in the name of Tladi, an African demon. Pete and Seth are intelligent and they are well aware that Maru is behind all this but "they only knew, as others before

them had known, that somehow they were on his bad side and that life was not worth living if you were on the bad side of Maru for he would terrorize you into the grave (pg 92). The three men flee and Dikeledi becomes the principal of Leseding School. Margaret now has her life and job secured in the village. Her psychic wholeness is no longer threatened by external factors; instead her mental equilibrium is shaken by a powerful troubled inner life.

Activity 5.3

1. *Reflect on your life at your first station of your first appointment as a teacher. How did you cope with the environment? In your essay state the challenges you experienced that may be similar to that of Margaret in Dilepe?*
2. *In your own critical analysis, do you sympathise with Margaret's life at Dilepe?*

5.2.4 Theme of Survival and Defensive Mechanism

The theme of survival is evidenced in Margaret while in Dilepe. Whenever she felt threatened, she had double personality. If anyone approached Margaret Cadmore, she slowly raised her hand as if to wage off a blow. She was a shadow behind which lived another personality of great vigour and vitality. She raised her hand to hide this second image from sight, but the two constantly tripped up each other. One would never be sure whether she was greater than the people she disguised herself from, or inferior, because of this constant flux and inter-change between her two images (pg71)

One side of her personality results from her ethnicity. She had become so used to rejection that her weapon was to keep silent because she had no power of any kind in the society. Therefore she created a mask to please society (an arrogant Masarwa would have only made things worse) and kept her real personality secret. This public image had nevertheless been so firmly implanted in Margaret's mind since her childhood that it had become an essential part of herself, Margaret's psychic wholeness was threatened by her difficulty in keeping the balance between two conflicting forces which coexist in her. On one hand, consciously, and because she was forced to by society, she had to keep her image of the silent Masarwa. On the other hand, unconsciously, she repressed herself and fecund inner life was fighting to annul the fake image.

At the beginning of the novel, Margaret's mental equilibrium seems stable. The new life she was going to begin in Dilepe forced her to concentrate on external observation and on her

role in the new community, thus shadowing her inner life. Margaret was determined to keep her real identity as a Masarwa and this was probably what prevented her from going insane. Margaret was naive insofar as she could not lie to people and less to herself, and this trait empowered her. The image she gave of herself to people had become natural and almost unconscious. Society had shaped Margaret's outer temperament and made her discreet, shy, obedient and silent. On her arrival in Dilepe, she did not even think of pretending to be a caloured, as Dikeledi suggested, because she was haunted by Margaret Cadmore senior's words "you will have to live with your appearance for the rest of your life. There is nothing you can do to change it". Margaret did not have the necessary strength and personality to pretend to be someone else. She did not know how to be important and respected. She was so amazed at the driver's kindness that she cried one tear. However, this new situation did not last long for Margaret and as soon as the whole community knew that she was a Masarwa, she found herself again in the familiar role of the persecuted victim. Margaret reverted to the external kind of life she was used to. She isolated herself in her house at the top of the hill and observed the village life. She was not a part of the village and belonged nowhere (pg 93). She neither asked nor hoped for anything and everything around her was quiet and harmonious.

Activity 5.4

- 1. State ten reasons justifying Margaret's survival and defensive mechanism at Dilepe?*
- 2. Do you think Margaret's isolating herself in her house is justifiable?*

5.2.6 Theme of Attention and Care

The theme of attention and care is crucial in this novel and it is first seen in Margaret when she falls in love with Moleka. Margaret loses her alienating sense of isolation and finds a temporary peace of mind. The loneliness in her life is replaced by the pleasant feeling that someone cares for her. Moleka made her feel as though she was the most important person on earth, when no one ever really cared whether she was dead or alive, and she had been so lonely. The loneliness had disappeared like the mist before the warmth of a rising sun. She really was no longer lonely (pg 30-31). The village of Dilepe seemed to Margaret the most beautiful village on earth because Moleka lived in it (pg 31). Margaret felt that something had stabilised her but this rationalization deluded her and she failed to see the precariousness of that stability.

Margaret had been trained by her foster-mother for a lonely life. Margaret Cadmore senior was herself a living example of someone who knew how to draw on her own inner resources (pg 94). Margaret's identity as a Masarwa and her childhood education also made her strong and powerful enough to face a tormented life. Good sense and logical arguments summed up what Margaret Cadmore senior mainly taught young Margaret. The white woman knew nevertheless that they would never be the sole solutions to the difficulties the child would later encounter, but they would create a dedicated scholar and enable the child to gain control over the only part of her life that would be hers, her mind and soul. She would have to take them and apply them to the experience gained in a hostile and cruel society. They would mean in the end that almost anything could be thrown into her mind and life and she would have the capacity, within herself, to survive both heaven and hell (pg16). Margaret was able to keep control of her mind and soul as long as the attacks of her persecutors were physical or verbal. But when feelings are involved, Margaret's psychic wholeness was threatened. Consequently, Margaret's inner self was deeply disturbed by her friendship with Dikeledi.

Activity 5.5

1. *It is true that when one is given with care and attention the subjective self shakes off. How far has this notion mesmerised in Margaret at Dilepe?*

5.2.7 Theme of Love and Friendship

Love and friendship are two completely new feelings for Margaret. During childhood, she never felt the love of her foster-mother. According to her, Margaret Cadmore was an educator of children, but also a scientist in her heart with a lot of fond, pet theories; one of her favourite, sweeping theories being: environment everything; heredity nothing (Pg 15). Therefore, Margaret always felt like the guinea pig of an important "experiment" led by her saviour:

The relationship between her and the woman was never that of a child and its mother. It was as though later she was a semi-servant in the house, yet at the same time treated as an equal, by being given things servants don't usually get: kisses on the cheeks and toes at bedtime, a bedtime story, long walks into the bush to observe the behaviour through binoculars of birds; and lots of reading material.

(Pg16-17)

Margaret Cadmore senior treated Margaret like a human being, but she never showed her any red feelings, as the scene of her departure demonstrates: The old white-haired lady was

retiring to England. She came in a car with pretty floral dresses and a pair of white shoes and practical last minute advice. The old plump lady pretended to cry, dabbing at dry eyes with a dry handkerchief' (Pg 19). Having always been treated by the people around her as if she was an animal of a thing, Margaret experienced for the first time in Dilepe the joy of having and receiving human feelings. But the discovery of her own feelings would threaten Margaret's psychic wholeness.

Margaret experienced for the first time the joy and the torment endangered by real friendship. Margaret and Dikeledi have both two very different, even opposed, attitudes and personalities and this was probably what helped to cement their friendship. Dikeledi's physical appearance was first of all in sharp contrast with Margaret's as she had a long, thin, delicate face, with a small mouth and is startling and unexpected in her elegance. She had a way of looking at people with one quick, wide stare, then immediately looking away into a far-off distance as though she did not particularly want anything from life or people (Pg 23). Margaret, on the contrary looked half like a Chinese, half like an African, and half God knows what (Pg 23), and when she speaks to people she usually kept her head bent (Pg 47) and searched the ground with her eyes (Pg 52). During their first encounter, Margaret was amazed at Dikeledi's "importance" and the way people waited on her, hand and foot. It made Margaret uneasy as she wasn't what she thought she was, an ordinary person like myself' (Pg 26). However, despite her social status, Dikeledi is kind toward and protective of Margaret. Dikeledi not only gave Margaret a place and a status in the community -'there goes the friend of Mistress Dikeledi'. She had no life outside those words" (Pg 93). She also raised Margaret's low self-esteem by treating her as an equal. Therefore, taken in this sense, Dikeledi's friendship was beneficial to Margaret's psychic wholeness: "Margaret grew in strength of purpose and personality - perhaps Dikeledi's love brought to the fore the hidden and more powerful woman who dwelt behind the insignificant shadow" (Pg112).

Margaret was so used to loneliness and silence that she did not know how to communicate with people and knew even less how to talk about herself and her feelings. When people approached her she kept silent or answered faintly to the questions asked (Pg 27) or answered foolishly, as on the day Ranko talked to her and she replied she had lost her handbag while it was on her arm (Pg 51). However, fear or anger made Margaret bolder and caused her hidden personality to take over temporarily. When Moleka showed her the accommodation, she was so afraid of scorpions that she asked Moleka not to remove the table (Pg 29). Also, after

Dikeledi regained the control of her classroom, she talked, probably for the first time in her life, about what she really felt at that moment, thus relieving herself of a suppressed emotion:

"Before you came in, I thought I had a stick in my hands and was breaking their necks. I kept on thinking: How am I going to explain her death? I thought I had killed a little girl in the front desk who laughed; because I clearly saw myself grab her and break her neck with a stick" (Pg 47).

The atmosphere between Margaret and Dikeledi "is so relaxed", that Margaret had no difficulties putting her trust in her new friend and discloses in part what troubled her. Dikeledi's friendship reassures Margaret somewhat; there is someone to rely on in the event of danger.

However, when Margaret meets Maru for the first time, she realised how much "Dikeledi invaded her own life (Pg63) and that everything Dikeledi said was not necessarily true or perceived identically by other people. Dikeledi always talked of Maru with reverence: she even said that he was a God in his kindness towards people (Pg 28). When Margaret met him for the first time, Maru harshly and authoritatively asked that she returns the bed lent to her. Margaret then thought about all the Masarwa slaves he owned and wondered how Dikeledi could be related to such a man (Pg 63). The friendship between the two women survives but thereafter they keep silent about their feelings. From that time on, Margaret avoided sharing her feelings and especially her secret love for Moleka. On the other hand, Dikeledi's attitude towards Margaret changed slightly with Maru's surprising revelation about marrying Margaret.

In spite of her appearance and high status in society, Dikeledi lacked self-assurance and her friendship with Margaret was not very helpful; instead of helping the latter, almost wrecked her fragile sanity. Dikeledi, because of her position as royalty, her elegance and beauty, her intelligence, and reputation as a difficult woman to get, seemed to be a strong and dominant character. However, emotionally, she was very weak, and despite being described as a queen, she was compared to a dog when it comes to feelings. Maru and Moleka had absolute control over her. Each time she saw Moleka, there was in her eyes the tenderness and devotion of a dog. She seemed to have no control over the dog love, even though the man obviously took it for granted and was flattered. In her eyes, Maru was a god. Dikeledi wanted to be the voice of reason and the spokesperson of a more humane world for the Masarwa (Pg 65); but as soon

as she learnt that Maru wished to marry Margaret she becomes hysterical and exclaimed: "But you can't marry a Masarwa. Not in your position"(Pg 66). According to Dikeledi, "Nothing had to go wrong with Maru. He was her god. Consequently, her friendship for Margaret changed and she became Maru's informant about Margaret.

Dikeledi's feelings for Margaret were nevertheless sincere. Nothing in the text contradicted her statement about her friendship for Margaret: "We loved each other from the day we met. There was no difficulty about establishing the friendship. Even there I was surprised. I knew the love had to grow, gradually" (Pg 67). Dikeledi was consequently warned about the danger in which Maru's love puts Margaret. She observed that "if people heard even a whisper of this they would instantly plot to kill her" (Pg67). In Dikeledi's mind, her role as a friend must be extended to become one of protector and "her affection says: 'I must take care of her'" (Pg 71). But Dikeledi's protectiveness made Margaret more at ease and trusting only until the final revelation about Dikeledi's marriage to Moleka. Because of her friendship with Dikeledi and the trust she puts in her, Margaret took this revelation as a betrayal. As the narrator explains, only Dikeledi is capable of hurting Margaret so badly.

A few vital threads of her life had snapped behind her neck and it felt as though she were shrivelling to death, from head to toe. The pain was so intense that she had to bite on her mouth to prevent herself from crying out loud. Oh, what did all the reasoning help now? There was a point at which she was no longer a Masarwa but the equal in quality and stature of the woman who sat opposite her. It was their equality which had given Dikeledi the unconscious power to knock her down with a sledge-hammer blow. No other woman could have killed her, but she knew Dikeledi through and through and her soul was a towering giant. She tried to raise her half-broken neck, to say some word that would be a remembrance or even a coherent recollection of the affection they had lived with for a year, but her throat was a tightly constricted knot of pain. She pathetically balanced the still unbroken part of her neck in the palm of her hand (Pg119).

Dikeledi threatened Margaret's psychic wholeness with her friendship and final revelation but she was also the one who gave her the possibility to exteriorize her feelings and inner visions. Dikeledi, obeying Maru's order, offers to Margaret all the material an artist could need. As soon as she received the box, Margaret's inner life was totally disrupted. "It had a beginning like the slow build-up of a powerful machine but once it had started the pitch and

tautness of its energy allowed for no relaxation; the images and forms, the flow and movement of their life imposed themselves with such demanding ruthlessness that there was no escape from the tremendous pressure".

Activity 5.6

1. *Critically establish Dikeledi's physical appearance and characteristics to that of Margaret. Which one of the two has virtuous qualities of a woman? Defend your answer with empirical evidence from the novel.*
2. *It is beyond doubt that the first encounter Margaret has with Dikeledi has led to contempt of her. What are the reasons Margaret has for this contempt?*

5.2.8 Theme of Fantasy and Dream

Through Margaret's paintings, the theme of fantasy and dreams emerge in *Maru*. Margaret's presence at Dilepe led to purging herself of all the feelings that had been trapped so long inside her subconscious and recreate her fragmented sense of self. According to the narrator, "there was a part of her mind that had saturated itself with things of such startling beauty and they pressed, in determined panorama, to take on living form" (Pg 101).

Margaret used painting as psychological therapy; however the process was so new and sudden that her psyche could not keep up with the censorship and lost control. Margaret had lost the link completely, like the non-swimmer suddenly thrown into the deep water. She could not discipline and control the power machine of production and it resulted in two days of total collapse (Pg 101).

With time, Margaret learnt to bring the power under control, but among all the pictures she painted during her two days, three of them were different and had been influenced by her unconscious. A theme ran through her and there was a pulsating glow of yellow light dominating pitch black objects (Pg 102). Margaret tried to explain to Dikeledi how she came to paint those scenes. She constantly saw inside her head those pictures she had never seen before, until she puts them down on paper. The reader knows that these scenes were Maru's dreams but they were also Margaret's unconscious wishes to have a house of her own with a field of daisies and a loving husband. Margaret was well aware that being a Masarwa, she could not aspire to this sort of dream. However, by giving a concrete shape to her unconscious wishes, Margaret purged herself of a maddening secret.

Margaret's psychic wholeness was troubled by those visions. The dreams she saw and paints were maddening because they had a supernatural. Like Oedipus, Margaret's fate was written and what she saw in her dreams were visions of the future. In fact her dreams were nightmares because she was fighting against adverse forces in them:

I felt so ashamed, thinking I had come upon a secret which ought not to be disclosed, that I turned and tried to run away. Just then a strong wind arose and began to blow me in the direction of the embracing couple. I was terrified. They did not want anyone near them and I could feel it. I dropped to the ground and tried to get hold of the daisies to save myself from the strong wind. At that moment I opened my eyes. (Pg 103)

In other words, in her nightmare, Margaret is trying to run away from her destiny but she was unsuccessful. Margaret's visions were both her wishes and fears. She knew that being a Masarwa she was not free to choose or decide and that people had control over her physical self. She was afraid of the future others were planning for her. Margaret's inner life was therefore once again shaken by the lack of balance between the great power of her inner self and the nothingness she was reduced to in reality.

In her nightmares, Margaret also tried to escape her destiny because she did not like at first what she was seeing. The profile of the loving husband was Maru's and not Moleka's. Margaret refused to see her visions as prophecies because she did not want to disturb her apparent inner peace and question the stability she thought she had found in Dilepe. She preferred to ignore those prophecies.

Activity 5.7

1. *Demonstrate how Margaret's Psychic develops into strength?*

5.2.9 Theme of Supernatural

The theme of supernatural powers is evident in Margaret who has a powerful soul for those who have the ability to notice it, like Dikeledi, Moleka and Maru. Margaret was a goddess, according to the narrator because, like Maru, she had the faculty to influence and transform people, especially those with par psychological powers like hers. This title of goddess was also the only symbolic link Margaret had with her real mother. It was no coincidence that

Margaret Cadmore senior wrote under the sketch of the dead woman (Margaret's mother): "She looks like a Goddess" (Pg 24). Although Dikeledi admired Maru for his character strength, her own insecurity made her fearful of his love for Margaret. When she saw that Maru by a sort of telepathic power was able to project his own dreams into Margaret's mind, she discovered that Margaret also possessed a strong and mysterious inner world. Dikeledi then noticed how much Margaret had "changed her life" and made her "a more sincere person (Pg 105). Margaret's power was even more evident in the changes she wreaked in Moleka.

Moleka's transformation was the most radical one because he had a great "inner kingdom" but, unlike Maru, he was unaware of the power of his soul, he never knew about the gods in the heart and gods in the earth but he could always see the light of their conversation in Maru's eyes. It was the light that Moleka was so devoted to. He never asked whether he might have a light of his own or that he might be a startling personality in his own right" (Pg 33). Moleka's kingdom was "unfathomable, as though shut behind a heavy iron door" (Pg34) and Margaret was the only one who had the key to it. Dikeledi was not spiritually strong enough to open or even find Moleka's heart (Pg 27). Moleka needed someone else to open his kingdom for him, and Margaret was the only one with this capacity because she was Moleka's complementary soul:

Moleka is only half a statement of his kingdom. Someone else makes up the whole. It is the person he now loves. Maru knew from his own knowledge of himself that his purpose and direction were creative. Creative imagination he had in over-abundance. Moleka had none of that ferment, only an over-abundance of power. It was as though Moleka were split in two - he had the energy but someone else had the equivalent gifts of Mm's kingdom: creative imagination (Pg 58).

Moleka's transformation by Margaret was irreversible and deeply affected his psychic wholeness. Moleka went through a complete resurrection. He became aware of what he really was and saw, like Maru, the extent of his power: "Something inside killed the old Moleka in a flash and out of one death arose, in a flash, a new Moleka" (Pg 32). Before meeting Margaret, Moleka was described as the typical African male. He typified Bessie Head's males who exert absolute power over women and who used it for evil.

At the end of a love affair, Moleka would smile in the way he smiled when he made people and goats jump out of his path, outrage in their eyes. There was

nothing Moleka did not know about the female anatomy. It made him arrogant and violent. There was no woman who could resist the impact of his permanently boiling bloodstream. But he outraged them, and horrible sensations were associated with the name of Moleka. Moleka and women were like a volcanic explosion in dark tunnel. Moleka was the only one to emerge on each occasion, unhurt, smiling. (Pg 35)

Margaret transformed Moleka's inner self and by doing so, changed also his attitude towards women. Instead of concentrating only on physical attraction, Moleka searched also for spiritual affinities, as Maru did. When he met Margaret for the first time, he understood how he could be in love with someone with no particular attractive features: "What were her legs like? He could not say" (Pg 32). In Fact "he had communicated directly with her heart and all the force of her life was directed to her eyes, as though that were the only living part of her" (Pg32).

Maru quickly noticed the new Moleka and feared him. Therefore, before Moleka came to terms with this discovery of himself, Maru sets his "bombs" and separates Margaret and Moleka. Moleka, like Pete and Seth, was aware of Maru's power and he was not ready to fight him: "I won't get her from Maru,' he thought. He's the devil (Pg 82). Consequently, Moleka's only chance to find some sort of happiness and salvation was in the arms of "the next best woman on earth" (Pg 82), Dikeledi. At the end of the novel, Moleka's peace of mind was threatened but not destroyed. He could not alter the changes that occurred in him nor erase the secrets revealed to him. Moleka's psychic wholeness could only be truly restored by Margaret because she was his twin soul and she possessed his heart: "I kept my heart alone for her" (Pg 38). Moleka's inner self does not really obtain what he wants but he nevertheless finds in Dikeledi

... a dwelling place for his restless heart. Dikeledi's kingdom was like that of the earth and its deep centre which absorbed the light and radiations of a billion suns and planets and kept on dreaming and brooding, recreating life in an eternal cycle. At least Moleka had stumbled on to something that was a true complement to his own kingdom of radiant energy. Still he felt cheated, baffled. How had one woman set his heart aflame and he had turned around and given all that fire into another woman's keeping?

Dikeledi, on the other hand, finally got what she had always hoped for and married the man she deeply loves. She always kept a good mental balance because Maru protected her. Maru controlled Dikeledi's life and he had the power to destroy or save her psychic wholeness: "If there was one thing that would kill Dikeledi, it would be to know who had found the heart of Moleka and that she had had no key to open the iron and steel doors of his kingdom (Pg67). Maru lies to Dikeledi because he needs her for his future plans. Thus he brings her happiness by forcing Moleka into her arms. However Dikeledi's happiness is uncertain because Moleka feels cheated; moreover knowledge of his love for Margaret would devastate her.

Regarding Margaret, she is Maru's equal in soul power but she lacks Moleka's self confidence and abundant power. When she met Moleka for the first time, she was also transformed by him.

...there was a trick to Moleka, some shocking, and unexpected magic. A moment ago he had been a hateful, arrogant man. Now, he had another face which made him seem the most beautiful person on earth. It was only his eyes, as though a stormy sky had cleared. What was behind was a rainbow of dazzling light. Though unaware of any feeling, something inside Margaret's chest went 'bang!' Her mouth silently shaped a word: 'Oh' and she raised her hand towards her hem. (Pg 30)

Moleka, like Dikeledi, gave Margaret a stature of equality and brought her peace in her heart and mind (Pg 99). According to Margaret, he also saved her from the solitary life she was doomed to live. Dikeledi gave Margaret a physical presence while Moleka offered her spiritual company. And if Moleka needed Margaret, the reverse was also true. Margaret could not help thinking and dreaming about Moleka because she loved him and it gave her a feeling of completeness: "First there was one of you. Now there are two of you" (Pg 64). However, their need for each other was not of the same intensity. Margaret could easily survive without Moleka because her inner world was self-sufficient, but for Moleka, no self sufficiency existed without Margaret's love he was doomed to unhappiness.

Activity 5.8

3. Write an essay titled "Men and the gods" by critically examining how the gods influence people's lives in Dilepe?

4. *Discuss the ways in which life in Dilepe, as described in the novel, compares with life in your area as you know it.*

5.2.10 Theme of Soul Mate and Idealistic Love

The theme of soul mate and idealistic love is fully evident in Margaret who had an inner kingdom similar to Maru's. She possessed that quality of mystery which was part of Maru's make-up, as well as that mine of inner strength and individuality which was her legacy from her British foster-mother. To find in Maru an inner life as powerful as hers can only be favourable to her psychic wholeness; it uplifted her soul to a near perfection. Most often she felt quite drunk and mad with happiness and it was not unusual for her to work around for the whole day with an ecstatic smile on her face (Pg 8). Margaret's problem was not her inner life, because she knew how to control it, but her external life, which was controlled by the people around her. Margaret did not need a soul saviour but someone strong and powerful enough to defend her against racial prejudice.

Maru was the only one capable of "saving" Margaret and unlike Moleka he triumphed at the end because he had been able to prove his love: "When Moleka gave in and reclaimed the bed, he failed to act on his love for Margaret publicly and defend her against the anti-Bushman prejudice, thus showing himself to be unworthy of her love. His passion was not socially strong enough to confront a greater power than his own" (Gover 115). Maru saved Margaret but his accomplishment also served his own interests. He saved himself from an imposed social life he hated and chooses to create his own new world.

Maru's royalty made people look forward to the day when he would be their chief. Maru had all the stuff that ancient kings and chiefs were made of' (Pg 36): he inspires fear in people's hearts and he was even believed to be the reincarnation of Tladi, a monstrous ancestral African witch-doctor (Pg 36), but he was nevertheless "highly popular among ordinary people" (Pg 50). Maru was not in a hurry to begin his reign; in fact he did not want to rule over such a rotten world:

Has it not occurred to you that I might despise, even loathe them? Three quarters of the people on this continent are like Mord, Seth and Pete - greedy, grasping, back-stabbing, a betrayal of all the good in mankind. I was not born to rule this mess. If I have a place it is to pull down the old structures and

create the new. Not for me any sovereignty over my fellow men. I'd remove the blood money, the cruelty and cookery from the top, but that's all. (M 68)

Maru's own private wish and dream was to rule over a more humane world, where prejudices and power struggle did not exist, But to make his dream come true he needed a simple, unaffected and emotionally independent wife. Apart from Margaret, only three of his friends possessed the qualities he admired: "From Ranko, Moleka and Dikeledi, Maru was inseparable. But it was only with Moleka that he shared all the secrets of his heart ..." (Pg 37). Ranko had an original personality but unlike Moleka, he had no other life than to love and serve Maru and "the day Maru would die so would he" (Pg 49). As for Dikeledi, Maru reproached her for her exalted opinion of him: "When you think of me. You think of me as they all do, that I *am* their public property to be pushed around and directed by what they think is right and good for me" (Pg 67). Consequently, only Moleka was Maru's equal and could help in the creation of the new world, until Margaret arrived in Dilepe.

Maru's marriage to Margaret enabled him to find his own psychic balance and made his dreams come true. Margaret possessed the two qualities which Maru found essential in a woman:

humility and a powerful inner self. Margaret cannot be important because she is a Masarwa and Maru turn it to his advantage. He knows that by definition, a Masarwa is nothing; therefore by marrying Margaret, he does her a favour without giving her a chance to become more important. Unlike other women, Margaret does not seek any social benefits from her marriage. Maru nevertheless imposes his will on Margaret and treats her quite roughly. He knows that she cannot refuse his proposition because it is her only chance to put an end to her loneliness and feel a different life as a human being: "Now, if you don't agree to marry me; you will stare at the moon for the rest of your days" (Pg 73).

Maru's attitude towards Margaret was one of "a distant uncaring god rather than of a lover and a future husband" (Gover 1 16). "I don't care whether she sleeps on the hard floor for the rest of her life but I am not going to marry a pampered doll" (Pg 66). When Margaret learnt of Dikeledi and Moleka's wedding, Maru asked Ranko: "Is she dying? Don't worry about that. Let her suffer a bit. I will teach her to appreciate other things" (Pg 120). And finally,

when he came to fetch her, he told her: "Self pity is something I don't like. Other people have suffered more than you. You must stop this self pity" (Pg 123). Maru's love for Margaret is purely idealistic but on the other hand Margaret had a strong enough inner force to respond to this kind of love.

Maru, unlike Moleka, was looking for a love relationship based primarily on emotional commitment rather than physical pleasure:

It was different with Maru. Maru always fell in love with his women. He'd choose them with great care and patience. There was always some outstanding quality: a special tenderness in the smile, a beautified voice or something in the eyes which suggested mystery and hidden dreams. He associated these things with the beauty of his own heart, only to find that a tender smile and scheming mind went hand in hand, a beautiful voice turned into a dominating viper who confused the inner Maru, who was a king of heaven, with the outer Maru and his earthly position of future paramount chief of a tribe. (Pg 35)

At the end of a love affair, the woman would turn insane and Maru could "be laid up for three months' (Pg 36), because he found in her heart nothing else than greed (Pg 34). The harm Maloka inflicts on women was physical while Maru's was psychological. Maru's girlfriends become insane because he led them to discover the emptiness and egoism of their inner selves. Maru found in Margaret a "kingdom" similar to his; therefore he was certain that his love would have no ill effects on her. He then used his par psychological powers to attract her. Maru also found a better mental equilibrium because he discovered someone as powerful as himself.

Maru needed Margaret to escape the insanities of his society and create his own world. To do so, he needed to first of all leave the conventional track and take another path. According to Bessie Head's own definition, Maru and Moleka are both gods: "by gods we mean people who are humble, unpretentious and who, when presented with these two roads, prefer the good" (Eilersen1995:118). After his first encounter with Margaret, Moleka choose a new road: "I have come to the end of one road', he thought, 'and I am taking another" (Pg 33). But Moleka discovered the existence of these roads too late. Maru, on the other hand, already knew that there were two roads, but after seeing Margaret, he faced that choice again: "there was a busy, roaring highway on one side, full of bustle and traffic. Leading away from it was a small, dusty footpath: Take that path' his heart said, 'you have no other choice'. Each time

he hesitated. It was too lonely" (Pg 64). Maru's inner psychological strength helped him make his decision.

Activity 5.9

1. *Explain who the true love between Maru and Moleka is to Margaret?*
2. *Why does Maru marry Margaret?*

5.2.11 Theme of Pysche and Moral Values

Of all the characters in the novel, Maru was the one whose psychic power and moral values were greatest. Because he was aware of the power of his soul, he had the advantage over Moleka, who was not conscious of his own power. Maru had the power of telepathy because he was able to project his dreams to Margaret. After his first encounter with Margaret "a picture slowly unfolded itself before him. How often had it haunted his mind, springing upon either side of the footpath were thousands and thousands of bright yellow daisies (Pg 64-65). His sister, Dikeledi, was bewildered by this power of projecting dreams to someone so far removed from him (Pg104). When she brought him Margaret's paintings, he straightaway separated the three pictures and simply said: "I was waiting for them" (Pg 105). Maru also had the power of 'second sight', a somewhat "all-seeing eye" (Pg36): "He could tell people what their secrets were, but he always had Ranko to verify them" (Pg 49). He could also see and hear everything; even people's blood stream and the beating of their heart" (Pg7). This visionary eye goes along with his prophetic power. Long before Margaret's arrival in Dilepe, Maru said to Moleka: "One day we will part over a woman" (Pg 37). Moleka never wanted to believe it until he really fell in love with Margaret. In fact, what made Maru so powerful was his complete trust in "the voices of the gods in his heart" (Pg 8). This gave him the power to "translate his dreams into reality" (Pg7).

Muru's psychic wholeness is linked to his trust in and his capacity to listen to the gods in his heart. To the extent that Maru kept on following his heart, his peace of mind was ensured. However, Bessie Head gives an unresolved ending to this novel. Maru's triumph at the end was overshadowed by a cloud of uncertainty brought on by his rivalry with Moleka. His peace of mind was threatened when he compared his own force with Moleka's. Maru then doubted for a short time the voices in his heart, thus upsetting his inner peace. This brooding and uncertainty made him malicious. Perhaps his heart was wrong and a day would come when he would truthfully surrender his wife to Moleka, because he had decided that Moleka's

love was greater than his own (Pg 10). But what he bears in his heart about Moleka also disturbed him: "It was only over the matter of Moleka that he was completely undone, not undone the way one would expect a wrong-doer to be undone. He was thrown off-balance by the haunting fear that he would one day be forced to kill Moleka, in one way or another" (Pg 8).

Bessie Head adds nevertheless a hint to her ending. Maru dreams at night that "Moleka would appear trailing a broken leg with blood streaming from a wound in his mouth and his heart. No one ever cried with such deep, heart-rending sobs as his wife did on these occasions" (Pg 9). This dream suggested that Bessie Head was herself uncertain about how to end the novel but she was inclined to this ending. Her narrative shows throughout that Maru is more powerful than the other characters and that he was the only one capable of "translating his dreams into reality" (Pg 7). At the end of the novel, Maru once again projects his dream of killing Moleka over Margaret and he found his wife crying in her sleep (Pg 9). Consequently, this ending alters both Maru's and Margaret's psychic balance. Maru is afraid of the voices of his heart and of his dreams, while Margaret is afraid of losing Moleka.

Margaret is also haunted by Moleka's memory and sometimes it disturbs her inner peace and her happiness with Maru. She loves Maru but she is also still in love with Moleka, thus bringing two conflicting feelings in herself: "There were two rooms and in one of them Margaret totally loved Maru while in another, she totally loved Moleka". Virginia Olaopines that the presence of Moleka inside Margaret's heart "undermines the degree of Maru's victory, and serves as a constant reminder to him of that dangerous aspect of his personality, the use of ruthless power for selfish reasons which is the true demon that thwarts the effort of visionaries like himself to build a more human society. Throughout the novel, Maru is presented as both a god and a demon. Maru can be kind, tender and affectionate, while the other half of him is a demon as he turns into a harsh, selfish and cruel schemer. His methods are cold, calculating and ruthless, the normal methods of those who wield destructive power. If Maru was not a powerful force for good (he used the good part of himself to create a new world), he would be a typical and very dangerous tribal chief because he uses his demonic power for selfish reasons. Bessie Head begins to explore in Maru a state of moral ambiguity in which most human beings have a bit of the visionary and the demon in them, a balance of good and evil

In fact, Margaret's love for these two men also reveals that Maru and Moleka are two opposites that cannot be reconciled in a single character. Maru and Moleka have similar traits; moreover, Moleka is Maru's alter ego in its evil aspects. The unresolved ending of *Maru* suggests that Head was not ready to draw conclusions about the mysteries of the human mind.

5.2 Characterisation

A character, by definition is a person in a story. A character may also be defined as representation of persona. Even when the characters are animals, they almost invariably represent human beings or exhibit human attributes.

5.2.1 Maru

Maru is an African tribal leader soon to be installed as hereditary Paramount chief in the village of Dilepe, Botswana. Adhering to the gods within him rather than to any external source of personal feeling, he is prompted to marry a woman of Bushman origin, an “untouchable” in the eyes of his fellow tribes’ people. To do so, however, he must renounce his chieftainship, even though he is more just and wise a ruler than the brother who will take his place. With three trusted companions and his bride, the younger Margaret Cadmore, he travels a thousand miles away to start a new life as a subsistence farmer. Symbolically Maru represents the missing heart.

5.2.2 Moleka

Moleka is the second most powerful man in Dilepe. He and Maru are close friends but then become bitter enemies and rivals for the love of the younger Margaret Cadmore. With the help of his spies, Maru manoeuvres Moleka into a marriage with Dikeledi, even though Moleka loves Margaret. Symbolically Moleka represents the self without the heart.

5.2.3 Margaret Cadmore (younger)

Margaret Cadmore (younger), an orphan and a light-skinned woman of the Masarwa tribe, kept by and named for a missionary with the expectation of one day helping her people. She is shy. She has an awkward manner. She is not personable. She becomes a schoolteacher in the village of Dilepe. When she first arrives in Dilepe, she is subjected to the same racial humiliation and ridicule as she was in her childhood. Treated as an outcast, she once again becomes a victim of racial oppression.

5.2.4 Margaret Cadmore (Senior)

She is the missionary's wife who adopts the infant girl and trains her to be a teacher and a leader, giving the orphan her own name and hoping to prove to the society that heredity is nothing, environment everything. The senior Margaret Cadmore is appalled by the treatment of the body of young Margaret's Masarwa mother, yet she leaves Africa without taking Margaret with her to England, where Margaret could have passed as coloured and at least have had the assistance of her white protector. Mrs. Cadmore writes back from England that she left her behind for the good of her people, the Bushmen.

5.2.5 Dikeledi

Dikeledi is a sister to Maru. She becomes the principal of Leseding School after the three men who planned to torment Margrate's life fled Dilepe. She is a quiet but drastic revolutionary lady. She approves Margaret's decision about revealing her identity. It's Dikeledi who asks Margaret not to tell anyone that she is a Masarwa and to pretend that she is a coloured. In Dikeledi's mind, it is not so much the shame she is concerned about, but the trouble this revelation will cause in the village. In terms of her physical appearance she had a long, thin, delicate face, with a small mouth startling and unexpected in her elegance. She had a way of looking at people with one quick, wide stare, then immediately looking away into a far-off distance as though she did not particularly want anything from life or people

Summary

This unit has demonstrated that the problem of institutionalized racism is not a battle call for the self-emancipation of the Masarwa. Bessie Head's stand point is calling for the self-emancipation of humanity, which includes Masarwa emancipation, downtrodden people or tribalism within societies. If everybody gets united with heart and head as Moleka does, racism and tribalism would dissolve as the people who believe and practise it would stop ultimately. Racism and tribalism that has seen other people cry passionately would simply cease. Although this vision is unrealistic, it is beautiful nonetheless. Individuals, together, would lead Africa out of its dark place and into the swelling sunlight, where temperate rains fall, and there are rainbows. The next unit will analyse the story on Silas Marner. God bless you all.

UNIT 6: GEORGE ELLIOT - *SILAS MARNER*

6.0 Introduction

Welcome to unit 6 that analyses a novel *Silas Marner*. The novel is about the main character Silas Marner who flees his strict religious community after being framed for a crime he did not commit. Before fleeing, he believes his faith will protect him, but when God does not defend his innocence, he abandons his religion. Silas settles in a small town, where he devotes himself to weaving linen and amassing a small fortune. His world is turned upside down, however, when he is robbed around Christmas. A young golden-haired girl arrives on his doorstep. He takes her in, and this allows him to join the community and the church that he has been avoiding for fifteen years. In the end, Silas recovers his faith and believes that God sent him the child as a reward.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the study you should be able to:

- demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the text of “*Maru*”.
- analyze the contents and Themes of the novel.
- apply the contents of the novel to everyday life

6.1 Synopsis of the Novel

This story presents Eliot’s pervasive theme of spiritual renewal through the influence of human love and communal fellowship embodied, as elsewhere, in realistic events, drama, and dialogue, with currents of symbolic meanings that suggest a mythic structure of concrete universals. Eliot called the story a “legendary tale” with a “realistic treatment.”

The theme of spiritual rebirth is announced in chapter 1 by reference to Marner as “a dead man comes to life again” and to his “inward life” as a “metamorphosis.” The resolution is foreshadowed in the description of his catalepsy as “a mysterious rigidity and suspension of consciousness” that his former religious community has “mistaken for death.” The rigidity of despair has driven him from his former home in a northern industrial city, the dimly lit Lantern Yard, where members of his “narrow religious sect” have believed him guilty of stealing church funds in the keeping of a dying man. Marner has been so stunned at being

framed by the man he thought was his best friend, at being renounced by his fiancé, who soon married the guilty man, and at being believed guilty by his community, that he could only flee. Because he had believed that God would defend his innocence, he has felt utterly abandoned in his faith and has declared “there is no just God.”

He chances among strangers in the isolated village of Raveloe and for fifteen years remains an alien at its fringes, immersed in his work as a linen weaver like “a spinning insect,” loving only the gold he earns and hoards, with ties to neither past nor present. When his gold is stolen as the Christmas season begins, Marner announces his loss at the Rainbow (promise of hope) Tavern and, like Job, begins to receive “comforters,” an interaction that slowly renews human feeling and consciousness of dependency. On New Year’s Eve, as Marner longs for the return of his gold, he finds on his hearth instead a sleeping, golden-haired toddler, a baby girl who has wandered in, while Marner held his door open during one of his cataleptic trances, leaving her laudanum-stupefied mother unconscious in the snow-filled lane. Marner can only think that “the gold had turned into the child,” but then seeks the mother, goes for the authorities, and learns that the woman is dead.

Marner clings urgently to the child as his own and names her Eppie for his mother and sister, renewing his ties to his past. His conscientious fatherhood, under the good Dolly Winthrop’s tutelage, brings him firmly into the community, including its church, making the ways of Raveloe no longer alien to him. In this novel Eliot contrasts the Church of England as a vehicle of tradition with evangelicalism as awakening more fervent, personal religious feelings for some. She is not an advocate of either set of beliefs, however, but approves a religious sense that cultivates “a loving nature” with a Wordsworthian piety expressed in charitable acts and fortified by a non-doctrinal awareness of “Unseen Love.” As Dinah the Methodist awakened this sense in Hetty, Dolly the Anglican awakens it in Marner, enabling him to ravel (weave or involve) himself into the “O” - to join the circle of fellowship. He is rewarded by Eppie’s filial loyalty when her blood father offers to adopt her into his home of luxury and rank.

Activity 6.1

1. *In Silas Marner, does the phrase "God will clear me" have any literary devices?*
2. *How would you describe the village of Raveloe, the setting for Silas Marner?*

6.2 Themes

This refers to central or dominant idea in literary work. It is the abstract concept that is made concrete through its representation in person, action or image in the work of art. It is the basic or general idea expressed in the book or novel.

6.2.1 Silas Marner Theme of Wealth

Money makes the world go round. Is it wealth the gold you can bury under your bed (or stash in an offshore account), or is it a pile of warm curls under your hand? *Silas Marner* answers that question pretty decisively, but not without some complications along the way. There's no doubt in the novel that money is good to have, and the specific wartime setting means that the villagers are not exactly poor. It does not seem like Eliot wants us to discount the importance of money after all, *Silas Marner* is at least partly a realistic portrait of life.

Activity 6.2

1. What are the various kinds of wealth in Silas Marner? Who has real wealth?
2. What can wealth do for people in Silas Marner? Why doesn't Eppie accept Godfrey's offer of adoption?
3. Why does Silas accumulate gold? What purpose does it serve in his life, and what kind of relationship with it does he develop?
4. What is the relationship between work and wealth? What kinds of work do people do in the novel?

6.2.2 Silas Marner: Theme of Greed

Where there is wealth, there is greed. But in *Silas Marner*, the greed, like the wealth, is not quite where you expect it to be. Silas may have all the money, but, if greed means a selfish desire to acquire, he is the least greedy character we meet. Although he wants to acquire money, he does not want it out of any desire or greed. In contrast, Godfrey, who wants Eppie without having to work for her, and who wants Nancy without deserving her, seems to harbour a lot of greed. What does greed mean when money does not seem to mean much?

Activity 6.3

1. What different types of greed does Eliot explore? What is desirable in the world of the novel?

2. *What is the relationship between greed and wealth? Greed and poverty?*
3. *Are there any instances in which greed becomes a positive emotion? Can greed be channelled for good?*
4. *What happens to the greedy characters? How is greed punished (if it is)?*

6.2.3 Silas Marner -Theme of Religion

Eliot evidently never got the memo re: not talking about religion, because *Silas Marner* is one God-rumination after another, exploring several different ways of thinking about religion. A little historical background to the novel is depicted from the early 19th century, when *Silas Marner* takes place, the Anglican Church was the official, state-sponsored religion of England. People who did not belong to the church were called Dissenters, and they went to "chapel." There were many different types of Dissenters, but many of them were Calvinist as they believed that you were either saved or not, and there was not anything you could do about it. Conflict between Anglicans and Dissenters is a major issue in a lot of 19th-century novels.

In *Silas Marner*, there is Silas, who comes from a Dissenting, Calvinist Church; there is the official Anglican religion of Raveloe; and then there is the superstitious, folkloric beliefs that both Silas and the villagers practice, full of household gods and ghosts. What is the purpose of religion, and what kind is best? Eliot does not give a straight answer, but you may have an idea by the end of the novel.

Activity 6.4

1. *Does Eliot seem to approve of any one kind of religious belief over another?*
2. *What is the purpose of religion in the novel? Why do people go to church?*
3. *Given that Eppie appears at Christmas, to what extent could you argue that Silas Marner is an allegory of Christian salvation?*

6.2.4 Silas Marner - Theme of Isolation

The novel begins with Silas fully part of his Lantern-Yard group and then spends the next fifteen years living alone in a cottage, rejecting anyone's attempt to bring him into village life. If we think of *Silas Marner* as a religious allegory, then we can think of the story as the soul being taken away from God and then brought back to it. Similarly, if *Silas Marner* is Eliot's

attempt to think about England and history, then it's the story of England becoming a nation, all the little isolated pockets of communities beginning to see themselves as part of a country connected by a common culture and brought together by railroads - and being destroyed in the process. Leaving in isolation is not always good. Expand this theme by reading the novel critically and attempt the following activity.

Activity 6.5

1. *Which characters seem to be isolated, other than Silas Marner? What causes them to be isolated?*
2. *Does isolation have any positive effects in the novel?*
3. *By the end of the novel, Silas Marner has resigned himself to being part of his new community. Does he ever seem to miss living in isolation? Without Eppie, would he have become a loner all over again?*

6.2.5 Silas Marner Theme of Community

Raveloe is a stratified community. There are wealthy folks like the "parishioners," and the poor (but respectable) villagers. They are tied together by a common church and by yearly rituals like the New Year's dance at the Red House. Everyone knows Silas's place and everyone seems fairly content with it. The villagers help each other out with baked goods and laundry, and the parishioners stimulate the economy by purchasing goods and smoothing things over with gifts. But how seriously can we take Eliot's portrait of Raveloe, given that the unravelling of the community is written into the village's very name?

Activity 6.6

1. *How many different kinds of communities does Silas Marner explore? What binds these communities together—blood, religion, geography?*
2. *Eliot looks at communities as large as nations and as small as two-person families. Are the types of communities essentially the same, or does something change as they grow or shrink? Is Eliot suggesting that a nation ought to look like a family?*
3. *What happens when communities are destroyed? Lantern-Yard has completely disappeared because it's been turned into a factory; what does Eliot suggest will happen to Raveloe?*

6.2.6 Silas Marner - Theme of Tradition

Tradition is important to the villagers of *Silas Marner's* Raveloe. As an agricultural community, Eliot suggests, the village has changed little in hundreds of years. Anything new like Silas's loom or Silas himself is suspicious. And so tradition is both good and bad. It holds communities together, but it can also shade into something like habit, and habit can keep people apart. In the context of Eliot's religious interests, it's also worth pointing out that the Anglican Church has traditionally been imagined as a stool resting on three legs that includes reason, scripture (the Bible), and tradition. In the Anglican Church, tradition, or what people have always done, is just as important as what the Bible says.

Activity 6.7

1. *What is the difference between habit and tradition in Silas Marner? Where does Eliot draw the line?*
2. *Do certain traditions seem outdated in the novel? Where do novelty and newness come from?*
3. *How sincere is Eliot in praising the traditions of the villagers? For example, are we supposed to read her praise of the New Year's celebration at Red House as ironic?*
4. *What is the relationship of tradition to religion? To superstition?*

6.2.7 Silas Marner - Theme of Change

Since *Silas Marner* is about rebirth and redemption, change is an important theme. But it is not a welcome theme in *Silas Marner*. Silas cannot bear the change from his childhood home to the strange new place where he finds himself, and even when he is happy with Eppie, he resists change. Eppie herself refuses to exchange her place with Silas for a comfortable life with Godfrey. But Silas and Godfrey are both changed despite themselves. Like any good Christian story of salvation, change seems never to come from inside. You can only be changed through an act of God, whether that is an orphan showing up at your door or a body coming to light at the bottom of a quarry.

Activity 6.8

1. *Which characters change over the course of the novel? Which don't? What does that tell you about the story Eliot is trying to tell?*

2. *Besides character change and growth, what other changes occur in the novel? What historical movements does Eliot gesture at?*
3. *Change can be good and bad. What negative changes happen in the novel? How do characters react to change in negative ways?*

6.2.8 Silas Marner - Theme of Home

The desire for home is one of the oldest themes in Western literature (*The Odyssey*). In *Silas Marner*, Eliot thinks a lot about what home means and what makes a home. Silas is cast out of his home, and the experience is so traumatic that it takes him 31 years to feel comfortable in a new one. Home is not simply a place where you live; it's a place of community, religious faith, and family. And in *Silas Marner*, it's always under threat. Knowing what we do about what happens to the real-life counterparts of Raveloe at the beginning of the 19-century, how secure are we supposed to feel about Eppie's delight in her home at the end?

Activity 6.9

1. *Which homes in Silas Marner are happy and which ones are unhappy? Why?*
2. *Silas is displaced from his home at the beginning of the novel. What other characters do not have homes like Silas does?*
3. *How sincere or ironic is Eliot being at the end of Silas Marner? Given the tragedies of the first part of the book, how seriously can we take the Hollywood ending?*

6.3 Characterisation

Characterisation refers to individuals that take part in the development of the story. A character may also be defined as representation of persona. Even when the characters are animals, they almost invariably represent human beings or exhibit human attributes.

6.3.1 Silas Marner

Silas Marner, a weaver of Raveloe. As a resident of Lantern Yard, he had been simple, trusting, and religious until falsely accused of theft. He then lost his faith in religion and people. Turning away from humanity, he directs his stunted affections toward his steadily increasing pile of coins. When Eppie enters his life, he regains his belief in the fundamental goodness of humanity. In his bewildered fashion, he accepts help from his Raveloe neighbours and decides to rear the motherless child who has captured his heart; under her influence, he no longer despairs because of the stolen money.

6.3.1.1 Critical Analysis of Silas Marner's Character

In an incident briefly recounted at the beginning of the novel, Silas Marner is cruelly betrayed by his best friend, who steals some money and contrives evidence suggesting that Silas is guilty. When a trial by lots conducted by Silas' narrow Protestant sect confirms his guilt, Silas is bitterly disillusioned with divine, as well as human, justice. Moving to a rural village in central England, he isolates himself from all contact with the community and, by his assiduous weaving, accumulates a substantial sum in gold coins.

Silas' lonely and miserly life is disrupted when his gold is stolen by Dunstan Cass, a son of the most prominent local landowner. The void which the loss of the gold leaves in Silas' life is unexpectedly filled when a small child, the daughter of Dunstan's older brother Godfrey by a secret marriage, wanders into Silas' cottage. Rather than invite social disgrace by admitting his sordid marriage to a drunken barmaid, Godfrey fails to acknowledge the child. Silas undertakes the responsibility of rearing her.

Much of the significance of the novel turns on the contrast between the gold and his adopted daughter Eppie as successive centers of Silas' life. In simplest terms, the gold isolated Silas, whereas Eppie brings him into cordial contact with the community. The child, George Eliot suggests, is like the angels who, in ages of religious belief, led men away from "threatening destruction" and toward a "calm and bright land."

Silas attains his reward and George Eliot asserts the moral of her fable. Years later, Eppie rejects Godfrey's belated claim of paternity and chooses to remain with Silas.

6.3.2 Eppie

Eppie (Hephzibah), Marner's adopted daughter. Fair-haired and blue-eyed, she captivates everyone who meets her, including young Aaron Winthrop, her future husband. After years of loneliness, Silas is sustained and his spirit nurtured by having her constantly near him. Even after she marries Aaron, she is determined to care for Marner, now frail and bent from years of unremitting toil at the loom.

6.3.3 Godfrey Cass

Godfrey Cass is Eppie's real father and the weak son of Squire Cass, a prominent Raveloe landowner. Blackmailed by his brother Dunstan, he lacks the moral courage to acknowledge to the public that Eppie is his daughter. Instead, fearing disinheritance, he keeps silent for many years, with his guilt gnawing at his soul. Later, however, when Dunstan's skeleton is found in the Stone Pits, he finally confesses to Nancy his previous marriage to Molly, dead for sixteen years. Belatedly, he wants, with Nancy's consent, to accept Eppie as his daughter. Thinking she will be overcome by his generosity, he is shocked by her determination to remain with Silas.

6.3.4 Dunstan (Dunsey) Cass

Dunstan (Dunsey) Cass, Godfrey's dull-minded, spendthrift brother. Drunken and dissolute, he forces Godfrey to give him money by threatening to reveal the secret of Godfrey's marriage to Molly, a low-bred, common woman. After stealing Silas' gold, he falls into the Stone Pit. Years later, his skeleton, the gold still beside it, is found wedged between two huge stones.

6.3.5 Nancy Lammeter

Nancy Lammeter, Godfrey's second wife, a lovely, decorous, and prim young woman. Although she lives by a narrow moral code, she surprises her husband, who has underestimated her, by courageously accepting the knowledge of his marriage to Molly.

6.3.6 Squire Cass

Squire Cass, a prominent Raveloe landowner. Often lax in his discipline, he can be unyielding when aroused. At times, this inflexibility of character makes both his sons and tenants fear his anger.

6.3.7 William Dane

William Dane, Silas Marner's treacherous friend in Lantern Yard. While mouthing religious platitudes, he steals money from the church and implicates Marner, thus forcing the latter's exile from the village. By planting Silas' pocketknife at the scene of the crime, Dane can steal the money with impunity, knowing that his friend will receive the blame.

6.3.8 Aaron Winthrop

Aaron Winthrop, a sturdy young Raveloe citizen. For many years, he has worshiped Eppie; when she promises to marry him, he is overjoyed. He promises Silas security and love in the old man's increasing feebleness.

6.3.9 Molly Cass

Molly Cass, Godfrey's first wife, a drug addict who marries him when he is drunk. She is walking to Raveloe to expose him as her husband. Fortunately for Godfrey, she takes an overdose of laudanum and freezes to death in the snow, leaving her baby to toddle into the warmth and security of Silas' cottage.

6.3.10 Dolly Winthrop

Dolly Winthrop, Aaron's mother, the wife of Raveloe's wheelwright. She and her little son often visit Silas, and it is she who defends his right to keep Eppie when the villagers question Silas' suitability as a parent.

Activity 6.10

1. How does George Eliot make *Silas Marner* an interesting novel?
2. What are some of Squire Cass's characteristics in *Silas Marner*?

6.4 Critical Analysis of the Novel

Like most of George Eliot's novels, *Silas Marner* is set in the rural England of the author's childhood memories. Like her other novels, too, the work is meticulously realistic in many aspects of its dialogue, description, and characterization. Unlike most of her novels, however, *Silas Marner* is very short, with an almost geometrically formal structure, and its plot relies upon some rather improbable incidents. Such elements reflect the author's intent to deal with profound themes in the form of a fable.

George Eliot obliquely approaches the realm of spiritual truth by depicting the restoration of faith in the heart of a very simple man. The old-fashioned rural setting is important as a frame; its cultural remoteness from the world of the reader gives it the archaic simplicity and uncontested credibility of a fable or fairy tale. Even so, George Eliot critics have never been comfortable with the implication that somehow Eppie has been given to Silas by a benevolent

providence in return for his lost gold. The question of the author's stance is especially problematic in view of her own agnosticism. Although George Eliot herself as a child was an ardent, evangelical Christian, in maturity (like many Victorian intellectuals) she rejected traditional beliefs for a humanist credo.

In Godfrey's story, realism predominates, and thus the author's control of theme is more secure. Godfrey's marriage to Molly Farren is the fatal step that enmeshes him in lies and guile as he tries to evade its consequences. One must beware of condemning Godfrey, however, because the author herself does not. Rather, she sees him as a type of erring humanity—a good-hearted but weak-willed young man who desperately wants to rewrite his past and enjoy a happy future with Nancy Lammeter. The role of Dunstan as a foil to Godfrey is important: Together, they represent a classic Cain-and-Abel, bad brother-good brother contrast. This structural polarity helps to create a context of judgment in which Dunstan's viciousness makes Godfrey's wrongdoing seem less damning.

Structural patterns of this kind are in fact a key to the novel's meaning. The various parallels and contrasts between the Silas and Godfrey stories show these respective halves of the novel to be formally related, like the panels of a diptych. Both Godfrey and Silas are living out the consequences of a past wrong, in which the one was the secret wrongdoer, the other the falsely accused victim. In both stories theft is a pivotal event: Dunstan's stealing of Silas' gold complements William Dane's taking of the church money. Silas suffers unjustly but magnifies his misery by becoming a virtual hermit. Godfrey suffers the pangs of conscience while maintaining an outwardly cheerful, gregarious disposition. As the ironic consequence of denying his wife and child, Godfrey remains childless, since he and Nancy apparently cannot have children, whereas Silas, the lonely bachelor, receives Eppie into his life as a daughter. In general, the unfolding of each story suggests the influence of a power or force of destiny beyond human understanding, something rather like Nemesis in Godfrey's case, and something rather like Providence in Silas'.

If the metaphysical implications of *Silas Marner* go beyond the realm of earthly reality, the primary moral intent of the author is firmly grounded in human relationships. As is the case in her other novels, the bonds of love, sympathy, and fellow feeling are the highest good that one can truly know. As such, they are redemptive in themselves and are the basis of George Eliot's "religion of humanity." Although she doubts the existence of God, she is assured of

the existence of a sublime, collective goodness. Thus, in both stories, the power of human affection, especially as shown by the women of the novel, heals psychic wounds, restores humanity, and, insofar as it can, atones for wrongdoing. In Godfrey's story, it is Nancy who serves in this role. She is a "centered" personality who counterbalances Godfrey's lack of inner strength; her love for him unites her sensitive, affectionate nature with her deep moral principles. In Silas' story, Dolly Winthrop and, later, Eppie, perform comparable functions. Dolly's good sense and warm sympathy provide Silas with a lifeline to a restored faith in humanity and God. Eppie's decision at the end to remain with Silas reflects the strength of their shared affection and affirms the bonds of feeling as the surest basis of right choice.

Activity 6.11

- 1. How does Dolly Winthrop influence Eppie and make raising the child easier for Silas?*
- 2. In Silas Marner by George Eliot, what does Silas come to love in Raveloe apart from his work?*

6.5 Critical Evaluation

The novel's narrative combines elements of myth which some critics have called it a fairy tale. Others say it is combined with realistic details of English country life centering on the rustic village of Raveloe. That being the case, the novel can be understood as a moral tale. Its message, however sentimental to a modern reader, is unambiguous. Its ambiguity is seen by viewing true wealth to be love, not gold. As a myth of loss and redemption, the novel concerns the miser Silas Marner, who loses his material riches only to reclaim a greater treasure of contentment. Silas comes to learn that happiness is possible only for the pure and self-sacrificing. Because of his love for Eppie, he is transformed, as if by magic, from a narrow, selfish, bitter recluse into a truly human, spiritually fulfilled man.

The novel, however, has a dimension other than the moralistic. Eliot skilfully counterpoints the experiences of Silas with those of Godfrey Cass. Whereas Godfrey appears, when the reader first meets him, to be a fortunate man entirely the opposite of the sullen miser, his fortunes fail just as Silas's improve. The wealthy, genial Godfrey has a secret guilt: an unacknowledged marriage to a woman beneath him in social class and refinement. Silas, on the other hand, carries with him the smouldering resentment for a wrong that he suffered (and

suffered innocently) from his friend William Dane. Godfrey's sense of guilt festers, especially after he learns about the terrible circumstances of the woman's death. Nevertheless, he remains silent, fearful of exposing his past. Eppie, the child of his brief union with the woman, becomes the miser's treasure and replaces the sterile gold stolen by Dunstan. Thereafter, the happiness of the old man is Godfrey's doom. His second wife, Nancy, is barren, and when he offers too late to adopt Eppie as his own child, she clings to her foster father. Silas's love earns what Godfrey's power fails to command.

By contrasting Silas's good fortune with Godfrey's disappointment, the author expands the mythic scope of her fiction. If some men were pure and deserving the novel discovered almost by accident the truths of happiness, others, maybe no less deserving, pass by their chances and endure misery. Silas is reformed not only spiritually but also psychologically. Once blasphemous, he returns to the Christian faith of his childhood, but his religious reaffirmation is not as important as the improvement of his psychological health. Freed of his neurotic resentment of past injustices, he becomes a friend to all, beloved of the village. For Godfrey, whose history is realistic rather than marvellous, quite the opposite fate happens. Without any heir, he shrinks within himself. He may endure his disgrace, even eventually make up to Eppie and her husband Aaron some of the material things he owes her; yet he cannot shake his sense of wrongdoing, appease his sorrow for betrayal, or make restitution for the evils of the past. Eliot, who once described her novel as "rather sombre," balances her miraculous fable of rebirth for the favoured Silas with another more common human story, that of the defeated Godfrey.

Summary

The unit has demonstrated that the scheme of things when we analysed the vicissitudes that Silas goes through we discern a pattern of ascendancy from obscurity at Lantern Yard. This is followed by despair/descent after rejection by Lantern Yard. At Raveloe, his life is illuminated by the reward of his toil - those golden and silver coins that constitute his period of Ascent are overshadowed by the descent of the Cass inheritance. After the theft of his treasure by Dunstan, in spite of the profound nature of his descent, he resurfaces after the arrival of Eppie. From then on it is a success story while the Cass estate seems to be experiencing its worst doldrums. Thus Eliot is valorising the peasantry/proletariat in affirming that in their own humanity they are proud of the reward of their toil. Eppie's refusal

to follow Nancy and Godfrey is the affirmative assertion of the proletarian new generation as a motive force towards the dismantling of class structures. It is at this point that, as the reader probably admires Eppie and Aaron's stand depending on their origin and point of view.

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