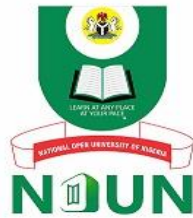


**COURSE
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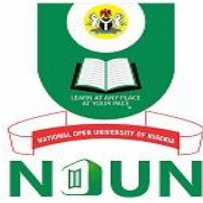
**ENG 172
INTRODUCTION TO POETRY**

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INTRODUCTION

ENG172: Introduction to Poetry

ENG172 is a one-semester course of two credit units. It is designed for English Language students and others in related departments who are required to take language and literature courses as electives. The course has fifteen units which cover almost all the introductory information a student would need to understand poetry as a genre of literature. This requisite information include: the nature of poetry as literature, definitions, uses, elements, techniques and devices of poetry and, finally, how to criticise or appreciate a poem.

You are expected to go through this course guide carefully to know what the course is all about, the course materials you need, the tutor-marked assignments and some other necessary information. Please attend your tutorial classes for practical discussion of some of the various aspects of the genre of poetry. By the time you are through with the course, you would be confident enough to appreciate poetry having acquired the necessary knowledge of what poetry is and how to recognise good and effective poetry from the poor and ineffective. Thus, you should also be able to analyse or criticise a poem by focusing attention on its form (manner/style) and content (matter/subject), etc. Going through this course will equip you specially for this purpose. Let me assure you that this course is a very interesting one and it would prepare you for your future encounters with poetry as a field of study.

Welcome on board.

Course Aim

This course is designed to expose you to the nature, uses, elements, techniques and devices of poetry. Its aim is to:

- enable you acquire an understanding of the character of poetry as a genre of literature
- introduce you to the functions of poetry in society
- enable you to understand the elements, techniques/devices, and forms of poetry
- impart to you the requisite knowledge that would enable you distinguish between effective and ineffective poetry
- encourage you (through Tutor-Marked Assignments) to criticise set poems.

Course Objectives

The objectives of a course are the things you are expected to be able to do at the end of the course. These objectives will guide you when going through the study and they will also help you in self assessment and where you need to improve on your learning and study habits. By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. define poetry as a form of writing or literature
2. discuss the elements of poetry that you have been taught in the course
3. identify the different forms of poetry through their characteristic features
2. comment on the qualities of any given poem to demonstrate the skills of criticism/appreciation you have acquired in this course.

Working Through the Course

In this course, you have fifteen study units to go through. In each of the study units, you are expected to study the contents very well before attempting the questions. You should pay attention to the objectives of each study unit so that you can be properly guided through the unit. You should be prepared to do a lot of thinking and writing in this course because it is designed to make you do so. The assessment will be through (1) self assessment exercises meant to enable you measure your level of understanding of the units contained in this course material and (2) tutor-marked assignments which you are

expected to do and turn in at the appropriate time. You are also expected to write a final examination at the end of the course. The time for the examination will be communicated to you.

Course Materials

The major components of the course are:

1. The Course guide
2. The Study units
3. The Textbooks
4. The Assignment files
5. The Presentation schedule

Study Units

There are three modules which are divided into fifteen units in this course. Each study unit constitutes a week's work and this is preceded by the objectives which you are expected to study before going through the unit. The objectives spell out what you are expected to be able to do at the end of the unit. In each study unit, you also have the reading materials and the self assessment exercises. The Tutor-Marked Assignments; the study units, the tutorials, all put together, will help you to achieve the stated objectives for this course.

In addition to the above, unlike other courses where you just read and take notes, ENG172 requires much involvement of your imaginative faculty since the study of poetry is essentially a study of what 'bodies forth' from the writer's intense imagination. You are also expected to do a lot of writing. However, this does not mean that the theoretical foundation, which this course is meant to impart to you is not important; it is very important if you are to master the various manifestations of poetry.

The Modules and study units are as follows:

Module 1 The Nature of Poetry as Literature

- Unit One What is literature (definitions; oral/written; imaginative; creative; suggestive)
- Unit Two What is poetry (definitions)
- Unit Three Elements of poetry: imagery; sound; rhythm; diction
- Unit Four Major form/types of poetry
- Unit Five Functions or uses of poetry as a form of literature

Module 2 Techniques and literary devices of poetry

- Unit One Tropes: irony; paradox; simile; metaphor; personification; etc
- Unit Two Rhetorical figures: contrast; antithesis; apostrophe; hyperbole; etc.
- Unit Three Types of Verse: blank, heroic, free
- Unit Four Foot; Syllable; metre and types
- Unit Five Duration/quantity

Module 3 Analysis of Poetry

- Unit One Through matter or sense
- Unit Two Through manner or method
- Unit Three Through evaluation of manner/method vis-à-vis meaning
- Unit Four Practice through selected poems for illustration
- Unit Five Useful literary/Poetic terms

Set Textbooks and Other References

Each unit has a list of recommended reference textbooks and materials for further reading. These are meant to deepen your knowledge of the course. Try to get as many as possible and go through them for necessary assistance while going through the unit and before attempting the exercises.

Assessment File

You will be assessed in two ways in this course: (a) the Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMA) and (b) a written examination. You are expected to do the assignments and submit them to your tutorial facilitator for formal assessment in accordance with the stated deadlines in the presentation schedule and the Assignment file. Your TMAs will account for 30% of the total course mark.

Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)

ENG172 is a course that involves a sizeable number of practical works, and this translates to a lot of tutor-marked assignments at the end of every unit which you are expected to do. You are also expected to master as many critical/literary terms that have particular relevance to the study of poetry and possibly discuss them in class/study groups or with your tutorial facilitator. You will be assessed on the aspects and activities of this course material through the Tutor-Marked Assignments. Make sure you submit your assignments before the stated deadline.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination for ENG172 will be a two-hour paper in which you are expected to answer all questions in sections A and B and a specified number of questions in section C. Each question is 1 mark, giving you a total of 70 marks for the examination. The 30 marks for the course work and the 70 marks for the examination give a total of 100 marks (i.e., $30+70 = 100$). The structure or pattern of the questions will be MCQs and FBQs. Revise properly before the examination date.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table shows how the actual course mark is broken down

Assessment	Marks
Assignments	Three Assignments, which count as 30% of course work.
Final Examination	70%
Total	100%

Presentation Schedule

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

Course Overview

Unit	Title of Work	Week's Activity	Assessment (End of Unit)
	Course Guide	1	
	Module 1: The Nature of Poetry as Literature		
1	What is Literature?	1	Assignment 1
2	What is Poetry?	2	Assignment 2
3	Elements of Poetry	3	Assignment 3
4	Major Types of Poetry – the impersonal forms	4	Assignment 4
5	Major Types of Poetry – the personal or romantic forms	5	Assignment 5
	Module 2: Techniques and Devices of		

	Poetry		
1	Tropes: Irony; paradox; metaphor; personification; simile; metonymy; synecdoche; etc.	6	Assignment 6
2	Rhetorical Figures: Contrast; antithesis; apostrophe; hyperbole; onomatopoeia; oxymoron; etc.	7	Assignment 7
3	Types of Verse: Blank; Heroic; Free.	8	Assignment 8
4	Syllable; metre and types	9	Assignment 9
5	Duration/quantity	10	Assignment 10
	Module 3: Analysis of Poetry		
1	Through Matter or Subject	11	Assignment 11
2	Through Manner or Method	12	Assignment 12
3	Through Evaluation of Manner vis-à-vis Meaning	13	Assignment 13
4	Practice Through Selected Poems for Illustration	14	Assignment 14
	Revision	15	
	Examination	16	
	Total	17	

How To Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecturer instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might give you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other materials. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units

provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. If you make a habit of doing this, you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from your course guides. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it. Follow the following advice carefully:

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment
2. Organise a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course Overview' for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend in each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write your own dates for working on each unit.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.
4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the Introduction and the Objectives for the Unit
5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.

7. Review the objectives for each unit to inform that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the Course Objectives (listed in the Course Guide)
11. Keep in touch with your study centre. Up to date course information will be continuously available there.

Tutors and Tutorials

There are 8 tutorial hours for this course. The dates, times and location of these tutorial sessions will be communicated to you as well as the name and phone number of your tutorial facilitator. You will also be notified of your tutorial group.

As you relate with your tutorial facilitator, he/she will mark and correct your assignments and also keep a close watch on your performance in the tutor-marked assignments and attendance at tutorials. Feel free to contact your tutorial facilitator by phone or e-mail if you have any problem with the contents of any of the study units.

Summary

ENG172 is designed to introduce you to the nature, uses, different types of poetry as well as how to appreciate poetry based on your understanding of what a given poem is and

what makes it effective or ineffective. On completion, you should be well equipped with all the necessary skills needed to criticise any type of poem.

We wish you the best as you go through this course.

MODULE 1 THE NATURE OF POETRY AS LITERATURE

UNIT 1: WHAT IS LITERATURE?

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 What is Literature?
 - 3.1.1 Imagination
 - 3.1.2 Creativity
 - 3.1.3 Suggestion/Indirection
 - 3.2 Forms or Genres of literature
 - 3.2.1 Poetry
 - 3.2.2 Drama
 - 3.2.3 Novel/Prose Fiction
 - 3.3 Functions or Uses of Literature
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignments
- 7.0 References and Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Literature is the art which imitates life in words with the twin objectives of entertaining and edifying. There has always been an unresolved argument as to whether literature inheres in the matter, subject or object that it concerns itself with or in its manner or style of expressing this matter of focus. While these arguments are valid in locating literature in a particular space in the array of other written forms produced by man, it is the major characteristics of the art that defines it most precisely. In this regard, literature is best

seen as the body of work (written or oral) in which a person's record of his/her experiences is given in an artistic form. The literary cosmos is best marked by its qualities of imagination, creativity and suggestiveness. These qualities are most explicitly discernible in poetry, our focus in this course, which is the oldest of the major forms or genres of literature.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define and identify the essentials of literature
- understand and identify the formal markers of literature
- identify the differences between literature and other forms of writing
- discuss the features of literature that lend it its universality

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

In this unit, you will learn about literature as the art form that mirrors life in deliberately chosen words or diction with the purpose of pleasing, teaching and developing the readers' or listeners' faculty of reasoning or thinking. You will also learn, as a means of preparing the ground for your proper understanding of the study of poetry, the major forms or genres of literature. The study of works of literature broadens our horizon, refines our sensibilities as well as deepens our understanding of people and human nature generally.

3.1 What is Literature?

Literature is writing in which ideas of permanent and universal values or interests are expressed in a deliberately embellished language, the purpose of which is to please (both sensually and intellectually) and teach by indirection. Compare this definition that gives us a clear idea of literature as both content (what is said) and medium (how content is expressed) to the following definition by Ezra Pound: "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree" (28).

The polarity of opinions regarding the exact nature of literature captures the age-old debate on whether literature or literariness should be judged merely by the subject or content of a work or by the style of its expression. We shall leave this question for now because you will have to form your own opinion as you get to understand the workings of literature and defend it with facts or illustrations.

However, some of the foremost things that a reader needs to know about literature are its constitutive elements or characteristics, viz: imagination, creativity, suggestion or indirection.

3.1.1 Imagination

Literature thrives essentially on imaginative constructs; which means that it is a form of composition that relies heavily on the composer's or writer's mental journeys that take him/her beyond the realms of the given to a world of fantasy or of the mind. Hence, the literary artist is not always bound by the ordinary daily experiences of people. For example, a raconteur or story teller almost always takes his/her audience to improbable and indeterminable lands and times which are products of his/her imagination. Writers have led their readers through lands of giants, one-eyed monsters, flying humans, speaking animals and forests; all these are emanations from their imagination. Some have presented environments that could best be described as replicas of heaven or hell in a bid to show the readers or audience the two poles of bliss/desire and repugnance/suffering and pain. Franz Kafka, in his story 'Metamorphosis', has given to written literature the unforgettable image of a young insurance executive who woke up in the morning to find that he had metamorphosed into a cockroach. All the extraordinary events and characters are products of literary invention or imagination. Imagination also comes into play in the literary artist's use of events and experiences in his/her social environment, but imbuing them with imagined aspects or qualities which raise them above the ordinary.

The imagination of the literary artist is also clearly visible in his/her use of language to express his/her experiences, be they real or imagined. A good artist always finds or imagines a fresh way of expressing ordinary experiences, thereby raising them to a level that appears to be out of the ordinary. For example, in the simple but extraordinary expression, “He watches from his mountain walls/And like a thunderbolt he falls”, the Victorian poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson, establishes a similarity between the speed of a thunderbolt and that of an eagle descending from a height to catch its prey. The poet has used his imagination to create this scene and the reader’s imagination is similarly excited. It is this collaboration that James Reeves so aptly describes in the statement that “most good poetry demands study and interpretation; it costs its maker much effort of thought, imagination and feeling, and it is worthy of corresponding efforts by its readers” (xxi). Aristotle’s opinion, in his comparison of history and poetry, is instructive in this discussion of literary imagination; he asserted that poetry (the poet) is superior to history (the historian) because the former is philosophical, expressing the probable, while the latter is factual, thriving on what has been.

3.1.2 Creativity

There is a very thin line that separates creativity that constitutes the bedrock of literature from imagination that we have discussed above. For one, they are both essential qualities and products of the artist; it is the competent artist that imagines the best forms that his/her matter and manner would take. Similarly, it is the artist who creates a fictive world in which his/her imagination plays among symbols to produce his/her work. So, in essence, the two qualities overlap to give us a rounded or full understanding of the true nature of literature. The literary artist, at the moment of creation is, in the words of Andrew Lang (Blakeney, xv quoted by Brooke), “a born visionary and mystic, beholding things unapparent, believing in experiences that were never actual.” For example, British poets like William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William B. Yeats who believed/claimed that some of their major works were handed to them by some supernatural mediums or agencies are of this mould. Some of their poems at times had

their origins in historical and legendary materials, which were then imbued with the extraordinary poetic touch. It is this faculty that gave to English literature, among many others, such great poems of the extraordinary and supernatural as Blake's 'Jerusalem' and 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell'; Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and 'Kubla Khan'; and Yeats' poems that incorporated the occult and mythology of Irish folklore.

1.3 Suggestion/Indirection

There is no other quality of literature that distinguishes it more succinctly from other forms of writing than this quality of suggestiveness. While other forms of writing could claim to be both imaginative and creative in their own ways, they are definitely not marked by the quality of indirection or suggestiveness which is the exclusive domain of literary language. In fact, most factual writings such as works on the sciences, history, geography, and so on, cannot afford to be purely suggestive in the manner that literature, especially poetry, is. Acclaimed literary critics, such as William Empson, have recommended a certain degree of ambiguity for a work of literature worth the label. Empson, in his discussion of what he identified as the seven types of ambiguity, has stated the virtue of indirection in literary language. The French Symbolist poet, Mallarme, also averred that the essence of an object is destroyed by direct naming when he said that "poetry lies in the contemplation of things in the image emanating from the reveries which things arouse in us.... To name an object is largely to destroy poetic enjoyment, which comes from gradual divination. The ideal is to suggest the object" (quoted in Adams 1961, p. 168).

The effect of suggestion is achieved through figurative language in poetry and generally through language that has multiple meanings. In the view of I. A. Richards and Cleanth Brooks, indirection or suggestiveness is best achieved through the use of irony and paradox. The latter critic has commented in his *The Well-Wrought Urn* that "paradox is the language that is appropriate and inevitable to poetry. It is the scientist whose truth requires a language purged of every trace of paradox; apparently the truth which the poet

utters can be approached only in terms of paradox” (3). In its commonest/barest extreme, suggestiveness or indirection could be achieved by a writer by deliberately restraining himself from calling an object by its name, while using words and expressions that suggest the object. The following is a very good example of a poet’s description of an object (a) by indirection:

I like to see it lap the miles
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks
And then prodigious step

Around a pile of mountains,
And supercilious peer
In shanties by the sides of the roads,
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides
And crawl between
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanzas
He then chase itself downhill

And neigh like Boanergesf
Then prompter than a star,
Stop, docile and omnipotent,
At its own stable door.

Emily Dickinson

Self-Assessment Exercise 1.1

1. What is the object that the poet has treated without mentioning its name?
2. Identify the words or expressions that suggest what this object is.
3. What effect does the poet achieve by not naming the object directly?

3.2 Forms or Genres of Literature

Literature, as you must have learnt in your previous studies, comprises some major types or forms or genres. These major types, which could be further reduced to sub-types or categories, are four and they are poetry, drama, novel or prose fiction, and non-fiction prose, otherwise known as the essay. It is important for you to note that these literary types are not defined or based on thematic focus, since all three types often share common themes as literature. They are categorised strictly by their stylistic features. Thus, the best approach to the study or understanding of these major forms is by noting their elements or defining characteristics which are as follows:

3.2.1 Poetry

This is the oldest of the three major forms of literature with roots deep in the rituals and religious observances of antiquity. Thus, it was mainly oral, performance-driven and public as it was, more often than not, a tool for supplication, communal tribal celebration and celebration of the supernatural as well as appreciation of the gifts of nature. From these early beginnings developed the personal and impersonal forms of poetry represented by the lyric on the one hand and the traditional epic and ballad on the other. Since we shall dwell on this form (poetry) in more detail in subsequent sections of this course material, we shall now move on to briefly enumerate the defining characteristics, namely: imagery, sound, rhythm and diction.

- Imagery is the sensory language used in poetry. By sensory we imply that the language appeals to or affects the senses of the reader or audience.

- Sound is the auditory aspect or quality inherent in poetry. The importance of this characteristic lies in the fact that poetry is meant to be heard and in its original form it was a song and most short lyrics today still retain this character.
- Rhythm is the wave-like movement discernible in poetry. It accounts, along with sound, for the musical quality in poetry.
- Diction refers to the special choice or selection of words utilised by the poet in his work.

3.2.2 Drama

Drama was the second to evolve of the three major genres of literature to be studied in the course, and like poetry, it had its origins in ritual, song, and dance. Hence a comprehensive definition of drama takes into account these defining strands, as you will notice in the definition that follows: Drama is a story told through action by actors who impersonate the characters of the story. It is a work of literature designed to be presented on a stage in a theatre by persons who impersonate or imitate the characters of other persons, speak and perform prescribed dialogues and actions. For drama to exist, there must be characters who imitate or impersonate the speeches and actions of other persons on a stage in a theatre; hence the defining characteristics or elements of this form are: action, plot, dialogue, character (isation) and setting.

3.2.3 Novel/Prose Fiction

The novel is an extended fictitious prose writing or narrative with human beings or humanised non-humans engaged in actions over a period of time, and displaying varieties of human characters engaged in human relationships in situations that simulate life. In other words, the novel is a make-believe account of the sequence of the lives of human beings. As a literary genre, it attained recognition as a widely practised form of literature at a later time than the other two major literary genres, although its antecedents were already present in the oral modes and poetic narratives of past eras.

Despite its relative newness in relation to poetry and drama, the novel has developed by leaps and bounds to be the most popular and widely read of the three and has successfully embraced/accommodated such subcategories as science fiction, fantasy, and utopia, within its fold. The unifying factors they share are the following elements or defining features: story, plot, setting and characterisation.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. Name the three major forms of literature
2. For each of these forms, give two examples each and give adequate reason for your choice of the texts

3.3 Functions/Uses of Literature

As we have mentioned above, literature serves some important purposes in human society, the two major ones being entertainment/pleasure and teaching of values. Along the lines of these two uses, critics have made large claims of the role of literature to include being the conscience of society. The writer is seen as the sensitive moral point of society who is constantly chiding errant humanity and pointing them in the right direction, to ensure that social harmony and health are maintained. P. B. Shelley, the Romantic poet, regards poetry (by extension, literature generally) as the unacknowledged legislator of the world.

While the above views of what literature is and is capable of doing in society may be debatable, there is no doubt that literature entertains and edifies through the creation of beauty, expression of thought and expression of emotions.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Discuss with reference to specific works how literature entertains and teaches.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have been able to go through some of the basic concepts of literature as an art form in this unit. This knowledge will serve as a good reference point as you study any of the forms of literature and poetry in particular.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt about the following:

1. The concept of literature as an imaginative and creative construct that communicates its thoughts through suggestion/ indirection.
2. The major forms or genres of literature and their stylistic markers such as imagery, sound, rhythm and diction (poetry); action, dialogue, plot and character(isation) and setting (drama); story, plot, setting and characterisation (novel).
3. The main functions of literature in society, viz: pleasure and instruction.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. With adequate examples, give and explain a comprehensive definition of literature.
2. In your own words, define literature, explain its nature and identify what makes it different from other types of writing.
3. Discuss the essential features of literature.
4. Explain the similarities and differences between the major genres of literature using ample examples.
5. What are the functions of literature?
6. Literature is said to work by indirection. Discuss this assertion using any two texts of your choice.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2: POETRY AND ITS DEFINITIONS

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- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 What is Poetry?
 - 6.1.1 Definitions
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- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn the basic considerations in the study of poetry. Poetry, as we have indicated in the foregoing Unit, is considered the most ancient of the four major genres of literature. Accordingly, we have to begin by seeing it as a form of literary expression with all the defining qualities of literature such as imagination; creativity; suggestiveness or indirection, as a mirror reflecting the individual's perception of life experiences. Generally speaking, these qualities apply to both oral and written forms of poetry, but the medium of expression and transmission are markedly different. Nonetheless, both manifestations of poetry share identical content, form and effect. This is to say that irrespective of the obvious difference between these forms of poetry, their sources and end-purpose are the emotions and imagination of the writer on the one hand, and the reader or audience on the other. They convey significant truths about the human condition and they employ a language that is deliberately adorned by the use of figurative expressions. This will become clearer to you by the time we define poetry by way of setting it apart as a specific genre of literature.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

1. Identify poetry as a form of literature;
2. Define poetry;
3. Explain some of the operative/recurrent words or terms in a good definition of poetry.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

The impulses responsible for the creation of poetry, whether oral or written, are as varied as there are individual differences and individual situations of life. However, three main motivations are generally discernible by critics, namely:

- Imitative (Mimetic): The innate human instinct to imitate things, which one can observe even in young children and monkeys.
- Aesthetic/Emotional: The natural pleasure of recognising good or effective mimicry. This is why Aristotle referred to poetry as “an imitative art”.
- Musical: The impulse or instinct for tune, music and rhythm as means of expressing and thus giving vent to emotions.

These motivations by and large would apply in the consideration of other literary and even plastic art forms, but they assume greater significance in the study of poetry, the type we are undertaking in this course.

To illustrate the workings of these impulses, let us consider the following scenario, which encapsulates the three principles listed above, that must be familiar to you. For most of you, your first experience of poetry, when you began to recognise sounds and notes, must have been the imitative sounds contained in the lullabies to which your mother or elder siblings treated you. While you definitely could not have understood a word of the sing songs, the occasional incorporation or introduction of common sounds of birds and other animals as well as appropriately placed repetition of words and sounds must equally have

had some calming effect on you. As you grew up, you must have applied this same method to achieve the same ends in your relation with your younger ones. The imitative content and their pleasing effects on both you and your younger ones as you grew are rudiments of the poetic instinct that we carry along with us into adulthood.

In the lullabies, you have inherent imitation, music and beauty/emotions. The lullabies and such other utilitarian songs and practices show that poetry has been and is always with us as human beings.

Nonetheless, this course is specifically designed to focus attention on written poetry, which means that we shall define poetry as a written form, but which by reason of common origins, share similar properties with its oral antecedent.

3.1 What is Poetry?

Since poetry means different things to different people, we shall not answer this question by providing a single definition until we have considered a good number of available definitions. The implication of this statement is that there is no one standard definition of poetry that can satisfy all possible shades of opinions; rather an aggregate(d) definition that contains aspects of some popular views or definitions representative of various critical approaches to literature might just be the most sensible way to take. These latter views take cognisance of basic concepts and words such as composition, words and their arrangement, expression, emotion/feeling/passion, perception, thought, rhythm, imagination, etc.

3.1.1 Definitions of Poetry

The following are well-known definitions of poetry which illustrate the varied view of this genre:

- Poetry is the language that tells us, through a more or less emotional reaction, something that cannot be said. All poetry, great or small, does this. - *Edwin Arlington Robinson.*
- I would define poetry of words as the rhythmical creation of beauty. Its sole arbiter is taste. With the intellect or with the conscience it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with duty or with truth. – *Edgar Allan Poe*
- Poetry is the imaginative expression of strong feeling, usually rhythmical...the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquillity. – *William Wordsworth*
- The proper and immediate object of Science is the acquirement or communication of truth; the proper and immediate object of Poetry is the communication of pleasure. - *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
- Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest minds. – *Percy Bysshe Shelley*
- An actual poem is the succession of experiences – sounds, images, thoughts, emotions – through which we pass when we are reading as poetically as we can. - *Andrew Bradley*
- ...the rhythmic, inevitably narrative, movement from an overclothed blindness to a naked vision. – *Dylan Thomas*
- If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold that no fire can ever warm me, I know that it is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that it is poetry. – *Emily Dickinson*

From the above definitions or explanations of what poetry is, it is clear as we have said earlier on that there cannot be a single definition that will be comprehensive enough to accommodate the various shades of opinions and schools of thought regarding the exact nature of the genre. While one cannot correctly adjudge one definition as superior, better

or more comprehensive than another, it is true that each of them has its point of emphasis which in turn places it in one or the other of the great literary/creative debate over content, style and effect. It is thus clear that Edgar Allan Poe's conception of poetry as expressed above emphasises style or form over content and effect, while both William Wordsworth and Edwin Arlington Robinson focus more attention on content and effect in their definitions to reflect their English and American Romantic pedigrees respectively. In this regard, you should take particular note of Emily Dickinson's own idea of poetry whose essential criterion is the effect it has on her and is capable of having on a reader. In a final analysis, one cannot fault any one of these definitions, given the special interests and period fascinations that shape them.

Besides the individual emphases noted in the definitions we have used as samples above, we should take note of the occurrence of some common words and phrases such as emotions/feelings, rhythm/rhythmical, truth, pleasure, imaginative expression, language, and so on, which underscore the protean nature of poetry and which make it susceptible to being conceived of variously by definers the way the proverbial blind men saw and defined the elephant.

Finally, we may attempt a definition that strives to distil the various elements of the explanations we have made so far as follows: Poetry is a form of composition in verse form, especially one expressing deep feelings or noble thought in a rhythmic and generally beautiful or embellished language written with the aim of communicating an experience. This definition contains the grains of the essential elements of the genre of poetry (imagery, rhythm, sound and diction) to which we will turn our attention in the next unit of this course material.

Self-Assessment Exercise

In your own words, attempt a definition of poetry.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Poetry is the oldest of the major literary genres that has been part of the traditions of people through the ages. It has manifested in most human ritual activities as well as served as a ready means of entertainment in traditional festivals. Yet, in spite of its long history and perennial occurrence and employment in important human activities, it has defied common definition because it seems to strike different people differently.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt several definitions and explanations of poetry as a literary genre. While a common definition has not been found and this is exemplified by the multiplicity of samples of definitions examined, we have provided a definition that has incorporated the major strands of the various explanations common to different traditions and periods of literary history.

7.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What do you consider as the major difference between Edwin Arlington Robinson's and Emily Dickinson's conceptions of poetry?
2. What is poetry? Please give examples.
3. Discuss the nature of poetry as an ancient art form with identifiable style.
4. What are the defining characteristics of poetry as a major genre of literature?
5. Analyse, at least four definitions of poetry studied in class. Your answer should illustrate the relationship between all the definitions.
6. Using one known poem, discuss the reasons why poetry is said to lend itself to various interpretations, like the proverbial blind men and the elephant.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3: ELEMENTS OF POETRY – IMAGERY, RHYTHM, SOUND, DICTION

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Imagery
 - 3.2 Rhythm
 - 3.3 Sound
 - 3.4 Diction
- 3.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As we have established in the foregoing units, poetry is one of the major genres of literature and in order for us to have a proper understanding of its nature, it is necessary for us to possess an adequate knowledge of the elements or salient features that differentiate/distinguish it from the other three literary genres – the novel/prose fiction, non-fiction prose, and drama. These elements, which constitute the tools by which poets convey the thoughts and experiences they wish to communicate, include imagery, rhythm, sound, and diction. They are the very essence of poetic study or criticism and a full comprehension of their meaning and functions in the realisation of the total experience of any poem is of paramount importance.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

1. Identify the major elements of poetry;
2. Explain the major elements of poetry;
3. Discuss the functions of these elements of poetry;
4. Apply your understanding of these elements in your appreciation of any given poem.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Imagery

In simple terms, imagery is a collective term used to denote the images in a poem or all the objects and qualities of sense perception in a poem. In other words, it is a language that represents sense experience as graphically as possible. Thus, it is the sensory content of a poem or a literary work in general that is meant to evoke a picture or an idea in the mind of a reader or the audience, in the case of poetry. You must have had this experience on occasions when you read a poem and images or pictures of the ideas and objects described or mentioned in the lines appeared in your mind's eye or are flashed on the mirror of your mind; you seemed to have seen these pictures right before you on the page or in the spaces in front of you.

Due to the power of imagery, poets utilise it to achieve the following important effects in their works:

- Arouse specific emotions in the reader or audience
- Create beauty, which is an important quality of poetry
- Communicate thoughts
- Achieve concretion of life experiences and ideas that are otherwise abstract

Accordingly, it is through imagery that the sense impressions and experiences evoked in a poem acquire necessary vividness and clarity.

The following are the main types of imagery that you would always find used either individually or in combination by poets in their works:

- **Auditory**

This is the type of imagery, words, or cluster of words that evoke the sense of hearing or a specific sound. Quite often, the auditory image manifests through the figure of sound known as onomatopoeia, that is, a combination of words whose sound seems to resemble or echo the sound it denotes: “hum”, “murmur”, “bang”, “crack”, “hiss”, “screech” “hoot”. Examples of the use of auditory imagery are the following excerpts from J. P. Clark’s ‘Night Rain’ and ‘Benin Sacrifice’ and Niyi Osundare’s ‘Raindrum’:

1. It is **drumming** hard here
And I suppose everywhere
Droning with insistent ardour upon
Our roof thatch and shed

(Clark, ‘Night Rain’)

2. The roof **sizzles** at the waking touch,
Talkative like **kettledrums**
Tightened by the iron fingers of drought

(Osundare, ‘Raindrum’)

3. Then the priest commanding
Intones the charge, and the latest
Instruments of slaughter **stutter** out
A message mortal...

(Clark, ‘Benin Sacrifice’)

A sensitive reading of the first two excerpts above would definitely make you ‘hear’ the drumming, droning, sizzling and talkative drops of the rain that sound like kettledrums on the thatch roof of the personae’s abodes as well as on the desiccated earth “licked clean

by the fiery tongue of drought”. In the third excerpt, the sound of the machine guns (‘instruments of slaughter’) is mimicked or conveyed through the onomatopoeic word “stutter”. The sound of the drum beat is common to both poets’ realisation of the experience conveyed in their poems. You will agree that the sense of hearing they express is what you are conversant with and would easily appreciate.

- **Olfactory**

Images of this type evoke our sense of smell whether sweet, pungent, fragrant, etc. An example of this is:

1. The air was heavy with **odours**

Of diarrhoea of unwashed children

(From Chinua Achebe’s poem, ‘A Mother in a Refugee Camp’)

2. ‘ARE YOU

LIGHT

OR VERY DARK?’ Button B. Button A. Stench

Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.

(From Wole Soyinka’s poem, ‘Telephone Conversation’)

The lines, “odours of diarrhoea of unwashed children” and “stench of rancid breath” virtually transport the reader, through his or her imagination, to the settings of the poems and make one a co-perceiver of the odours described by the poets.

- **Tactile**

This refers to the images that appeal to one’s sense of touch. A good example of this is the memorable line from James Shirley’s poem, ‘The Glories of our Blood and State’:

Death lays his **icy** hand on kings (Reeves 104).

This line makes someone feel by imagination the cold hand of death as it seizes its victim. You must have often read in obituary announcements the mention or reference to the “cold hands of death” that have snatched away a loved one. This expression accentuates the sense of touch by the use of “icy” to underscore the coldness of death.

A similar poetic process takes place in these lines from Okinba Launko’s poem, ‘Separation’, where the coldness and aloneness of separation of people, probably former lovers, are given a concrete approximation in the comparison/simile in the two last lines of the following quotation:

So welcome again,
The old loneliness. I hear you spring awake and hiss,
Cold as the touch of steel
In a **harmattan night**

The combination of “cold” and “harmattan nights” in the above lines, no doubt, sends a familiar feeling through your mind and body; the harmattan season is associated with the cold draught of the wind that blows from the Sahara Desert and most of us have felt it.

- **Gustatory**

The images that evoke our sense of taste go by this name.

1. I like to see it **lap** the miles
And **lick** the valleys up,
And stop to **feed** itself at tanks
And then prodigious step

(Excerpts from the poem, ‘I Like to See It Lap the Miles’, by Emily Dickinson)

2. My husband’s tongue
is **bitter** like the roots of the

Lyono lily

..... ..

It is ferocious

like the **poison** of a barren

Woman

And **corrosive like the juice** of

the gourd

(Excerpts from the poem, 'Song of Lawino' by Okot p'Bitek)

- **Visual**

Quite often, our sense of sight or vision is evoked by merely reading lines of poetry where a poet has effectively utilised words or language that effectively create appropriate pictures in the reader's mind. Such resultant images are referred to as visual images or imagery. For example:

.... children

With washed-out ribs and dried-up

Bottoms struggling in laboured

Steps behind blown empty bellies

(Achebe, *Beware Soul Brother*)

On reading these lines, one cannot help but visualise a picture of emaciated children – the sad relics of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war of the 1960s. The children are mere ghosts of their former selves; their erstwhile robust bodies have now turned skeletal and their bottoms are shrivelled. All these physical changes accentuate the “blown empty bellies”, symptomatic of kwashiorkor.

- **Kinaesthetic**

Kinaesthetic imagery refers to those images that call forth in the mind of the reader the perception of movement. In other words, these are images that appeal to the reader's sense of movement or motion. Examples of this type of imagery are:

1. And 'mid these **dancing rocks** at once and ever
It **flung up** momentarily the sacred river.
Five miles **meandering with a mazy motion**
Through wood and dale **the sacred river ran**.
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And **sank in tumult** to a lifeless ocean:

Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' (Reeves 177)

2. From the west
Clouds come hurrying with the wind
Turning
Sharply
Here and there
Like a plague of locust
Whirling
Tossing up things on its tail
Like a madman chasing nothing

Rubadiri's 'An African Thunderstorm'

The lines, phrases and words highlighted above convey the impression of movement, which a reader of the poems from which they have been excerpted cannot fail to realise in their minds' eyes.

A very useful approach to the understanding of imagery is by seeing it as "a description of something **concrete**, whereby the writer conveys an impression of something else" (Heese and Lawton 82). While this definition introduces a new set of

words/terms/register that would further aid our understanding of how an image works in a poem or in the realisation of the meaning of a poem, it also focuses our attention on the necessary association of similar and dissimilar objects or ideas in imagery as well as the expansion by accretion of the scope of words made possible by its usage. In this regard, we should note that ‘concrete’ means something that is perceivable or palpable to some of the senses we have discussed above while ‘**abstract**’ means the opposite; that is, an idea that could neither be seen, felt nor touched, etc.

The use of imagery makes it possible for the poet to bridge the gap between the abstract and the concrete, in the words of Shakespeare, to give “to airy nothing a local habitation and a name” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act V, Scene 1). A good example of this description of something abstract through concrete objects or entities could be seen in the closing stanza of George Herbert’s poem ‘Virtue’, as follows:

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives

In these lines, the abstract and reified ‘virtue’, which gropes towards concretion in the equally impalpable ‘virtuous soul’, achieves a fully perceivable state in the comparison “like seasoned timber”, that does not break even when the hardest of pressures is exerted on it.

In all the examples we have used in the above section on the well-known types of imagery, we have to realise that the ability of the reader to perceive and share fully in the pictures and sensations the poet has captured in his/her verse comes or is achieved through the apt use of figures of speech and figures of thought such as simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, metonymy, synecdoche, onomatopoeia, among others. It is through the employment of these figures that the poet achieves the desired figurative expression of thought as well as impresses his/her ideas in the minds of the readers.

Indeed, accordingly, it is through this process of collaboration that, in the words of James Reeves we make the best poems “part of our own lives and we make our own lives richer and more full of meaning” (*The Poet’s World*, xxx).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Give an example each of four figures of speech and then analyse them.

1.2 Rhythm

Rhythm is derived from the Greek word which translates in English into ‘flow’. As one of the elements of poetry, it is considered the most important of a poet’s technical resources. In practical terms, it is the alternation of periods of effort with periods of relaxation. According to R. N. Egudu,

Rhythm can be compared with a beat or pulse; and as a beat or pulse [it] implies the presence of movement in which there is the recurrence of identical points, rhythm can also be said to mean movement. Any action in which motion is involved therefore has some rhythm. A moving vehicle shows rhythm; and a flowing stream exhibits rhythm. Also the rise and fall of the water in the ocean is rhythmical. (34)

Similarly, Reeves sees rhythm as “a form of repetition – the repetition of a particular pattern of light and heavy syllables” (xxxvii) while Abrams defines it as “a recognisable though variable pattern in the beat of the stresses in the stream of sound,” (93)

You should take note of the words ‘beat’, ‘pulse’, ‘recurrence’ and ‘repetition’ in the above definitions of rhythm; they underscore the fact that rhythm obeys or follows a basic movement of the pendulum of the metronome, which marks the underlying approximate equivalent time intervals between specific sounds in music. It is equally important to note that the repetition that characterises rhythm in poetry, as in music, is

variable and alternates between stressed and unstressed syllables. This variation removes monotony and accounts for the variable combinations of sound patterns to which we attribute the music in poetry. Have you ever imagined a song or a poem that maintains the same rhythm throughout without variations in low and high tones or between light and heavy syllables? Definitely, it would be a very boring song or poem. The American poet and critic, Ezra Pound, has in his characteristic suave manner commented on this flaw by saying that “the writer of bad verse is a bore because he does not perceive time and time relations, and cannot therefore delimit them in an interesting manner, by means of longer and shorter, heavier and lighter syllables, and the varying qualities of sound inseparable from the words of his speech” (199).

This leads us to the functions of appropriate rhythms in poetry. Generally, it contributes greatly to the emotional content and effect of poetry. As with tones in our everyday discourses, the poet uses different rhythms to convey different moods or emotions to the reader or listener: s/he uses a long line and a slow rhythm to express a sombre and studious mood; a light tripping rhythm to express a feeling of joy and gaiety. It may be smooth, staccato, fast or slow, abrupt and disjointed or jerky. Thus, rhythm is intricately connected with the form and the meaning expressed by the poet and provides both emotional and intellectual pleasure for the reader or audience. For example, the following excerpts illustrate the deployment of effective rhythmic patterns to achieve these different emotional effects:

1. His gol/den locks/ Time hath/ to sil/ver turned;
O Time/ too swift,/ O Swift/ness ne/ver cea/sing!
His youth/ ‘gainst time/ and age/ hath e/ver spurned,
But spurned/ in vain;/ youth wa/neth by/ in/crea/sing:
Beau/ty, strength,/ youth are/ flo/wers but fa/ding seen;
Du/ty, faith,/ love/ are/ roots,/ and/ ev/er green.

George Peele (Reeves 51 – 52)

2. Come, come away, to the tavern I say,
 For now at home 'tis washing day;
 Leave your prittle-prattle, and fill us a pottle,
 You are not so wise as Aristotle.
 Drawer come away, let's make it holy day:
 Anon, anon, anon, Sir, what is't you say?

Anon. (Reeves 21).

From our discussion so far, it is clear that the wave-like recurrence of sound and motion that constitutes poetic rhythm has its foundation or basis in the pattern of stresses and the length of lines of poetry. This aspect of the nature of rhythm necessitates a knowledge of the metrical schemes, be they 'regular' (basic metre) or 'irregular' (deviation from the basic metre). Metre in poetry is a repetitive and symmetrical pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, and usually indicated by the symbols or marks: (ˇ) for stressed syllables and (˘) for unstressed syllables.

The following is a table of the four common feet in English poetry with their sounds and examples:

Name of foot	Name of metre	Sound	Example
Iamb	Iambic	Đa Dum	Return
Trochee	Trochaic	Du˘m Đa	turning, running
Anapaest	Anapaestic	Đa Đa Dum	resurrect, jubilate
Dactyl	Dactylic	Dum Đa Đa	curious, serious, furious

Self-Assessment Exercise

What is rhythm and of what significance is it in the art of poetry?

3.3 Sound

Sound is one of the most pleasing features in a poem. Along with rhythm, it constitutes the foundation of the musical quality that is associated with poetry as a form of literature. Accordingly, its functions in a poem are similar to those of rhythm which we have discussed in the preceding section on rhythm. The nature or significance of sound in a poem can be better appreciated when the poem is read aloud. This, however, does not mean that the aural qualities are not realised when a poem is read silently. For the experienced reader, these qualities remain and are realised as inherent parts of the total poem; instead of the vocalised realisation that marks reading aloud, these qualities are achieved through a process of sub-vocal enunciation. When effectively deployed in a poem, sound effects enable the reader to achieve a state of mind in which s/he can more readily appreciate the emotions and meanings conveyed in the poem by the writer. In the words of Heese and Lawton, “much of the delight to be derived from the reading of poetry stems from the pleasure experienced in contemplating patterns which are not only decorative but significant” (33).

Generally, sound effects in poetry not only give aural/auditory pleasure to the reader, they equally give added significance to the words used by the poet. In other words, sound in poetry is used to convey meaning, emotions and pleasure. For example, the poet employs such literary devices as alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, onomatopoeia, repetition, refrain, etc., to place desired emphasis on particular words as well as achieve specific emotions or sensations in his work. It is important that the sound be appropriate to the experience or action presented in a line, stanza or on work in its entirety. The effects produced by sound in a poem could be good or bad, depending on how skilful the poet is.

The following examples illustrate some of the sound effects, such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, repetition, and rhyme, commonly used by poets and their effects when skilfully applied:

1. I have given you hands which you turn from worship,
I have given you speech, for endless palaver,
I have given you my Law, and you set up commissions,
I have given you lips, to express friendly sentiments,
I have given you hearts, for reciprocal distrust.
I have given you power of choice, and you only alternate
Between futile speculation and unconsidered action.

(Eliot, Choruses from 'The Rock III' 115)

2. The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow follow'd free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

3. Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze –
On me alone it blew.

4. The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl;d,
Like noises in a swound!

Samuel T. Coleridge (Reeves 181, 182, 195)

You should take your time to appreciate these stanzas from the poet's memorable art/literary ballad, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. Indeed, you should find a suitable anthology of English poetry and read this poem in its entirety because it is a compendium

from which one could draw illustrations of most of the devices and elements studied in this course. In terms of music, there is much sense in Pound's assertion that "the way to learn the music of verse is to listen to it" (56). Listening does not just imply listening to someone else read aloud lines of poetry; you can equally listen to yourself as you read, just the way you listen to yourself as you sing a song.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Attempt a critical appreciation of the poet's use of sound devices and their effects in any one of the stanzas above.

1.3 Diction

Diction, in very simple terms, means the use of words in oral or written discourse; the peculiar choice of words used by the poet or his/her vocabulary considered for their meaning and association, rather than for their aural qualities. More expansively, Abrams has defined the term as "the selection of words in a work of literature. A writer's diction can be analysed under such categories as the degree to which his vocabulary is abstract or concrete, Latinate or Anglo-Saxon in origin, colloquial or formal, technical or common, literal or figurative" (131). Accordingly, nothing is a clearer indication of the interests, habit of mind, and the period of a poet than his/her diction – the words s/he uses in his/her poems. Different periods in English literature have chosen and popularised various forms of poetic diction. In addition to the categories mentioned in Abrams' definition above, a poet's diction can also be described as plain or ornate, homely or exotic, contemporary or archaic, familiar or cryptic, etc., and each kind has its attractions as well as its limitations. You should be able to analyse any given poem to determine the dominant pattern of the diction or selection of words employed by a poet in his/her work.

Compare the following excerpts, in terms of the diction used by the poet. You will discover, on reading the lines, that there is a world of difference between the poet's peculiar choice of words, as represented in these lines:

1. It comes so quickly

The bird of death

From evil forests of Soviet technology

A man crossing the road

to greet a friend

is much too slow (Achebe 'Air Raid', *BSB* 15)

2. In the greyness

and drizzle of one despondent

dawn unstirred by harbingers

of sunbreak a vulture

perching high on broken

bone of a dead tree

nestled close to his

mate (Achebe 'Vultures', *BSB* 39)

4.0 CONCLUSION

Poetry has been variously defined by different poets and critics over the ages. While some would prefer to see it as the subject or content that is written about by the poet, others emphasise that it is the manner of expressing this content that should determine the essential nature of poetry. Nonetheless, irrespective of the positions of these schools of thought, there is consensus on the major elements that, by and large, distinguish poetry from other forms of writing, viz: imagery, rhythm, sound, and diction.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have focused attention on the elements of poetry that differentiate it from the other major genres of literature, drama and the novel. With some suitable examples, we have been able to indicate as well as demonstrate the nature of these elements and

their contribution to the effectiveness or quality of a poem. We have learnt that the elements – imagery, rhythm, sound and diction – are the vehicles that the poet utilises to convey his/her thoughts and emotions as well as delight his/her readers.

7. 0. TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. How would you define the term, ‘Diction’?
2. Categorise the diction in the above two excerpts from Chinua Achebe’s poetry collection, *Beware Soul Brother*, as well as explain the reasons behind your categories.
3. Identify the principal elements of poetry and discuss five.
4. What roles do the elements of poetry play in a poem?
5. Imagery is a very important element of poetry. Identify and explain the different types of images used by poets.
6. Write all you know about rhythm and sound as two primary properties of poetry.
7. Using Achebe’s poem “Vultures” explain the place of diction in poetry.

8. 0. REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4: IMPERSONAL FORMS OF POETRY

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Epic
 - 3.2 Ballad
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will equip you with a detailed study of the major forms or types of poetry with special emphasis on their distinguishing features. It is necessary that you know the type of poem that you are dealing with at any point in time.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

1. Recognise and explain the different forms of poetry;
2. Describe in detail each type of poetry;
3. Distinguish between the different forms of poetry on the basis of their individual characteristics;
4. Determine and rationalise the type of poem you may have to appreciate in a professional manner.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Nowadays, it has become the norm to speak of the various types of poetry and it is therefore pertinent for us to note that these types developed at different periods in the long history of written English poetry. To the earliest and mostly communal types such as the epic and the ballad have been added other forms, whose roots may be traceable to these earlier forms, but are mainly of the lyrical stock that are concerned with the expression of the intense personal emotions or feelings of the poet on a specific subject. These major forms are also referred to as the “fixed forms” in poetry due to the fact that they are made up of traditional patterns or structures of rhymes and line lengths which control the entire poem. Of all these traditional patterns, the sonnet is considered the most important.

The major forms or types we shall study in this unit are the epic, the ballad, the ode, the sonnet, the elegy, and the lyric.

3.1. The Epic

The epic is a poem composed or written on a grand scale, usually in many separate books or volumes, concerned with the exploits of some great national, historical or legendary character or hero. In other words, an epic celebrates in the form of a continuous narrative the feats of one or more heroic characters of history or tradition. Accordingly, as a rule, the epic treats a theme of lofty nature and consequently its characters are usually of high social standing or are very powerful forces. As is to be expected, the narrative of an epic is presented in such a way that the actions of the subject intimate and comment on the values and destiny of a particular people or race, in spite of its episodic nature.

There are two major types of the epic, namely: the primary (folk) and the secondary (art) epics. A primary epic is the type that draws its sustenance mainly from the oral tradition of a people hence, the label ‘folk’, while the secondary epic is a modification and reorganised version by identifiable or known authors. This latter type is as a result of its

very basis and nature, written with much literary sophistication by poets who imitate the primary epic in both subject and manner.

3.1.1 Characteristics of an Epic

Whether folk or art, epics share a set of common general characteristics and conventions as follows:

1. The poet commences his narration by stating his theme and invokes the Muse to inspire and instruct him in his task.
2. The story begins 'in medias res', that is in the middle of things, and proceeds to recount the great deeds of the heroes with objectivity.
3. The action in which supernatural forces participate is one, and entire.
4. Story is of great length and scope, with the action taking place over a long period of time and extending over several nations, the world of the poet's day, or the imagined universe.
5. The hero, who is a person of great stature, legendary and historical significance and performs superhuman actions, is more of the concern of the audience or reader because s/he symbolises the aspirations and destiny of his/her nation or race.
6. Narrative style is grand and alternates between the sublime or sustained elevation and grand simplicity.
7. Story includes elaborate formal speeches by the main characters.
8. The constituent episodes of narrative easily arise from the main story and, as a result, there are no parts that could be detached from it without loss to the whole.
9. Epic poetry incorporates a long list of warriors, armies, and war machines, which necessitate employment of the fitting vehicle of the epic simile or extended comparison.

(NB: List, which is by now normative, relies mostly on Holman, Abrams, and so on.)

Well known examples of the epic in English literature include the following:

- Traditional/folk/primary – Homer's *Iliad*, *Odyssey*; Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*; the

Indian *Mahabharata*; the French *Chanson de Roland*; and the Spanish *El Cid*.

- Art/Literary/Secondary – Virgil’s *Aeneid*; Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

The term, ‘epic’, has also been loosely applied to other works, both poetry and prose, written on a grand scale and attempting or aspiring to the spirit of the epic in matter/subject and manner/style. These include Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, Ezra Pound’s *Cantos*, and Niane’s *Sundiata*.

3.2 Ballad

The ballad, one of the earliest forms of poetry, is a song that tells a story or conversely, a story told through song. Thus, a ballad is a short narrative poem, adapted for singing, simple in plot and metrical in structure, divided into stanzas of four lines (quatrains) rhyming alternately, and characterised by complete impersonality, as far as the author or singer is concerned.

As in the epic, there are two main types of the ballad, namely: the folk ballad (also referred to as the popular or traditional ballad) and the art or literary ballad. These terms equally intimate the origins and nature of this type of poetry similar to the distinctions we have seen in the epic genre. Accordingly, a folk ballad is anonymous, but we can safely infer that there must have been a poet since all poems are mostly composed by individual poets. According to Hugh Holman, “debate still rages as to whether the ballad originates with an individual composer or as a group or communal activity” (52). Whether as individual or group composition, the personal emotions of the composer or poet do not manifest in his/her work. There is no first person singular (I), but where it strays in, it is always found in the context of the speech by identifiable characters in the poem to whom it refers. In studying the folk ballad, we are studying the poetry of the traditional people, as different from the poetry of art, as in the art ballad whose writer, who may modify and

use folk materials, is known. Thus, oral transmission is the medium of spreading the song of the folk ballad.

There are a number of sub-categories of the ballad, some of which include the ballads of history, of love, of humour, of domestic tragedy, of the domestic border, and ballads derived from epic materials.

3.2.1 Features of the Ballad

Some common characteristic features of the ballad as a form of poetry should be noted to enable you identify, describe, and critique when required, as follows:

1. Impersonality and lack of sentimentality;
2. Anonymity of authorship and consequent lack of authorial comments;
3. Simple repetition;
4. Incremental repetition meant to slow down action and thus add to suspense and emphasise the points in a dialogue;
5. Focus on a single episode;
6. Use of dialogue to make action of story dramatic and compress and remove unnecessary descriptions and points;
7. Absence or minimal utilisation of figures of speech;
8. Use of refrains, which aids musicality in the poem as well as perform the functions of repetition noted above (in #4);
9. Stereotype or stock epithets and concrete diction;
10. Quatrain stanzas.

As a general rule, the ballad uses a common measure of a four-line stanza rhyming abab, abcb, or xaxa. You should note that in this rhyming pattern, the first and third lines could rhyme (represented as 'a' in abab), while the second and fourth lines (represented as 'b') **must** rhyme. In some ballads, however, the first and third lines may not rhyme (as in

abcb and xaxa, where 'x' represents 'no rhyme' and this deviation does not disqualify such lines as ballad stanzas.

The following are notable examples of the folk ballad and the art ballad which you should read in any good anthology of English poetry:

Folk/Popular/Traditional Ballad – 'Sir Patrick Spens', 'The Wife at Usher's Well', 'The Daemon Lover', 'Edward', 'The Three Ravens', 'Lord Randal' and 'The Twa Corbies'.

Extracts:

(1) Edward

“Why does your brand sae drop wi’ blude,

Edward, Edward?

Why does your brand sae drop wi’ blude,

And why sae sad gang ye, O?” -

“O I hae kill’d my hawk sae gude,

Mither, Mither;

O I hae kill’d my hawk sae gude,

And I had nae mair but he, O”.

(Reeves 4-6)

(2) **Sir Patrick Spens**

The king sits in Dunfermline town
Drinking the blude-red wine,
“O whare will I get a skeely skipper
To sail this new ship o’ mine?”

O up and spak an eldern knight,
Sat at the king’s right knee;
“Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor
That ever sailed the sea.”

(Reeves 7-10)

Art/Literary Ballad – Scott’s ‘Proud Maisie’, John Keats’s ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci’, Samuel T. Coleridge’s ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, Robert Burns’s ‘A Red, Red Rose’ and ‘Anna’, Gerard M Hopkins’s ‘Felix Randal’.

(1) **A Red, Red Rose**

O my love is like a red, red rose
That’s newly sprung in June:
O my love is like the melody,
That’s sweetly played in tune.

As fair thou art, my bonnie lass,
So deep in love am I;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a’ the seas gang dry.

(Reeves 60)

(2) **Belle Dame sans Merci**

“What can ail thee, knight-at-arms,

Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

“O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel’s granary is full,
And the harvest’s done

(Reeves 212-214)

Self-Assessment Exercise

List and discuss the similarities and differences between the epic and the ballad as types of poetry.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have looked at two specific types of poetry in this Unit: the Epic and the Ballad, and we have also studied the different features and characteristics that make up each, with particular examples given to enhance our understanding.

5.0 SUMMARY

While the epic is grand and long, the ballad is short and ordinary, a familiar poem to the average person. Each type of poem comes with its own strength and beauty.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Using the extracts above as examples, examine the main features of the popular and art ballads as poetic sub-categories.
2. Identify and explain the different forms of impersonal poetry?
3. Choose two types of poetry classified under the impersonal forms and discuss their major characteristics.

4. The ballad has two major types. Using the poems, 'Edward', 'A Red, Red Rose' and any other ballad studied in class, explain the distinguishing features of two of these types.
5. In terms of issues discussed and style, are there similarities between epic and ballad as types of poetry?
6. In your own view, what are the properties that qualify epic as a main poetic type?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5: MAJOR TYPES OF POETRY – PERSONAL OR ROMANTIC FORMS

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Ode
 - 3.2 Elegy
 - 3.3 Sonnet
 - 3.4 Lyric
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will equip you with a detailed study of the major forms or types of poetry, with special emphasis on their distinguishing features. It is necessary that you know the type of poem that you are dealing with at any point in time.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

1. Recognise and explain the different forms of poetry;
2. Describe in detail each type of poetry;
3. Distinguish between the different forms of poetry on the basis of their individual characteristics;
4. Determine and rationalise in a professional manner the type of poem you

may have to appreciate.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Ode

An ode is a rhymed or rarely unrhymed lyric poem often in the form of an address, expressive of exalted or enthusiastic emotion (usually of exalted style and enthusiastic tone), especially one of varied or irregular metre. An ode is usually between 50 and 200 lines long and it was originally intended to be sung or at least recited. It has been defined by Gosse as “any strain of enthusiastic and exalted lyrical verse, directed to a fixed purpose, and dealing progressively with one dignified theme” (quoted in Holman 363).

In its earliest Greek form established by the poet, Pindar, it was choral or sung by a group of people who constituted the personas who moved in a dance rhythm in the dramatic poetry that was the main matrix for the ode/form. More explicitly, Holman tells us that the term, ode, “connotes certain qualities both of manner and form. In manner, the ode is an elaborate lyric, expressed in language dignified, sincere, and imaginative and intellectual in tone. In form the ode is more complicated than most of the lyric types. Perhaps the essential distinction of form is the division into strophes: the strophe, antistrophe, and epode” (363). The dance movements of the chorus are as follows:

Trophe (movement to the left)

Antistrophe (movement to the right)

Epode (Chorus stands still).

The great period of the ode in English poetry began with Abraham Cowley, who in the seventeenth century popularised the Pindaric ode in English. There are three main types of ode in English poetry, namely: the Pindaric (regular), the Horatian, and the Irregular. The Pindaric ode is a complex poem of some length on a subject of public interest or on an abstract quality, written in rhyming or irregular pattern. On the other hand, the

Horatian type modelled on the odes of the Roman poet Horace, is less complex, calm, meditative and restrained, and contains only one strophe (homostrophic). Famous examples are Milton's 'Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity', 'To the Lord General Cromwell, May 1652'; Gray's 'The Progress of Poesy'; the romantic odes including Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', Keats's 'Ode to the Nightingale', 'Ode to Autumn', and 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind'.

Excerpts:

(1) 'To the Lord General Cromwell, May 1652'

On the proposalls of certaine ministers
at the Committee for Propagation of the Gospell
Cromwell, our cheif of men, who through a cloud
Not of warr onely, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith & matchless Fortitude

(2) 'Ode to Autumn'

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees, **5**
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;

(3) 'Ode to the West Wind'

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

3.2 Elegy

An elegy is a sustained and formal poem setting forth the poet's meditations upon death or another solemn theme (Holman 183). The meditation is often occasioned by the death of a particular person, a painful loss, or a general calamity that touches not just the poet as an individual, but a wider spectrum of persons in his/her community or humanity generally. Thus, the poem may also be a generalised observation or the expression of a solemn mood. Other poetic types that are akin to the elegy and whose labels are often misused in reference to the elegy are the dirge, a short, less formal type, and usually in the form of a text to be sung, with sub-types such as threnody, which is mainly an equivalent to the dirge, and monody, which is an elegy presented as an utterance by one person.

The following are popular examples of the elegy in English literature: John Milton's 'Lycidas'; Alfred Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'; W. H. Auden's 'In Memory of WB Yeats' and William Gray's 'Elegy, Written in a Country Churchyard'. You should find a suitable anthology of English poetry and read these poems so as to be able to identify and discuss an elegy, no matter the variant that you come across.

An ancient category of the elegy is the pastoral elegy in which the poet or mourner and the dead or the one mourned, who is also a poet, are characterised as shepherds. The name, 'pastoral', is derived from the Greek word, *pastor*, which means shepherd. M. H. Abrams, using one of the notable examples of the pastoral elegy, has identified seven fundamental conventions that have marked this poetic form from its earliest Greek form through the Renaissance as follows:

1. The invocation of the muses and frequent references to other figures from classical mythology.
2. All of nature is implicated or joins in mourning the shepherd's death.
3. The mourner charges with negligence the nymphs or other guardians of

the dead.

4. There is a procession of mourners.
5. The poet raises questions about the justice of divine providence and goes on to comment on the decadence of his/her contemporary society in seeming digressions which are often integral to the development of the mourner's line of thought as in 'Lycidas'.
6. In Post-Renaissance elegies, flowers are brought in to deck the hearse in an elaborate passage.
7. There is a closing consolation, especially in Christian elegies, where the tone of the poem changes from that of grief and despair to joy and assurance, and an epiphanic realisation that death is a necessary prelude to a higher life.

Bearing in mind the above general thematic and stylistic characteristics of the elegy as a poetic form, we will now take a look at a local example to illustrate the universal application of these features in the following Igbo traditional verse:

My brother, death has crushed my heart.
My brother has left me at crossroads
My brother has left me hanging over the fire like a
parcel of meat to dry
But a parcel of meat over the fire will still have
Somebody to touch it.
Death has reaped me up like cocoyam and peeled
off my tubers
My left hand has turned to my back
Death has turned me into bitterness itself
My mirror is broken
My own is past

(Egudu & Nwoga, 1973)

3.3 Sonnet

The sonnet is a poem generally expressive of a single, complete thought, idea, or sentiment. It is made up of 14 lines, usually five-foot iambic pentametres, with lines arranged according to one of certain definite rhyme schemes. Holman defines this poetic form as “a lyric form of fourteen lines, *highly arbitrary in form, and following one or another of several rhyme schemes*”(p. 300). You should take note of the section of this definition that is italicised; we shall have cause to refer back to it as we study the various structural and prosodic manifestations of the sonnet.

There are three main types of the sonnet; these are the Petrarchan or Italian; the Miltonic; and the Shakespearean or Elizabethan. We should note that although the sonnet was originally an Italian poetic form, hence the name of the prototypic form - Petrarchan/Italian, it had a very large following in the English poetic tradition beginning from the sixteenth century. The earliest English or Elizabethan sonneteers are Isaac Wyatt, Phillip Sidney (‘Astrophel and Stella’ sequence), and Edmund Spenser (‘Amoretti’ sequence) and they set the tone by deploying their poems as vehicles for impassioned amorous, religious, and friendly adulation.

3.3.1 Petrarchan/Italian: This type consists of two parts or systems, as they are called; a major part, known as the octave, made up of the first eight lines; a minor part, called the sestet, made up of the last six lines. There is usually a pause or turn in idea or thought at the end of the octave. This turn or break in sense is known technically as the ‘volta’. This structure conventionally goes hand-in-hand with the thematic content of the poem in that a statement of a problem, a situation, or an incident in the octave is followed by a resolution in the sestet. The rhyme scheme of the octave is abba, abba, and this is fixed or invariable. On the other hand, the rhyme scheme of the sestet varies, but it may consist of any arrangement of two or three rhymes, as long as the last two lines do not form a couplet, that is, they do not rhyme. Thus, the usual arrangement in the sestet is cdcdcd or

decade. An example of this type in English poetry is William Wordsworth's 'The World is Too Much With Us':

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

3.3.2 Miltonic: This type is similar to the Italian form discussed above, but the only difference is that the Miltonic does not observe the pause or turn at the end of the octave. Rather, the poet lets the octave to run-on into the sestet. Suitable examples of this type are John Milton's 'On His Blindness'; 'On the Late Massacre at Piedmont' and Sonnet XXIII 'Methought I Saw My Late Espoused Saint'.

Methought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescu'd from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed taint
Purification in the old Law did save,
And such as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind;
Her face was veil'd, yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd
So clear as in no face with more delight.
But Oh! as to embrace me she inclin'd,
I wak'd, she fled, and day brought back my night.

3.3.3 Shakespearean/Elizabethan/English: This type differs markedly from both the Petrarchan and Miltonic forms. It consists of three quatrains and a final rhyming couplet and its rhyme scheme is abab cdcd efef gg. At times, the division of material found in the Petrarchan sonnet is also present here or there is repetition, with variation of the statement in the three quatrains, with the final couplet presenting a neat and laconic encapsulation of the central thought in the poem. The volta sometimes occurs between the twelfth and thirteenth lines.

The following Shakespearean poems are examples of this type: ‘Shall I Compare Thee To a Summer’s Day?’; ‘Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds’; and ‘Since Brass nor Stone, Nor Earth, Nor Boundless Sea’.

We said we would refer back to the highlighted part of Holman’s definition in the opening paragraph of section 3.5. We have seen how the sonnet follows “one or another of several rhyme schemes” in our examination of the areas of congruence and divergence in the structures and rhyme patterns of the three main types of sonnet. Although the arbitrariness of form has largely been shown in the differences among the three types explained above, we should still add that this characteristic alludes to the idiosyncratic manipulations of the basic markers of the sonnet such as the number of lines (14) as well as the number of feet per line (5 iambic feet). These deviations were mainly experimental as demonstrated in Gerard Manley Hopkins’ “Felix Randall” as well as in several well-known pieces by the American poets such as William Carlos Williams, E.E. Cummings, and John Crowe Ransom.

3.4 Lyric

In its original form, the lyric was a poem sung to the accompaniment of a lyre – a classical stringed musical instrument. In the Greek classical period, it was sung by a single singer and was thus differentiated from the ‘choric’, which was performed by a group of singers. The term is now applied to describe any poem that is light in tone, could

be adapted into song and reflects the personal mood or feeling of the singer or poet, rather than narrate a story. This quality or characteristic constitutes the main difference between it as a poetic type and the ballad and the epic, which concentrate on extra-personal subjects or themes. The lyric does not follow any rigid metrical law (unlike the sonnet) by which it is identified and it is for this reason that it is often regarded as a mode of writing rather than as a form.

The subjects of the lyric poet are as varied as his/her moods; thus, s/he is at one time writing about love and at other times s/he is expressing his/her feelings towards nature; or merely giving vent to his/her personal observations on life generally. However, the idea of unity of mood, of thought, of feeling, and of style is essential to the lyric.

Since the true quality of the lyric is the personal element, that is, as a vehicle of the poet's mood, a means of expressing his/her individual sensibility, the ode, the sonnet, as well as the elegy, are lyrics. As such, all the examples of these latter form cited in the preceding sections of this unit can rightly be studied as lyrics.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have discussed the major personal or romantic forms of poetry – the ode, elegy, sonnet and lyric, and identified the specific characteristics of each. Popular examples of each have also been given. The Ode is usually a lyrical address; the Elegy is mainly solemn; the Sonnet is usually distinguished by its common characteristic: fourteen lines; and the Lyric is poetry in song form.

5.0 SUMMARY

The four types of poetry we have treated above come with their own unique characteristics and types. The Ode has three types – Pindaric, Horatian, and the Irregular. Famous examples include John Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The Elegy is usually solemn in mood, and the thematic issues revolve around personal loss and death. Alfred

Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' is a ready example. The Sonnet is also in three types – Petrarchan or Italian; the Miltonic; and the Shakespearean or Elizabethan. The last type, the Lyric, got its name from the musical instrument that the poem was sung with – the lyre.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. The Elegy is commonly confused with the Dirge. What is the difference between the two?
2. Examine John Keats's "Ode to the Nightingale" as an ode type of personal poetry.
3. On the basis of Alfred Tennyson's "In Memoriam," write all you know about elegy as a type of poetry.
4. Identify and discuss the differences between three types of sonnet.
5. Discuss the primary features of the lyric poem.
6. Choose any well-known poem that belongs to the personal/romantic class and analyse the poet's interest.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 2: TECHNIQUES AND LITERARY DEVICES OF POETRY

- Unit 1 Tropes: irony; paradox; metaphor, simile; personification; metonymy; synecdoche; etc.
- Unit 2 Rhetorical Figures: antithesis; apostrophe; contrast; onomatopoeia; hyperbole; oxymoron; etc.
- Unit 3 Types of Verse: blank; heroic; free
- Unit 4 Movement and Sound in Poetry: syllable; foot; metre and types
- Unit 5 Movement and Sound in Poetry: duration/quantity

UNIT 1: TROPE - IRONY; PARADOX; CONTRAST; ETC.

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Irony
 - 3.2 Paradox
 - 3.3 Metaphor
 - 3.4 Simile
 - 3.5 Personification
 - 3.6 Metonymy
 - 3.7 Synecdoche
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We should recall at this point the emphasis we placed on the figurative or connotative nature of the language of poetry in our consideration of several definitions of the genre in Unit I of Module I. Among other points, we stressed that poetry communicates experiences in language, deliberately selected and arranged by the poet to create specific emotional as well as intellectual response through meaning, sound, and rhythm. Another related point we made was that poetry, in line with the general nature of literature, communicates experiences through indirection. This deliberately contrived and indirect/suggestive language of poetry is achieved mainly through some figurative usages among which are irony, paradox, metaphor, simile, personification, metonymy, and synecdoche, which we shall discuss in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

1. Identify the figures of speech used to communicate experiences or ideas in a poem;
2. Explain points of comparison in figurative expressions;
3. Discuss the aptness/effectiveness or otherwise of figurative usage.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Irony

Irony is one of the most typical figures of speech in poetry. Hugh Holman has defined it as “a broad term referring to the recognition of a reality different from the masking reality” (42). In other words, it is a figure of speech in which the denotative, literal or ordinary meaning of a word or expression is more or less the direct opposite of the sense intended by the speaker or, in this case, the poet. You should be able to identify this poetic device by paying close attention to the contexts in which the ironic words or expressions are used in a poem.

For example, irony could manifest in a context in which a patently ugly and unpleasant event or object is described as beautiful/attractive and pleasing/satisfying. For example, when an unattractive person is referred to as the most beautiful or attractive person; a dwarf is described as a palm tree or the African 'iroko'; and a hopeless situation is said to be a hopeful or cheering one. These are examples of verbal irony and they illustrate the manner in which irony as a figure of speech stands logic on its head through expression or usage that is built upon a discrepancy between what is asserted and what is actually the case. We will now examine the opening lines of J.P. Clark's short poem, 'The Cleaners' to illustrate how this type of irony works:

Look at the crew
Who after each disastrous race
Take over a public place
To wash it new.
They are themselves so full
Of muck (State of the Union, 5)

To begin with, the title of the poem is ironic because it runs contrary to the moral quality expected of whoever would lay claim to being a cleaner. The irony is further strengthened by the fact that "the crew" referred to is depicted as a group of persons who pretend to be morally above board, as opposed to those who were responsible for the disastrous race that instigates their reaction. Their professed intention is to wash clean the proverbial political "Augean stable" when they themselves are not better than those they have ousted.

You, as close readers, should be able to identify and enjoy this form of verbal duplicity, which is the stock in trade of the ironist because its contradiction is apparent.

However, there is the more complex type of irony which best reveals the characteristic feature of irony as a dominant structural ingredient in an ironic poem; where the persona or speaker in a poem assumes the position of a well-meaning or disinterested neutral

person to express ideas that appear to be earnest, but which essentially are not to be taken literally. A good example of this form of irony is 'A Modest Proposal' by the Irish poet, Jonathan Swift, in which the persona acts as a caring professional economist who proffers economic solutions to end the poverty in his impoverished society by suggesting outrageously impossible steps to be taken by the authority. It is highly recommended that you read this poem in a good anthology of English poetry.

Other forms of irony are the situational, cosmic and dramatic, which are more frequently used in dramatic works.

3.2. Paradox

Paradox is a statement or expression, which at first seems to be contradictory or senseless, but which on further or closer examination contains much truth. As a poetic device, it usually contains an element of surprise or shock that reveals the potentials of words in poetry and literature in general. The truth that is contained in paradox is often realised against a religious or philosophical background. For example, the concept of the Fortunate Fall, as expressed by a medieval lyricist, when taken literally does not make apparent sense, but when read against the Biblical/religious background of Man's fall from divine favour in the Garden of Eden, it conveys the truth of the interplay of the Fall and the advent and mission of Christ on earth. The truth that transforms an apparently 'unfortunate fall' or disfavour into a fortunate ascendancy is that it provides the necessity for the redemptive career of Christ.

Similarly, the paradox that runs through John Donne's sonnet, 'Death Be not Proud' can only be fully appreciated against an understanding and acceptance of the religious concept that death is not a terrible end-all of a person's ontology; that death is a needful interlude between a person's existence in this world and his/her transition to the next world:

Death be not proud, though some have called thee

Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not soe
..... why swell'st thou then?
.....

One short sleepe past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

(quoted in Gardner 83)

The elements of contradiction and shock combine here to give us a classic example of the workings of a paradox. Initially, the idea that death is not mighty and dreadful does not sound rational until the poet provides convincing reasons to back up his statement and concludes by proving that it is a mere necessary prelude to a person's resurrection that would signal the end/demise of death! This typical shock resulting from a new awareness of an inherent truth in an apparently absurd statement is also couched in a philosophical garb in the following poem by William Wordsworth titled 'My Heart Leaps Up':

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky;
So it was when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

In this Romantic poem, the poet gives lasting expression to the philosophy that a child's potentials are a presage of what s/he would become at maturity. But by the way it is expressed, it conveys, on the surface, the ridiculous and contradictory impression that the child is actually the father of man. It is only on close scrutiny against the Romantic

philosophy of the evolution of the child with all its positive and negative implications that its embedded truth is realised.

J. P. Clark also offers us a fitting example of the use of paradox to reinforce poetic meaning in ‘Letter from Kampala’, a piece that conveys the familial sentiments of the persona who is engaged on a journey away from home as follows:

At this other end of Africa
It is of you alone
I think at home,
And the children:
I go further in order
To get home to you. (*A Decade of Tongues*, 95)

Taken literally, the two last lines would contradict the home sickness of a person who is actually missing his wife and children, because he deliberately goes farther away from them/home instead of moving in a reversed direction towards home. However, the truth in this seemingly absurd progression is that, in order to complete his journey and return to his family, the traveller has to reach the farthest limit of his journey. He will not achieve this if he stays at the beginning of the journey.

3.3 Metonymy

This involves the use of an object or idea to stand for or signify some other thing with which it is closely associated, but which is not necessarily an integral part of it. In this type of figure/trope, we commonly speak of “the king” as “the crown”, an object closely associated with kingship, but not an organic part of the person of the king or royalty. Similarly, the “scythe” and the “spade” are made to stand for the peasantry that is closely associated with two objects as in the following examples:

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things,

There is no armour against fate,
Death lays his icy hand on kings;
Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

James Shirley, 'The Glories of Our Blood and State'

(Reeves 104)

Other examples are:

1. After much strife on the streets, *the green berets* were called in handle the situation (i.e. the soldiers).
2. The man who lives across the street goes after any *skirt* in the neighbourhood (any female).

3.4 Synecdoche

This is a figure of speech in which a person, place or thing/object is made to stand for the whole or conversely the whole is made to stand for a part. You should note that, as in the metonymy, this figure works on the basis of association or relationship; but unlike the metonymy, however, the part is an integral part of the whole as the whole is often a whole because it subsumes the part. In addition, for the synecdoche to be effective and clear, it must be based on an important or a main part of the whole and should be manifestly associated with the topic being discussed or in focus as in these examples:

1. More *hands* are needed to execute the task (i.e. workmen).
2. The worker finds it difficult to cater for more *mouths* in his family (i.e. persons).
3. I gave commands;/And all *smiles* stopped together

3.5 Simile

A simile is a figure of speech/trope in which two things or actions are directly compared because of some inherent qualities they share in common, although they may be totally

different in other respects. The term hints at the similarities or similitude that underlies the natures of the two objects or actions being compared and which are normally linked by the operative word 'like' or 'as'. As in a metaphor, the ability of a poet or writer to see and effectively establish similitude in a simile in two patently dissimilar things is considered as a mark of genius as long as the comparison remains fresh and striking. Consider the following examples and try your hands on as many fresh and striking examples as possible:

1. The youthful hue /Sits on thy skin like morning dew
2. My love is like a red, red rose/That's newly sprung in June
3. I cannot sleep
But my head just stops
Like a broken down car!
4. He talks endlessly,
And some of the things he says
Are painful and hurtful,
Like an unripe boil.
5. The roof sizzle at the waking touch,
Talkative like kettledrums
Tightened by the iron fingers of drought

Osundare, 'Raindrum'

3.6 Metaphor

A metaphor is a contracted simile whereby the two similar entities are implicitly equated with one another, thus dispensing with the comparative words, "like" and "as". The similes above can be contracted into metaphors as follows:

1. The youthful hue is morning dew
2. My love is a red rose that's newly sprung in June
3. My head is a broken down car
4. And some of the things he says are an unripe boil

5. The roof is talkative kettledrums

Another example you should take a close look at for its ingenious equation is
“Beauty is but a flower which wrinkles will devour”.

3.7 Personification

Personification is a figure of speech in which inanimate objects, animals or abstract ideas are endowed with human form, character, or sensibilities. Thus, to personify an object or thing is to attribute to it human life or feelings. Heese and Lawton described it as “another kind of image where the ‘something concrete’ relates to human beings, while the ‘something else’ is not human” (83). Examples:

1. Summer’s lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the *eye of heaven* shines,
And often is *his gold complexion* dimmed:

Shakespeare, “Shall I Compare... (Reeves 62)

2. The keen wind
Knifes through his
Torn trousers
Licking his bruised knee
Witth rough fenile *tongue*
... ..
The small toe
On the left foot
Slowly *weeps* blood

(p’Bitek, *Song of Ocol* 122)

3. Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless

With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run

John Keats, 'Ode to Autumn' (Reeves 211)

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have looked at a number of figures of speech and given some relevant examples to help enhance our understanding. Specifically, we have discussed the following figures of speech: irony, paradox, metonymy, synecdoche, simile, metaphor and personification.

5.0 SUMMARY

Our understanding of figures of speech enhances our understanding of poetry, and being able to decode particular meaning(s) that the poet intends to pass across. The irony, for example, is better understood when the context in which it is used is identified. The paradox presents a seeming senseless and clueless worldview, which usually contains vestige of surprise or shocking truth. Metonym is also used in few words with large meanings. An object or element is usually employed to represent a whole. For example, 'green berets' refer to soldiers, while the 'crown' refers to a king.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Identify element(s) of surprise or shock in John Donne's poem, 'Death, Be Not Proud'.
2. Identify the figurative devices used by poetry and explain why they are important in poetry.
3. What is irony and what are the different types of irony?
4. Using JP Clark's "Letter from Kampala", and any other poem, explain how paradox reinforces poetic meaning.
5. Using ample example, identify and discuss the differences and similarities between metonymy and synecdoche as poetic devices.
6. Write short on Simile, Metaphor and Personification.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2: RHETORICAL FIGURES OF SPEECH

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Contrast
 - 3.2 Antithesis
 - 3.3 Apostrophe
 - 3.4 Hyperbole
 - 3.5 Onomatopoeia
 - 3.6 Oxymoron
- 8.0 Conclusion
- 9.0 Summary
- 10.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We should recall at this point the emphasis we placed on the figurative or connotative nature of the language of poetry in our consideration of several definitions of the genre in Unit I of Module I. Among other points, we stressed that poetry communicates experiences in language deliberately selected and arranged by the poet to create specific emotional as well as intellectual responses through meaning, sound and rhythm. Another related point we made was that poetry, in line with the general nature of literature, communicates experiences through indirection. This deliberately contrived and indirect/suggestive language of poetry is achieved mainly through some figurative usages, among which are irony, paradox, metaphor, simile, apostrophe, personification, metonymy, synecdoche, etc., which we shall discuss in this unit.

1.0 OBJECTIVES

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

4. Identify the figures of speech used to communicate experiences or ideas in a poem
5. Explain the point of comparison in the figurative expression
6. Discuss the aptness/effectiveness or otherwise of the figurative usage

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Contrast

Contrast has been defined by R. N. Egudu as “the technique of juxtaposing ‘unlike characters, ideas, or images for the purpose of furthering or heightening an Effect’”. He continues, “like irony, or paradox, contrast is a device of finding direction by indirection which ... is part of what poetry is” (77). On the other hand, Hugh Holman refers to it as a rhetorical device and goes on to stress its function of emphasis and clarity whenever it is deployed in a poem or any other form of writing. In simple terms, contrast comes into play and its effect is felt when ideas, objects, persons, situations are placed side by side in a context in which their opposite qualities are made clear and striking. It is important to note that if these ideas, persons, objects, etc. are made to stand alone, the clarity engendered by this device of contrast would be lacking. It is in this sense that Egudu has seen the device as a veritable means of “finding direction by indirection;” it serves to throw into sharp relief the differences between the ideas, objects, situations or characters contrasted/juxtaposed. The following examples will illustrate the workings of contrast in a poem.

In the poem, ‘Loser of Everything’ by David Mandessi Diop, contrast achieves the poet’s desired effect of highlighting the stark different realities in two historical periods in the national life of a postcolonial society. A natural and peaceful order depicted in nature imagery (in the first ten lines) and a ravished and militarised order represented in images of machines and corruption (in the last ten lines). By juxtaposing these two contrasting

orders, the socio-political existence in a typical pre-colonial African setting and that in a colonial regime become very clear and heightened:

The sun used to laugh in my hut
And my women were lovely and lissom
Like palms in the evening breeze.
My children would glide over the mighty river
Of deadly depths
And my canoes would battle with crocodiles.
The motherly moon accompanied our dances
The heavy frantic rhythm of the tom-tom,
Tom-tom of joy, tom-tom of carefree life.
Amid the fires of liberty.

Then one day, Silence...
It seemed the rays of the sun went out
In my hut empty of meaning.
My women crushed their painted mouths
On the thin hard lips of steel-eyed conquerors
And my children left their peaceful nakedness
For the uniform of iron and blood.
Your voice went out too
The irons of slavery tore my heart to pieces
Tom-tom of my nights, tom-toms of my fathers.

Hammer Blows

Another example of the use of contrast is available in the poem, 'Virtue', by the English metaphysical poet, George Herbert, as follows:

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of earth and sky,
The dew shall weep thy fall tonight
For thou must die

Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,
Thy root is ever in its grave;
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie,
My music shows ye have your closes,
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

To underscore the endless currency of the abstract Virtue, it is juxtaposed with the ephemeral “Sweet day”, “Sweet rose”, “Sweet spring” which must all inevitably die. By placing these phenomena beside the “sweet and virtuous soul”, the difference between them is shown by indirection as they ‘speak’ by themselves.

3.2 Apostrophe

As we have seen so far in our examination of the devices and examples of their uses in the sections above, poets are consistently seeking and utilising different techniques to concretise, emphasise, and heighten meaning in their works. We have seen how this is achieved through irony, paradox, and contrast. We shall now turn our attention to apostrophe, which is a direct and straight forward “address either to an absent person or to an abstract or inanimate entity”(Abrams 149).

Poets use the apostrophe to give the impression or sense of immediacy as well as the emotional involvement/outpouring in their works. That is, it enables both the poet and the reader to have a feeling of nearness and a sense of presence of the person or entity addressed in a poem. You will agree with me that this usage equally aids the reader's imaginative realisation of meaning in a poem. Let us consider the following examples to illustrate these qualities and functions of this rhetorical figure of speech:

1. Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain

Where health and plenty cheer the labouring swain

Oliver Goldsmith, 'The Deserted Village'

2. O dawn

Where do you hide your paint at night

That cool breath, that scent

With which you sweeten the early air?

O dawn

What language do you use

To instruct the birds to sing

Their early songs

And insects to sound

The rhythm of an African heartbeat?

Susan Lwanga, 'Daybreak'

3. Before you, mother Idoto,

naked I stand,

before your watery presence,

a prodigal

leaning on an oilbean,

lost in your legend...

Christopher Okigbo, 'Idoto'

In these three excerpts, the poets address abstract and inanimate objects or entities as if they were living and sensate. As we have mentioned above, the device is a ready tool for the poet's emotional expression and this is evident in the direct addresses in the forms of eulogy and adulation directed to the village of Auburn that is no more (in excerpt 1), the evanescent dawn (as in excerpt 2), and a revered female godhead, Idoto (in excerpt 3).

3.3 Antithesis

This is a rhetorical figure of speech achieved by the poet by juxtaposing or placing side by side two contrasting phrases or statements to create expressional balance. In the words of Abrams, it "is a contrast or opposition in meaning, emphasised by a parallel in grammatical structure" (10). An interesting quality of this device is its wittiness and ability to surprise through abrupt apposition. As ingenious and attractive as it may be in a poem, Hugh Holman (35 – 36) has cautioned that it could lose its significance and surprise if overused. He then advises that "true antithetical structure demands that there be not only an opposition of ideas, but that the opposition in different parts be manifested through similar grammatical structure – the noun "wretches" being opposed by the noun "jury-men", and the verb "hang" by the verb "dine", as in the following example:

The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jury-men may dine

Other examples of antithesis that obey the above structure and are likely to be familiar to you:

1. To err is human, to forgive divine
2. For many are called, but few are chosen
3. Once bitten, twice shy

3.4 Hyperbole

This is the use of deliberate exaggeration or overstatement for emphasis or to achieve a humorous effect, without any intention to deceive the reader or audience. It is the

opposite of *litotes*. (Look this up in a dictionary or glossary of literary terms). As in common usage amongst you and your friends, you should be in a position to appreciate the deployment and effect of exaggeration in communication. Take, for example, when you walk into your friend's room after a long day of back-to-back lectures and say: "I want to eat a basin of eba". Certainly, you know that you are not capable of eating that quantity of food; but you have made the statement to emphasise how hungry you are as well as to achieve humour. The following excerpts from Robert Burns's poem, 'A Red, Red Rose', will equally illustrate the nature and effect of hyperbole:

O my luv'e's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June:
O my luv'e's like the melody,
That's sweetly played in tune.

As fair thou art, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luv'e am I;
And I will luv'e thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And **the rocks melt wi' the sun**;
And I will luv'e thee still, my dear,
While **the sands o' life shall run.**

And fare thee weel, my only luv'e!
And fare thee weel awhile!
And **I will come again**, my luv'e,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

You should take note of the words and lines highlighted in the stanzas and attempt to appreciate, enjoy and be able to discuss their effectiveness as hyperbole.

3.5 Onomatopoeia

This rhetorical figure, according to Abrams, “is applied to a word, or a combination of words, whose sound seems to resemble the sound it denotes: ‘hiss’, ‘buzz’, ‘rattle’, ‘bang’” (118). In other words, this figure involves the use of words whose pronunciation echo or suggest their meaning. For example, the highlighted words in the following lines excerpted from Coleridge’s ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ intimate their meaning through an artful matching of sound to sense:

1. The ice was all around:
It **crack’d**, and **growl’d**, and **roar,d**
2. With heavy **thump**,
They dropp’d one by one
3. And every soul, it pass’d me by
Like the **whizz** of my crossbow!

The closing lines of David Rubadiri’s ‘An African Thunderstorm’ also contains some words whose sounds resemble and suggest their meaning, as follows:

As **jagged** blinding flashes
Rumble, tremble, and **crack**

3.6 Oxymoron

In oxymoron, two words or phrases of opposite or contrary/contrasting meanings are placed side by side to achieve a rhetorical effect. While such a juxtaposition may seem to be “pointedly foolish”, it achieves sharp emphasis in the context in which it is used. Examples are the following phrases and expressions: bitter-sweet; loving hate; pleasing

pain; kindly unkind; I burn and freeze; resounding silence; conspicuous absence; a dearness that lacerates; etc.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have looked at more figures of speech in this Unit. Many of the ones discussed here have their effect in the use of contrast for effect. Thus, we see the contrast, antithesis, and oxymoron making use of opposites to create a striking effect in poetry.

5.0 SUMMARY

The figures of speech studied here are adopted by poets to create a powerful impression in the minds of readers. For example, in onomatopoeia, words are used to reproduce the sounds certain objects make, for effect. For example, ‘the thunder claps’, ‘the bees buzz’, ‘lightning strikes’, etc. For the hyperbole, words are used to create or produce humorous effect: ‘I have a mountain-load of dirty clothes to wash’. In antithesis, opposing words or phrases are juxtaposed to create aesthetic balance. For example, ‘bitter-sweet’. These figures of speech improve the aesthetic beauty and meaning of poetry tremendously.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Clearly identify the difference in these figures of speech that deal with opposites: the contrast and the antithesis.

1. How does contrast facilitate the achievement of the desired effect in David Diop’s poem ‘Loser of Everything’ or George Herbert’s ‘Virtue’?
2. Define apostrophe as a figurative device of poetry and explain its function in poetry.
3. Discuss the qualities of antithesis and how they contribute to illuminate the meaning of a poem.
4. Using Robert Burns’s poem, “A Red, Red Rose,” illustrate the nature and effect of hyperbole in a poem.
5. Examine onomatopoeia and oxymoron as devices used by poets to enhance meaning.

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UNIT 3: TYPES OF VERSE

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Blank verse
 - 3.2 Heroic verse
 - 1.4 Free verse
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As we have already stressed in the earlier units in Module I, the best way to read and enjoy poetry is to read it aloud. Although some poems could be enjoyed “as a visual experience” through the appreciation of their structures on the page, they are ultimately meant to be heard and seen. This is why special attention to the sound and rhythmic patterns in a poem is a key to the full appreciation of a poem. Hence, the importance of an understanding of the skilful deployment of stressed and unstressed syllables in verse forms to convey speech rhythm and emotions.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you will be able to:

1. identify the three verse forms discussed;
2. distinguish between the types of verse;
3. discuss the effect of rhymed and unrhymed meters in lines of poetry/verse.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Blank Verse

This is a type of metrical composition which typically consists of lines of unrhymed iambic pentametres and was the dominant verse used for English dramatic and narrative poetry since the 16th century. In England, it was first adapted by Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, in his translation of some books of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Its original sources or homes were classical Greece and Rome from where it was adapted by the Italian Renaissance writers. It is called blank verse because, as opposed to the conventions of metrical compositions, it was not in stanzas. Rather, it was marked by verse paragraphs that set off each sustained unit of meaning. In the hands of a capable poet, it is "a supple instrument uniquely capable of conveying speech rhythm and emotional overtones" (Encarta).

A number of famous English poets and playwrights as John Milton in 'Paradise Lost', Alfred Tennyson in his narrative verses, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlow and other Elizabethans playwrights resorted to the creative use of the blank verse in their plays.

3.2 Heroic Verse

This is iambic pentametre lines rhyming in twos, aa bb cc, etc. It is called heroic because it was the medium or form used for heroic/epic poetry and plays in English. However, it evolved from the 14th century when it was the medium utilised by Geoffrey Chaucer and was usually written in the ten syllable (decasyllabic) lines. Its use became widespread and popular in the 17th and 18th centuries, at which time it became known as heroic couplet.

It is the smallest unit of verse forms and as such it is quite restrictive, as can be demonstrated in the following examples drawn from the works of two great poets of Augustan or 18th century English poetry:

1. First follow Nature, and your judgement frame
By her just standard, which is still the same.

Alexander Pope, 'Essay on Criticism'

2. All human things are subject to decay,
And when fate summons, monarchs must obey.

John Dryden, 'McFlecknoe'

There are two distinct types of the heroic couplet: the closed and the open. The closed couplet is that in which the end of the two lines of the couplet coincides with the end of either a sentence, a complete thought, or a self-contained unit of syntax, with a pause at the end of the first line and a termination of that unit of thought at the end of the second line. Consider the two examples above. Thus, this type constitutes a stanza but it is not separated from the lines that precede or follow it. On the other hand, in the open couplet, the syntax is not symmetrical, the lines run-on, and rhyme is a mere ornament rather than marking the end of the verse, as in the vibrant and rhythmical opening lines of Chaucer's prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*:

Whan that Aprille with his shoures sote
The drogte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veyne in Swich locour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heet
The tendre croppes....

3.3 Free Verse

In the words of Heese and Lawton, free verse "may be defined as rhythmical lines varying in length, adhering to no fixed metrical pattern, and usually unrhymed" (48). These characteristics were meant to free poetry from the restrictions of formal metrical patterns and approximate the free rhythm of natural speech. In this sense, free verse (verse libre, as it was called by the French) is written with a general rhythm rather than any pattern of metre or line length; it has a vague rhythm based largely on repetition,

balance and variation of phrases or parallel grammatical structure. There is no doubt that the absence of regular stress pattern or metre may lead to the misconception that this type of verse is arbitrary and lacks the discipline imposed by conventional rhythmic pattern. To correct this misconception, T. S. Eliot has rightly remarked that no verse is free for the poet who wants to do a good job, since the absence of metre does not indicate absence of rhythm. You should be able to detect the rhythmic pattern achieved in a poem written in free verse through the peculiar variations in line length, repetition, etc. adopted by the poet.

The French Symbolist poets of the late 19th century and the American Walt Whitman as well as most modern poets, especially the Imagists of the 20th century, made effective use of free verse. The following lines excerpted from T. S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' are typical of the verse form:

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels

You should take note of the varied/irregular line lengths, the absence of a consciously contrived rhyme scheme, and the vague rhythm that approximates the rhythm of natural speech.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Why do you think this verse is referred to as 'Free Verse'?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Poetry is best enjoyed when it is read aloud. Certain features make this act of reading aloud possible. The three verse forms that we have just studied contribute in no small measure to the feel and texture of the richness of a well composed poem.

5.0 SUMMARY

The three verse forms – blank verse, heroic verse, and free verse – were copiously adopted by English literary giants like Pope, Milton, Chaucer, and T. S. Elliot in their poetry and this has contributed to the continued appreciation of their literary works. When applied creatively, they add a rich ambience to the overall quality of the poetry.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Identify the differences observed in the three verse forms studied in this Unit.
2. Define and explain blank verse, as a major member of poetry.
3. Discuss the characteristics of the heroic verse.
4. T. S. Elliot's 'The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock' is one of the best examples of the use of free verse in poetry. As such, assess how it employs repetition, balance and variation of phrases or parallel grammatical structure to create desired effect.
5. Discuss the differences between the blank, heroic and free verses.
6. Select any two poems studied in class and identify the type of verse by such a poem.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4: MOVEMENT AND SOUND IN POETRY

CONTENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit (3) of this module, you were introduced to three types of verses in English poetry. At the beginning of that unit, the place of sound in poetry is re-emphasised. This means that you must be interested in sound elements of a poem. Movement and sound characterise poetry. Poetic effects are produced by figures of speech (discussed in Unit 2) and sound effects. Thus, poetry involves sounds/musical effects. Poetry, more than other genres of literature, employs the music supplied by its language of expression. Poetry employs sound as a means of strengthening and vivifying meaning. According to Arp, Thomas R. and Greg Johnson

(2006:822), in poetry, musical quality is achieved in two ways: “by the choice and arrangement of sounds and by the arrangement of accents.” Movement and sound are injected into poetry by the combination of rhythm and rhyme. Rhyme is linked to sound.

We deliberately gave a little more attention, in this unit, to rhyme and rhythm, which are irretrievably bound to sound and movement in poetry. Do you know why? It is because this unit is centrally interested in Syllable, Foot and Metre, and their types. The three are closely related aspects of poetry and are primary co-determiners of sound and movement. For you to understand Foot and Metre, which are important bases in the analysis of a poem, you must first understand the Syllable, which is a principal defining factor in both. So, what are our objectives in this unit? The next section tells us.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

1. Provide a comprehensive definition of syllables and, with examples, explain the different types of syllables one could encounter in English poetry.
2. With copious examples, describe the nature/characteristics, constituents, functions and types of foot in English poetry.
3. Discuss the essential characteristics of the different types of metre in English poetry and identify the types as they occur in poems.
4. Clearly establish and define the relationship between syllables, foot and metre in English poetry.
5. Discuss how syllables, foot and metre facilitate movement and sound and contribute to meaning.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Rhythm and Rhyme

Rhyme is closely associated to sound. Rhyme generates a recurrent pattern of sound that introduces melody into a poem and improves its sound quality, especially when it is found at the

end of the line. Let us study the stanza below, taken from the poem, ‘The Raven’ by Edgar Allan Poe:

Darkness settles on the roofs and walls,
But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;
The little waves with their soft, white hands,
Efface the footprints in the sands,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Observe the end-rhymes – *walls*, *calls*, *falls* and *hands* and *sands*. Please note that rhyme is not a compulsory member of poetry. That is why several Christian hymns exhibit recurrent rhyming patterns but cannot be classified as poems. You need to understand that while several good poems possess rhymes, others do not. However, some of the poems which do not have rhymes are still acknowledged as great poetic pieces. Rhymes connect the lines of a poem and so add to movement in a poem.

Rhythm is the recurrent pattern of sound and movement. Note that each poem has a type of rhythm and “therefore prosody” (Crawford 1). According to Akporobaro:

Rhythm is sense of movement, which is bound up with the tempo at which the lines, or words of a given poem, are spoken. ... Poetry (exhibits) this sense of rhythmical succession of words or sense of units bound up with the emotional state, or mood, either out of which those words are written, or else given imaginative utterance by the reader (128).

Akporobaro adds that the ideal rhythmic pattern is hardly, but not, motionless. It is rather usually “active, moving and powerfully suggestive” (133). Thus, when we talk of movement, we refer to “*prosody* the rhythmic structure of verse” (*Collins English Dictionary*). Of course, you know that the difference between prose and poetry is rhythm. Defined in elementary terms, rhythm is the pattern produced by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables in poetry; pattern of stress. It also functions to reinforce meaning. For instance, Samuel Coleridge’s ‘Kubla Khan’ below displays an apparent rhythm. Why not read it aloud? You can tap your feet as you do so:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man.

3.2. Syllable

Poetry expresses itself through words. Every word is constituted by syllables. Thus, a syllable or syllables make up each word used in poetry. That is why it is important for you to know what a syllable is. So, what is a syllable? Let us start from a very general source. *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines syllable as “a single unit of speech, in English usually containing a

vowel, consisting of either a whole word or one of the parts into which a word is separated when it is spoken or printed.” Barber terms it “a peak of prominence in the chain of utterance” (7). He explains that the sounds produced by a speaker vary “with time” and go “continually up and down forming little peaks and valleys: the peaks are syllables.” Words like *sow* and *care* are respectively pronounced with one peak, which indicates one syllable, while others like *banner* and *tutor*, each form two peaks and so are individually made up of two syllables. According to Simarmatar, a syllable is “a unit of sounds which includes a vowel sound. All words have at least one syllable. A syllable is a unit of speech” (1). Therefore, a syllable is a single unit of spoken or written word with an obligatory vowel sound and optional consonant sound or sounds before and or after it. It is a single uninterrupted sound in a word. It consists of either a lone vowel sound as in *are*, *or* and *air*, or a combination of vowel or consonant sounds as in *art*, *kiss*, *painter*, etc. A word like *sat* is made of one syllable of one vowel (a) and two consonants (s and t) while *Saturday* is made of three - sa-tur-day. Each of the three has a vowel sound (a, u, and a) and a consonant sound (s, t and d).

3.2.1 Types

Our definition shows that there are different types of words based on the number of syllables contained in each. A word can contain one, two or more syllables. Consequently, there are single syllabic words like *at*, *to*, *are*, *bite*. They are made up of only one vowel sound. There are also multi-syllabic words which are constituted by two or more syllables. These include words like *ahead*, *teacher*, *wonderful*, *vegetable*, *association* and *indispensable*. Words are classified according to the number of syllable each contains as illustrated below:

SN	Type of Word	No of Syllables	Example
1.	Monosyllabic	1 syllable	Dog, car, at
2.	Disyllabic	2 syllables	Po-em, ho-tel, learn-ed
3.	Trisyllabic	3 syllables	Po-e-try, beau-ti-ful, e-di-ble
4.	Polysyllabic/Multisyllabic	+ 3 syllables	Miss-iss-ipp-i, in-do-mi-ta-bi-li-ty

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. Draw your own table and fill the spaces with monosyllabic, disyllabic, trisyllabic and polysyllabic words of your choice. Please ensure that the syllables, in the multisyllabic words, are clearly identified.

3.2.2 Stressed and Unstressed Syllables

Do you know that in the English language some syllables are stressed while others are not? That is why there are stressed and unstressed syllables. However, you must understand that technically, every syllable is produced with a measure of stress, if it must be heard. This means that the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables is the degree of stress. Abrams explains that “stressed” syllable is the relatively stronger-stressed syllable while the “unstressed” or “light” is the relatively weaker stressed syllable (168). Stressed syllable is also called accented

syllable while the unstressed is termed unaccented syllable. Note that syllables with greater stress are called long, strong, heavy or stressed syllables. Syllables with lesser stress are referred to as short, light or unstressed syllables. Based on duration, stressed syllables are longer while unstressed syllables are shorter. This means that one or more syllables of every word that consists of one syllable is/are stressed or accented. In pronunciation, the stressed syllable is accorded more prominence than the unaccented syllables. Let us use the words ‘a-head’ – aHEAD - and ‘won-der-ful’ – WONderful - as examples here. The second syllable in the disyllabic word, *ahead*, is stressed while the first syllable of the trisyllabic word, *wonderful*, is stressed too. The stressed syllables are written in capital letters in the following words:

1. YESterday
2. toDAY
3. toMORrow
4. comPLETE
5. interVENE

Conjunctions, typified by *and*, are usually regarded as unstressed syllables. For instance, in the sentence below, *the* and *and* are not stressed:

Destroy, the sun, and watch.

Again, in a sentence, which is naturally made up of words, given words and syllables are accorded more stress in relation to others co-occurring in the same sentence structure. For instance:

1. She RAN to the shop
2. Dan is DRIVing his CAR

The stressed syllables/words are represented in capital letters. Try pronouncing the above words. As you do, observe the difference between the stressed and unstressed syllables.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Identify the stressed syllables in the following words and sentences by writing them in capital letters.

- a. Module
- b. Lecturer
- c. Examination
- d. Certificate
- e. Application
- f. He sat on the floor.
- g. Dave is eating the food.

The implication of the above observations is that poems are fundamentally made up of syllables. Thus, “the most basic unit of measure in a poem is the syllable and the pattern of syllables in a line, from stressed to unstressed or vice versa” (Cooper 1). Syllables come in pairs of twos or threes and this is determined by the stresses in a sentence. Two syllables occurring together, or three in a three-syllabic construction, is termed a foot. It is important to know that “to determine which syllable in a foot is accented, we compare its sound with that of other syllables *within the foot*, not with the sounds of syllables in other feet within a line” (Arp and Johnson 841).

Did you note the relationship between syllable and foot? One more relationship, in English, you must be aware of is the close connection between stress and rhythm. Let us at this point study foot as an aspect of poetry.

3.3. Foot

Foot is a literary device in poetry. It is a vital measuring unit and contains one stressed and at least unstressed syllable. It is, therefore, constituted by stressed and unstressed syllables. Conventionally, the stressed syllable is represented by a vertical line (|) and the unstressed by a cross (X). Unstressed and stressed syllables are also respectively marked thus: \cup $_$. So many scholars have advanced the definition of Foot. First, Akporobaro holds that “the “foot” is the general concept denoting the special combination of stressed and unstressed syllables, which form the basic recurring rhythmic unit” (130). Second, to Abrams, “a foot is the combination of a strong stress and the associated weak stress or stresses which make up the recurrent metric unit of a line” (168). Third, Thrall, Hibbard and Holman define it as “the unit of RHYTHM in a VERSE, whether accentual or QUANTITATIVE” (202). In addition, Arp and Johnson consider foot as “the basic unit used in scansion or measurement of verse which usually” contains one accented syllable and one or two unaccented syllables (1664).

There are two common issues in all the definitions above. The first is that a foot is a basic measuring unit of metre. That makes it a constituent of the metre and that which is employed in measuring the metre. The second is that it comprises stressed and unstressed syllables. This means that it is a combination of accented and unaccented syllables. A foot is usually made up of one long or stressed syllable and one or more short or unstressed syllable. That is why the stressed syllable in a line of poetry determines the number of feet in such a line. In other words, a line of poetry possesses as many feet as its stressed syllables. Thus, in a line of poetry, the foot is the rhythmic pattern. One can therefore say that foot is the fundamental component of measurement of accentual-syllabic metre. In other words, a foot is the formative component of the metre and is composed of stressed and unstressed syllables. A combination of feet constitutes a line of metre. A complete poem is composed of metres, which are made up of a combination of feet. In other words, a group of feet makes metre and a combination of metres makes a complete poem. The next line is an exercise which is intended to help you articulate your understanding of all we have discussed in this part. Go ahead!

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

In your own words, define foot.

3.3.1 Pattern

English poetry consists of several metrical feet and the basic types are:

1. **IAMB**: unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable
daDUM [X |] [_ _].
Example: *behold, recall*
2. **TROCHEE**: stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable
DUMda [| X] [_ _].
Example: *speaking, garland*
3. **ANAPEST**: two unstressed syllables before a stressed syllable
dadaDUM [X X |] [_ _ _].
Example: *interrupt, on the road*
4. **DACTYL**: a stressed syllable before two unstressed syllables
DUMdada [| X X] [_ _ _].
Example: *Saturday, happiness, fortunate*
5. **AMPHIBRAC**: unstressed syllable followed by a stressed and an unstressed syllables
daDUMda [X | X] [_ _ _].
Example: *indifferent, reclining, the garden*
6. **SPONDEE**: two stressed syllables
DUMDUM [| |] [_ _].
Example: *heartburn, out, out*
7. **PYRRHIC**: two unstressed syllables
Dada [X X] [_ _].
Example: *on the*

Even a casual observation will tell you that while some feet are made of two syllables, others are constituted by three. This is because the English accentual-syllabic metre has two types of metrical feet. Both are identified and discussed subsequently.

Duple Metre is constituted by disyllabic (2-syllable) feet. A disyllabic foot displays alternating pairs of stressed (|) and unstressed (X) syllables. This is the most common type in English poetry.

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----|
| 1. Iamb | (iambic foot) | X |
| 2. Trochee | (trochaic foot) | X |
| 3. Spondee | (spondaic foot) | |
| 4. Pyrrhus/dibrach | (pyrrhic foot) | X X |

Triple Metre consists of trisyllabic (3-syllable) feet. In this pattern, single stressed syllables are combined with a pair of unstressed syllables:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Dactyl (dactylic foot) | X X |
| 2. Anapest (anapaestic foot) | X X |
| 3. Amphibrach | X X |
| 4. Molossus | |

These are the most occurring rhythmical patterns and are constituted by the metrical feet below.

Please study the examples below. The set is adapted, and slightly modified, from Arp and Johnson (2006, p. 842).

SN	Examples	Name of Foot	Adjectival Form
1.	<i>to-day, the sun</i>	Iamb	Iambic
2.	<i>dai-ly, went to</i>	Trochee	Trochaic
3.	<i>in-ter-vene, in the dark</i>	Anapaest	Anapestic
4.	<i>mul-ti-ple, col-or of</i>	Dactyl	Dactylic
5.	<i>True-blue</i>	Spondee	Spondaic

Did you observe that the examples consist of both words and phrases? There are two important things that should also guide your attempts at demarcating poetry lines into feet and you must bear these in mind. The first is that a foot is not always made of single words. The second is that divisions between one foot and the other in a line of poetry do not always take place between one word and another. Let us use the line (borrowed from Arp and Johnson 2006, p. 842) to buttress this point further.

I *want* | to *in-* | *ter-vene*.

Note the lot of the word, ‘intervene’, in the line above. It is a trisyllabic word. The first syllable of the word falls into the second foot and the second and third into the third and last foot of the line. Thus, the word constitutes components of two different feet in the line.

Also observe that the three feet line exhibits an iambic pattern as each foot is made up of unstressed [X] and stressed [|] syllables. Consequently, the line could be technically represented as:

[X /] [X |] [X |].

There are a number of further observations we need to make on the foot in the English poetry. First, the most common type of metrical foot is iambic. Second, spondee (a foot consisting of two accented syllables) occurs rarely in English verse because most polysyllabic words in the language carry a primary accent. In English poetry, a Spondee is usually made up of two monosyllabic words as |all joy|. Only one or two examples of an occurrence of real spondee in a

single word have been found and this includes [football]. More words, which are actually compounds made up of monosyllabic words, have been discovered and these are:

|Childhood|
|Heartbreak|
|Bookcase|
|Mayday|
|Wineglass|
|Bright-eyed|

A good example of a spondaic foot is found in Milton's line thus:

“Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou *deep, peace!*”

Moreover, entire poems are hardly written in spondaic pattern. The pattern could be found, as irregular feet, in lines written mainly in metres like iambic. When they appear within a regular line, they create a striking impact. It functions to create emphasis or contain a word which exhibits a stress pattern that is at variance from that of governing metrical pattern of the poem. It is present in lines where the poet intends to communicate rapturous or catastrophic moments as well as a speaker's state of amplified emotion. It could be feelings of grief, as in “Break, Break, Break” (Tennyson) or that of veneration, as in ‘Pied Beauty’ (Hopkins). Both poems are used as examples below:

‘Break, Break, Break’ by Alfred Lord Tennyson:

Break, break, break,
On thy *cold grey stones*, O *Sea!*
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

Tennyson's poem, above, is termed the most popular example of spondaic meter.

‘Pied Beauty’ by Gerard Manley Hopkins:

With *swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;*
He fathers-forth whose beauty is *past change:*
Praise him.

Furthermore, while two stressed syllables make up the spondee, two unstressed syllables make up the **Pyrrhic**. Thus, pyrrhic is the opposite of Spondee. The pattern usually occurs in classical poetry but is unusual in English versification. Some prosodists do not accept it as a foot because it is not constituted by accented syllable. According to Fowler, as quoted in Thrall et al. (394), pyrrhic is mainly symbolised by double Anacrusis, like “O my” as observed in:

Ō mỹ | M̄ari | on's ă | bonny | lass

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

1. Mention the major differences between the two types of metrical foot found in English accentual-syllabic metre?
2. Iambic foot and spondaic foot are given special consideration in our discussion of foot in the English poetry. Can you say why?

3.3.2 Functions of Foot

Does the foot play any significant role in English poetry? O yes! The foot plays a very important role within English poetry. It works to supply the fundamental structure required by a metre in a poem. The combination of two or more syllables produces musical rhythm. As a result, in poetry, feet supplies rhythm. Outside the repetition of given foot in verse, poetry will be the same as prose. Rhythm separates poetry from prose and rhythm is produced by feet. So feet inject elements of rhythm and thus musical quality into a poem. We can, therefore, say that the foot contributes considerably in giving poetry its overall character. It is the foundation of metre, as combinations of different types of feet make up various types of metre.

3.4. Metre

Poetry is mainly constituted by metre. Thus, metre is the primary constituent of poetry. In order to understand the meaning of metre, it is important that we examine more than one definition of the term. Let us start with Meyer H. Abrams, who posits that “meter is the recurrence, in regular units, of a prominent feature in the sequence of speech sounds of a language” (167). Let us simplify the definition a bit by giving more attention to certain defining terms. First, poetry, our primary focus in this course, is made up of series of speech sounds, consciously employed to communicate meaning in a pleasing manner. Secondly, the sequence of speech sounds is usually constituted by syllables. Remember the definition of syllable: “a single unit of speech” consisting of a vowel which represents “a peak of prominence in the chain of utterance” provided earlier in this unit; 3.1. What of foot? We have already established that it illustrates a given combination of stressed and unstressed syllables, which constitute the “basic recurring rhythmic unit.” Now, go back to Abram’s definition and you will understand it better.

Bergman throws more light on Abram’s offering. He delineates metre as “a regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables that defines the rhythm of some poetry” (1). The scholar adds that “these stress patterns are defined in groupings, called feet, of two or three syllables ... Metre is a combination of the type and number of feet it contains”. Bergman’s definition is more explicit, as it highlights the close relationship between metre and syllable and foot, as well as its role in creating rhythm, which is a major characteristic of poetry.

Our third definition, by Thrall, Hibbard and Holman, validates Abram and Bergman’s respective views as well as the attendant observations above. Thrall et al. posit that metre is the “recurrence

in poetry of a rhythmic pattern, or the RHYTHM established by the regular or almost regular occurrence of similar units of rhythm” (285). Our last definition here, by Arp & Johnson, further simplifies the entire concept of metre. In the words of the scholars, “meter is the identifying characteristic of rhythmic language that we can tap our feet to. When verse is metrical, the accent of a language is so arranged as to occur at apparently, equal intervals of time, and it is these intervals that we mark off with the tap of a foot” (840).

You must have noted that rhythm is a recurrent decimal in English poetry. It is already treated in Module 1 Unit 3.2. Please go back to that section, if you need to.

3.4.1 Types of Metre

Generally, there are four principal types of metre in European languages and these are identified and briefly discussed subsequently:

1. **Quantitative** is established by units constituted by regular sequences of long syllables and short syllables. It is the classical metre, as it is found in Classical Greek and Latin.
2. **Accentual:** the basic unit is determined by the occurrence of syllable marked by accent or stress, irrespective of the number of intervening unstressed syllables. This type of metre is used by older Germanic languages, like Old English versification and Sprung rhythm.
3. **Syllabic:** even when the accent varies, the number of syllables in a line is set. This metre is mostly found in Romance versification. It is also present in some other Romance languages.
4. **Accentual-Syllabic:** here, the metric unit is constituted by a repeated pattern of stresses on a recurring number of syllables. The number of syllables and accents are set or almost set. Since the 14th century, this type has been the principal metre of English poetry. Thus, in English poetry, the term, metre, refers to accentual-syllabic rhythm.

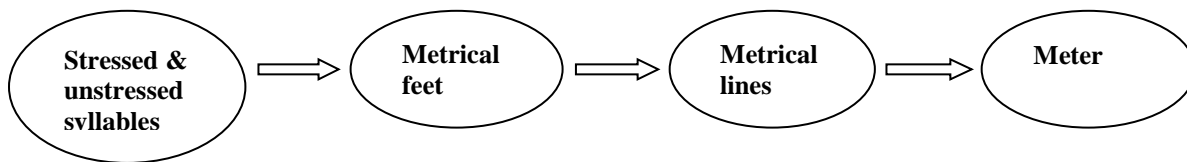
However, we must stress that some poems are metered while others are not. Presence or absence of metre is also used in the classification of poetry into types. From this perspective, three types exist. They are:

1. **Formal verse;** it has a strict metre and rhyme scheme.
2. **Blank verse** displays a strict metre but not rhyme scheme.
3. **Free verse** has neither a strict metre nor rhyme scheme.

Metered verse developed from the ancient Greek and Roman epic poetry epitomised by *Illiad* and *Odyssey* (Homer) and *Aeneid* (Virgil). Have you heard of the Homer and Virgil? Both are important because of their respective timeless offerings to the literary world. The ancient Greek and Roman epic poetry are long poems which were delivered orally and accompanied by music

in group settings of oral traditions at a time when literacy was rare and poetry existed predominantly, if not exclusively, in its oral form. The consistent or recurring rhythm of the poems facilitated easy recital of the poems along with music and memorisation of the words of such poems. Memorisation for recital of such long poems was necessary for the survival of storytelling. Metre is still an essential instrument of memorisation and that is why songs, nursery rhymes and children’s books employ it copiously. Contemporary poems, however, hardly use it. With the development of literacy, metre is more employed for aesthetic purposes and to differentiate the language of the poem from the everyday language of conversation.

Metre represents the structure of rhythm present in the lines of a verse. Most of the English verses are inaccentual-syllabic metre constituted by alternating stressed and unstressed syllables occurring within a set total number of syllables in every line. Metrical feet consist of groups of syllables, and so a combination of syllables is termed ‘metrical feet’. A total number of feet make up a line of verse. The noted relationship is represented diagrammatically below:



Thus, stressed and unstressed syllables make metrical feet and metrical feet represent the ‘building blocks’ of metre.

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

Provide your personal definition of metre. Please make it clear and comprehensive.

3.4.2 Poetic Metre and Foot/Feet

A metre of a line is determined and defined by the type and number of recurring feet in each line of a poem. The patterns below signify the number of stressed syllables in a line. The types of metres are indicated below:

SN	Name of Metre	Number of Foot/Feet per Line	
1.	Monometer	1	
2.	Dimeter	2	
3.	Trimeter	3	
4.	Tetrameter	4	

5.	Pentameter	5	
6.	Hexameter (Alexandrine)	6	
7.	Heptameter (Fouteener)	7	
8.	Octameter	8	

The names are derived from Greek prefixes and indicate the number of feet in each line. Thus, a poem that has six poetic feet in each line is written in hexameter; hexa means six in Greek. A metre that consists of five iambs per line is classified as an iambic pentameter.

In other words, a metre is classified on the basis of two qualities. The two elements are the “building blocks” of poetic metre. They are:

1. **Common feet present in poetry:** Iambs, Trochees, Spondee, Pyrrhus (Duple Meters) and Dactyl, Anapaest, Amphibrach, and Molossus (Triple Meters).

|||

2. **Common number of feet present in the lines of poetry:** Monometer, Diameter, Trimester, Tetrameter, Pentameter, Hexameter, Heptameter and Octometer.

Example: Clement Moore’s ‘The Night Before Christmas’ is a poem written in anapestic tetrameter because it has four anapests in each line. These are italicised.

Twas the *night* before *Christmas* and *all* through the *house*
Not a *creature* was *stirring*, not even a *mouse*.

You must have noted that the metric format of a line of poetry is determined by the number of syllables contained therein rather than the number of words in the line. The implication is that you need to read the relevant line to yourself and, as you do, pay special attention to the stress pattern in order to classify the line into the appropriate category - trimester, pentameter, heptameter, etc. Also, note that a poem may employ a single metre all through. Different places of the same poem can also employ different metres. Thus, one could find different metres at different lines of the same poem.

Remember that we have already established that the most common type of metrical foot in English poetry is iambic, while the French verse commonly employs tetrameter and Greek hexameter. Pent represents ‘five’, in Greek. An iambic metre employs five iambs in each line. You still recollect our lesson on foot. Remember that an unstressed and stressed foot is called an iamb. A line with five pairs of such syllables is therefore termed an **iambic pentameter**. In other words, each iamb is constituted by unstressed and stressed syllables. Each line of iambic pentameter has ten syllables of alternating five pairs of stressed and unstressed syllables. Thus, in iambic metre, stressed and unstressed syllables alternate as in the natural sound of English language and so it reproduces the sounds of the language. Therefore, the pattern is a versatile instrument and natural choice of poetic composition as it mimics the natural rhythm of a

language closely. Consider the following example of iambic pentameter (five feet; all iamb – unstressed and stressed syllables):

If *you* | would *put* | the *key* | *inside* | the *lock*
Da *dum* | da *dum* | da *dum* | da *dum* | da *dum*

Sounds natural? That is iambic for you! Iambic is employed by several classic works across different periods of literary history. It was popularised in the 14th century by Geoffrey Chaucer in his seminal *Canterbury Tales*. Shakespeare later solidified its status by employing the pattern in his classic plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*, especially for his upper class characters. His lowly characters usually speak in prose. Modern poetry, exemplified by Theodore Roethke's 'The Waking', still employs the iambic pentameter. This pattern is usually found in sonnets, which is made up of 14 lines and follows a very definite rhyme scheme. Most of William Shakespeare's works exhibit iambic pentameter. That is why his works and other such works appear both lyrical and natural. Take a look at the popular line below taken from *Romeo and Juliet*:

But *soft!*/ what *light*/ through *yon/der win/dow breaks?!*
It is/ the east,/ and Ju/liet is/ the sun./

Please, bear this in mind! Once again, **iambic** pentameter is a line of verse composed of five units of rhythm; five pairs of stressed and unstressed syllables. In the example below, the stressed syllables are italicised for easy identification and comprehension:

1. Roethke's 'The Waking' (1953):

This *shaking keeps* me *steady*. I should *know*.
What *falls* away is *always*. And is *near*.
I *wake* to *sleep*, and *take* my *waking slow*.
I *learn* by *going where* I have to *go*.

'The Waking' is a popular poem. It is a villanelle in iambic pentameter and is a modern poem that employs traditional metre strictly. Every foot is an iamb. Have you observed a rhyme scheme? Examine the first, third and fourth lines.

2. 5 Iambs (iambic pentameter) in Shakespeare's Sonnet 12

Shall *I* | *compare* | thee *to* | a *sum* | *mer's day*?
When *I* | *do count* | the *clock* | that *tells* | the *time*

3. 4 Iambs (iambic tetrameter); in Christopher Malowe's poem.

Come *live* | with *me* | and *be* | my *love*

Another common occurrence is a pattern of lines of iambic tetrameter alternating with lines of iambic trimeter. This pattern has been extensively employed in Wordsworth's Romantic poems, Christian hymns, etc. That is why it is tagged "common meter." Therefore, **Iambic Pentameter** and **Common meter** are two mostly used in English poetry.

Common meter alternates between iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter and is found in popular Christian songs and hymns like 'Amazing Grace'. 'Hope' by Emily Dickinson displays this type:

I've heard it in the chilliest land-
And on the strangest Sea-
Yet – never – in Extremity,
It asked a crumb – of me.

Do you know the song 'Amazing Grace'? Apply the tune to the poem above and enjoy your study.

Trochaic meter represents a converse of iambic pattern and is made up of a combination of stressed and unstressed syllables. A good example of **trochaic tetrameter** is given below and it is constituted by 4 trochees and 8 syllables.

Tell me | not in | mournful | numbers. |

Walt Whitman is recognised for his contributions to the development of free verse poetry. However, occasional metered lines are found in his free verse. The poem, 'When Lilacs in the Dooryard Bloom'd' below shows an almost perfect line of dactylic **hexameter** sandwiched between non-dactylic lines:

I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so tall.

Encyclopedia of poetry and poetics advances the examples below:

Dactylic hexameter (6 dactyls, 17 syllables, the last dactyl is substituted by a trochee)

This is the | forest pri | meval, the | murmuring | pine and the | hemlocks

Anapestic trimeter (3 anapests and 9 syllables)

And the sound | of a voice | that is still. |

Self-Assessment Exercise 6

1. The English poetic metre is classified on the basis of two qualities. Please identify the two “building blocks” with as many examples as you can give.
2. The Iambic pentameter is very popular in English poetry. Describe an iambic pentameter. Have you identified it in the lines of any English work?

3.4.2.1 Metrical variation

Metered poems (poems written in metre) could use same metrical pattern all through the entire poem. However, different metrical feet (types of meters) can make up poems that are written in formal or blank verse. The variation can also be found within a line of poetry. For example, to form variation in rhythm, accommodate a given word or produce a pause, an iamb, in a poem written in iambic metre, may suddenly be substituted with a trochee, which is another foot and opposite of iamb. The substitution hardly changes the general classification of the metre of the poem in question. The affected poem is classified by its principal metre. Thus, even when occasional trochees occur in a poem written in iambic pentameter, such a poem is still classified as written in iambic pentameter (not trochaic).

3.4.2.2 Metre and Metrical form

A poem can be written in metre but not have a metrical form; that is, it does not follow deliberate metrical forms like iambic pentameter or spondaic tetrameter. Different feet can be combined and metre can be interspersed at irregular periods all over the poem to create a pattern, a unique metrical form. This type of poem hardly follows any strict metrical tradition.

Before we say goodbye to metre, please note that “the study and use of meter in poetry is known as “prosody”” (Bergman 2019, p. 1). In English verse, metre arises from emphasis placed on given syllables and that makes it accentual. The analysis of metre can be done at different levels of a poem - foot, line, stanza and an entire poem.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Unit 1 of Module 2 of ENG172: Introduction to Poetry, has comprehensively discussed Syllables, Foot/Foot and Metre as elements of English poetry. You have been provided with adequate information on the three related concepts in a way that should trigger a huge hunger for further research in these aspects of English poetry. You can see that discussions are supported with ample examples in a way that makes them more practical. The implication is that at this point, you must have had a deep insight into the meaning, features, types and other essential elements of syllables, foot/feet and metre. If you understand the different sections of this unit, you have gained an understanding of a primary part of ENG172.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit functions to expose you to:

- The concept of sound and movement in English poetry.
- Different aspects of syllables as the building blocks of poetry.
- Bases for the classification of foot/feet in English poetry
- Types, components and features of foot/feet employed in English poetry.
- Name and essential qualities of the different types of metre in English poetry.
- The natural link between syllables, foot and metre in English poetry and their role in the meaning aspect of English poetry.
- Several examples of syllables, foot/feet and metre as they occur in selected English poems.
- Metrical variation, metre and metre form.

If you have followed our lesson to this point, there is no reason why you cannot comfortably attempt the questions in the next section of this unit.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Define the concept of the syllable and clearly explain the different types that could be found in English poetry.
2. Demonstrate your understanding of foot/feet by stating the major types and explaining, with relevant examples, their constituents.
3. The English poetic metre manifests multiplicity. Clarify the assertion, using as many poems as possible.
4. It is said that there is a natural relationship between syllables, foot and metre in English poetry. Examine this relationship and explain how it contributes to the success of a poem.
5. Examine the following excerpts, from John Donne's 'The Rising Sun' and William Shakespeare's drama *Twelfth Night*. What types of syllables, feet and metres can you identify in both?
 - a. Busy old fool, unruly sun
Why dost thou thus
Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
 - b. If music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,

The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again! It had a dying fall;
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound.

6. Identify and describe the type of metre employed in the first and last lines of the excerpt below. It is taken from the drama, *Othello*, by Shakespeare.

If I do prove her haggard,
Though that her jesses were my dear
Heart-strings

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 3 – ANALYSIS OF POETRY

UNIT 1: ANALYSIS OF POETRY THROUGH MATTER AND THEME

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
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1.0 Introduction

Welcome to Module 3 Unit 1. Module 3 is the last module of this course. This module is primarily interested in analysis. Before we engage Unit 1, it is important that we get close to Module 3 in general. This is because some foundational information is needed to provide a necessary basis for the various units of the module.

Generally, an academic examination of a literary text is called Literary Analysis or Practical Criticism. It represents a critic's response to a work of fiction. The goal is to explain or interpret a literary piece, including poems. It is therefore explanatory. Put in another way, the focus is textual study and this makes poetic analysis an exegetic enterprise. Poetic analysis is an academic activity and thus requires a scholarly approach. It belongs to the critical category and therefore entails detailed and systematic examination, evaluation, explanation, description and appreciation of a given literary (poetic) piece. Thus, we should study a poem - lines, stanzas and parts – to find and illuminate the ideas contained therein. Is that all? No! That is one major aspect. In addition, we will examine the selected poems to identify and classify the various methods/techniques and styles employed by the poets in conveying his/her meanings. This means that we are expected to study selected poems to demonstrate our understanding of the meanings encapsulated in such poems and how such meanings are communicated. Furthermore, it is our responsibility to determine how effective such techniques/styles are in relation to their contribution to the elucidation of poetic subject and significance.

To facilitate our work, we need to give a little more attention to guidelines for poetic analysis. This will make our task in this module easier and more effective.

First, Akporobaro, F. B. O. (296) provides us with an insight into what he considers essential aspects of the entire “critical process.” They are:

- i. Thematisation
- ii. Validation
- iii. Elaboration or Analysis/Discussion
- iv. Value judgement

I am sure that you are expecting some level of explanation in relation to each of the four above. Let us start with the first, thematisation. Every poem, as a literary text, has a theme/subject matter or concern/interest. A good analysis identifies and clearly states the central **Theme(s)**. It is also important to **validate** your statement of the primary idea, feeling, atmosphere, contained in and evoked by the poem using a reference in form of quotations (or paraphrases) from the relevant poem. By this, you have supported your view with a credible and valuable data. This makes your analysis more objective. In addition, a creditable analysis should **elaborate and discuss** the development of ideas/thoughts, feelings, mood, diction (language) as well as the structural composition of the poem in question. Please note that you need to keep the text in question, its creative characteristics and diction, in constant view in your discussion. It is at this stage that you are expected to discuss how the poem is constructed to create meaning and how the poet incorporates different materials and sections to generate the desired meaning. Lastly, your analysis ought to incorporate an informed view on the quality of the selected poem. In simple terms, it could be tedious, vague, insignificant or vivid, lucid, appealing. At this stage, you are engaging in **value judgement**.

Second, Arp, Thomas R. and Greg Johnson (903) add that in evaluation of a poem, three basic questions must be asked and these are:

- i. What is the central purpose?
- ii. How fully has the purpose been accomplished?
- iii. How important is the purpose?

For the scholars, to understand the poem, we should answer question i and evaluate it on the bases of questions ii and iii, which respectively evaluate the poem on a “scale of perfection (and) scale of significance” (903). On the second ground, a poem can be evaluated on the basis of how the elements are organised into a full original artistic system and contribute to the attainment of the primary idea/purpose. An excellent poem exhibits an original integration of ideas, feelings, sound, atmosphere and language.

The implication of the above, in summary, is that analysis of poems entails what is said and how it is said. You need to take note of a number of issues. First, theme, language, and feelings are considered important in analysis of poems. Second, an analysis ought to display consciousness of how the various elements are employed to form a whole poem and how they interrelate to elucidate the theme. Third, your analysis must make constant reference to be the poem under review. Again, it is important that you make an honest and informed statement of the merits or quality of the poem under examination.

The above indicates that Module 3 tilts more to the practical. That is why it also provides you with a number of poems to help you practice what you have been taught. Remember the popular saying: “practice makes perfect!” To effectively deal with the various arms of our poetic

analysis, Module 3 is divided into 5 units as initially listed. I am sure you are ready. Let us get to work. Unit 1 of Module 3 beckons.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit, students are expected to:

1. Provide a clear definition of theme/matter as a primary element of the poem.
2. Explain the position and role of theme in a poetic piece.
3. Identify and discuss thematic preoccupations of selected poems.
4. Explain how a given poet combines the theme and other constituents of a poem to communicate his/her meaning.
5. Make an objective and logical value judgement on poems.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Meaning of Theme (Matter)

First, we must establish the relationship between Matter and Theme, which make up our topic in this unit. Matter implies subject, and theme or question, issue; what the poem says. It is the substance of a poem. It is the real or vital meaning of a poem. It is closely connected to the idea/thoughts and experiences as well as sense or message of a poem. Thus, matter, in this context, refers to subject and theme of a poem and ideas expressed in such a poem. You can understand why this text will be incomplete if it fails to give a considerable attention to the concept and meaning of theme as a primary element of literature in general, and poetry in particular. This unit provides an appropriate opportunity for us to discuss theme and idea in poetry. Remember that this unit is practical and so you will encounter several examples in different parts. Please follow the examples closely and you will gain useful insight into thematic analysis of poems.

Every poem expresses some idea(s). To understand the dominant idea(s) expressed in a poem, it is vital to identify the theme(s). Thus, theme is essential to poetry. Barret, Sylvan (119) refers to theme as the “underlying idea” and this means the main, major or primary idea of a work of art. Jason Lineberger (1) defines main idea as “what the piece is mostly about.” The main idea of a poem is usually not as apparent as those of drama and fiction.

Theme is the main idea contained in a work of art. It is the significant universal idea or belief the author conveys about the subject of his/her work. It represents the poet’s view of his/her world or human nature. It is the fundamental issue(s) of a literary work and goes beyond the moral and purpose of a poem and covers the significant ideas prevalent all through a poem. The governing idea of a poem is usually represented in its main theme and perceived in the poem’s diction, atmosphere/mood, rhythm and tone.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. In your own terms, define the concept of theme.
2. What is the central theme of your favourite poem?

You must understand that the theme of a literary work is hardly expressed in one word and is usually not as explicitly stated as the subject. It is rather implied. This means that in analysis you need to examine a poem closely to understand its themes and interpret how it conveys such. Let us use Alfred Lord Tennyson's 'The Eagle', which is one of the most enduring and charming poems in the history of English poetry, to illustrate the point.

The Eagle

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

The poem above is rendered in two stanzas of equal lines; three lines each. The governing themes are ultimate freedom and detachment in the face of natural and existential forces, as perceived in "close to the sun in lonely lands." Its closing lines – "and like thunderbolt he falls" suggests the limitations of living beings. Also decipherable is the poet's interest in the dignity of existence, tenacity, strength; rendered in "ringed in the azure world, he stands." The poem also explores the idea of aging and attendant physical weakness as well as mortality. All these are found in the activities of the subject, the eagle. Thus, the eagle, which is a bird, is selected as a poetic subject. Then it is dignified, ennobled and employed by Tennyson to communicate his idea of doggedness and decline, as an inevitable destiny of every living thing.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Identify the stanza that best expresses the controlling idea in 'The Eagle' Please validate your answer with lines from the poem.

3.2 Thematic Analysis of Poems

In this segment, we are going to thematically analyse two remarkable poems; African and English. The poems are selected for their respective perennial appeal and contemporary relevance. The first is Niyi Osundare's poem, 'They Too are the Earth' and the second is John Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

Osundare's 'They Too are the Earth' is contained in his fourth collection of poetry, *The Eye of the Earth* and is reproduced below. I hope you know that Osundare is a Nigerian, of the Yoruba extraction, and one of the leading poets from Africa.

3.2.1 Thematic Analysis of Niyi Osundare's 'They Too are the Earth'

They too are the Earth

They too are the earth
the swansong of beggars sprawled out
in the brimming gutters
they are the earth
under snakeskin shoes and Mercedes tyres

they too are the earth
the sweat and grime of
millions hewing wood and hurling water
they are the earth
muddy every pore like the naked moles

They too are the earth
the distant groans of thousands buried alive
in hard, unfathomable mines
They are the earth
of gold dreams and blood banks

They too are the earth
The old dying distant deaths
in narrow abandoned hamlets
they are the earth
women battling centuries of
maleficent slavery

Are they of this earth?
who fritter the forest and harry the hills
Are they of this earth
who live that the earth may die
Are they?

Can you identify the major concern of the five-stanza poem above? Read it again, if you cannot! Can you observe the poet's interest in poverty and inequality? Did you note how the poor, weak and old are employed as subjects to effectively communicate alienation and inhumanity? You need to decipher the poet's indictment of the rich and powerful as well as his subtle advocacy for an egalitarian society. The poet's concerns display his attitude towards class and gender inequality present in his society.

To engage the above poem properly, we need to go back to Akporobaro's suggestion in the introduction segment of this unit. Remember that he advanced a four-step process of thematic analysis of poems. These are thematisation, validation, elaboration or analysis/discussion and value judgement. Our analysis will be mainly guided by the steps because the scholar's proposal is a simple guide to a comprehensive examination of poetic texts.

The poem, 'They Too are the Earth', is primarily preoccupied with inequality and alienation as well as undue abuse of the earth by human beings. Please take note of the two-pronged concern of the poem. It is for this reason that Godwin Doki (2009, p. 75) submits that the poem has a "dual thematic preoccupation." The poet uses the poor, weak, neglected and downtrodden as subjects. Moreover, the earth is also his subject. Both subjects of the poem are represented as victims of abuse and neglect. Inequality and poverty are expressed early in the first stanza in the "swansong of beggars" spread out in the "brimming gutters" and trampled underneath the "Mercedes tyres" of the very rich, who don "snakeskin shoes." The lines exhibit an obvious socio-economic disparity between the desperately wretched and the very rich. Both themes are invigorated in the images of the lower class as they struggle for their daily survival as servants - hewers of wood and drawers of water - and miners, alongside beggars. The several members of the lower class communicate Osundare's idea of the ubiquity of poverty and the emphasis on the class difference communicates his perception of the asymmetrical relationship between the rich and poor in his society. In the second and third stanzas are identified the undesirable fate of the poor; their "sweat and grime." This is even more encapsulated in the image of the miners "buried alive" in impenetrable mines and the lines best illustrate the consequences of poverty. Moreover, the "distant groans" of the trapped miners convey their lonely existence and death underneath the earth. Their isolation invigorates the sense of alienation. Have you observed how Osundare's ideas of inequality and poverty develop across the lines and stanzas of the poem and facilitate the exploration of the concept of alienation?

Furthermore, the poet's concern with alienation is intensified by the image of "the old dying distant deaths in narrow abandoned hamlets" and women living, for centuries, under the heavy yoke of "maleficent slavery." You must be conscious of how Osundare in these lines indicts patriarchy as an instrument of alienation and marginalisation and so interrogates his patriarchal African society. The poet here makes age and gender issues or matters of discussion and this further activates the universal spirit of the poem. So, what is the poem's major message? The central message is that the poor, weak, old, rejected and abandoned are, together with the privileged, all citizens of our world. The moral is communicated and emphasized through the oft-repeated line "they too are the earth." 'That is also the title,' you may say. Yes, you are correct!

Again, poverty implies deprivation, and alienation connotes abuse. The themes of deprivation and abuse are further conveyed in frattered forest and harried hills of the last stanza. By subtly chastising those "who live that the earth may die," the poem draws the curtain closed by communicating the effect of the wanton despoliation of the earth by human activities. The idea of death connects the earth to the trapped miners of stanza three whose blood was sacrificed that their more privileged employers may live in the lap of luxury. It also creates an atmosphere of disaster and sadness which is in agreement with the themes. Note that the alienated and the earth, subjects of the poem, partake in the same fate, as victims of oppression. Thus, the themes and ideas develop naturally and complement one another. It is easy to perceive Osundare's concern with the earth. That is why he is called a nature poet. Again, this is one of his poems which reveal his Marxist orientation. "How?" You may ask. Of course, by his interest in class matters and in the poor.

So, what is your view about 'They Too are the Earth'? the poem is delivered in simple, lucid language which enables the poet to convey his ideas and meaning clearly. For instance, read the

third stanza again. The endangered lives of the miners, and by extension, the poor, are clearly stated in “the distant groans of thousands buried alive in hard, unfathomable mines.” You can even hear the death groans of the subjects and see their mangled body in your mind’s eyes. You may be compelled to ask; “how much is the life of an ordinary Nigerian man/woman worth?” A good poem provokes questions and conclusions. Closely examine the poet’s depiction of inhumanity in “the old dying distant deaths in narrow abandoned hamlets.” Without saying so explicitly, he clearly and effectively communicates the negative outcomes of the late 20th century mass urbanisation in Nigeria and other African countries. This is a good poem!

Please note that the subject matter of a poem usually contains its central theme, which represents an abstract idea of life. The value of the entire poem is contained and communicated through the main theme. Do you now understand why you should identify the central theme of a poem as an essential aspect of analysis? You are expected to communicate the identified main theme of a poem in a clear statement that encapsulates its total meaning and your interpretation.

Self-assessment Exercise 3

1. What is your impression about the poem, ‘They Too are the Earth’? Please write it down.
2. Read ‘Farmer Born’, another poem by Osundare. What does the poem reveal about the poet’s background?

3.2.2 Analysis of John Keats’ ‘Ode to a Nightingale’

‘Ode to a Nightingale’

‘Ode to a Nightingale’ is a poem of 80 lines written by the Romantic poet, John Keats, and dated May 1819. It is a personal poem and one of Keats’ six major Odes. The poem is one of the best poems in the English literary tradition and that is why it is selected by this unit. However, it is not reproduced in this module, like others already studied. Why? As a student, you are expected to engage in research, and often too. This entails searching for relevant information. You are also told earlier that this module is practical. The implication is that you need to find the poem under study before you continue in this segment. Enjoy your research!

Have you found the poem? Please read it carefully and read it more than once so you can ‘hear’ and understand Keats better. The poem is employed by the poet to communicate his experience as he listens to the song of the subject, Nightingale. It expresses the deep thoughts and emotions of the poet, as inspired by the bird’s song. This means that the principal interest of the poem in the bird is its song. The Nightingale - its song - is the poem’s primary image and symbol. The song of the bird symbolises unadulterated and unrestricted beauty. It symbolises the communication between nature and people, whose interpretation and response to the messages of nature is respectively special and legitimate. Keats employs the bird’s song to communicate human experience in general. The major concerns of the poem are contradictions of life, escape from the pains of life, the power of imagination and immortality. You can see that all these are aspects of human experience.

‘Ode to a Nightingale’ has been described as an examination of the human heart as it is afflicted by contradictions of life. The poem centrally thematises the contradictions of the human existence. Remember that the poet’s experience is activated by the song of the nightingale. It

oscillates between the real and imaginative world. The singular experience enables Keats to cover both realms and express the relationship between the real and imaginative, as aspects of human existence. For instance, the song of the bird creates a momentary rapturous happiness and pleasure which makes the poet more conscious of the acute sorrows and pains of life. The interest is depicted in the bird's "happy lot" as perceived by the poet in its "melodious plot" which engenders his own pleasure communicated in his "being too happy in thine (bird) happiness." However, the apparent joy and liberty of the nightingale heightens the poet's awareness of "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" present in the daily existence of human beings. Thus, pain and pleasure are juxtaposed and evoked by the same song of the nightingale.

There are also several contradictions of our daily life encapsulated in the poem. These include life and death, mortality and immortality, life (real) and art (ideal), nature and human beings, waking and dreaming, freedom and bondage, permanence and change. Keats' profound attention to these contradictions hangs up a coloured image of the dilemma of life in a manner that suggests the pressure or anxiety such contradictions exert on the mind of the human being. The need for escape, therefore, becomes a natural response to such unease. You need to take note of how the poem, as it develops, creates a natural association between its primary issues. Thus, its attention to the contradictions of life facilitates and justifies its exploration of the concept of escapism.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

Can you identify other contradictions of life expressed in 'Ode to a Nightingale'? What are they?

Furthermore, the poem is interested in escapism. It explores the idea of escaping from the intolerable pains of the poet's existential reality. The pain is communicated in the first line of the poem in "my heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains my senses". Please go back to the opening lines of the poem and try to gain a deeper understanding of the feelings expressed there. If you understand that it will be easy for you to see that the tragic human life is further given eloquence in the second stanza which describes the human world in the terms below:

Here men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs
Where youths grow pale, and spectre-thin and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrows
And laden-eyed despairs.

Please observe how the latter lines intensify the former and how both contribute to the development of the theme of escape. Both facilitate a clearer image of the poet's world and rationalise his desire to escape such existence. The concern with escapism, through death, is encapsulated in the revelation that "I have been half in love with easeful death." It is important to note how he uses language in the line to convey the attraction of death as a pain-relieving agent. The poet's feeling that such death would be a worthy experience is found in his wish "to cease upon the midnight with no pain." This again displays an attempt at avoiding pain and suffering and strengthens the theme. Thus, the escapist philosophy of the poem is communicated in multiplicity and this shows how fundamental the matter is in the poem. The escapist tendency of the poem is the main reason why Keats is termed an escapist poet. There is an aspect of this

theme you must not ignore. That is how the poem ennobles death and changes its negative connotation by painting death in bright colours. Death is assigned “soft names ... (and) now, more than ever seems it rich to die.” Thus, the idea of death is considered a “rich” experience which could liberate the poet, and by extension human beings, from pain and usher him into a painless eternal existence. The sense of death is, therefore, accorded positive treatment. The death-wish is suspected to be a response to all the troubles and frustrations of Keats’ life – bereavement, uncertain financial condition, unfulfilled love life, and illness. The addition of little details of the poet’s life is an indication that an author’s life could provide an insight into literary analysis.

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

Read up John Keats’ life and his poem, ‘Ode to a Grecian Urn’. Do you observe any relationship between his life poems – ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ and ‘Ode to a Grecian Urn’?

Another dimension of this theme you must observe is the poet’s realisation that one cannot escape from the realities of life. That is why he terms his imagination “deceiving elf” in line 74, after bidding it goodbye in line 73 with “Adieu! The fancy cannot cheat so well.” Thus, imagination cannot last. This again seamlessly connects to another concern of the poem, which is imagination.

The power of imagination constitutes another thematic preoccupation of Keats’ ‘Ode to a Nightingale’. Art involves imagination of ideal beauty. It engages in idealisation of the real. The ideal beauty, the “viewless wings of poesy” (stanza 4) can only be accessed through the power of imagination. Solely, by the act of imagination, engendered by the song of the bird, Keats experiences transportation to another realm which he can neither describe as “a vision” or “a waking dream.” According to Mutasem T. Q. Al-Khader, the song of the bird enables Keats to “transcend his everyday reality for a higher type of reality, which is his creative imagination” (1). Thus, the poem describes a conceptual experience without ignoring the real world. This dimension of the poem should help you understand the imaginative nature of literature as an art form. The issue again provides the poem with the justification for its close examination of the immortality and arts.

The poem also expresses the idea of immortality of art embedded in the eternal song of the nightingale. The timeless song serves as a powerful symbol of that element of immortality. Thus, the “immortal bird ... was not born for death” (Stanza VII), as its enduring voice has outlived several ears who also heard the song but have long gone. Both lines work together to establish the theme of immortality still using the bird’s song. This stanza again juxtaposes the temporal and eternal to demonstrate the contradiction between transience and intransience, in the brevity of life and perpetuity of the arts. John Keats here thematises a reality that should connect easily with every student of literature like you. Here you are in the 21st century, closely relating with Keats’ poem, but the poet is long dead, since 1821 (19th century). Several others who read or examined the poem have gone but the arts are still here, as fresh as the morning dew. Our own Chinua Achebe is gone but his art lives on. Let us further buttress the point with music, another popular art form, employed by Keats. Yes! By engaging the song of the nightingale, Keats infuses music into poetry and this combination illustrates the close relationship between different art forms. I am sure you remember the phenomenal Bob Marley and Michael Jackson. Both are

dead and gone but their works live on. This further establishes the reality that arts outlive their makers.

The poem is an expression of the poet's emotion. Keats extensive employment of a natural song of a nightingale to explore profound issues of life is admirable. 'Ode to a Nightingale' is an enduring testament of the poet's power of imagination. The poem displays Keats' ability to vividly describe nature and the complexities of human realities through the instrumentality of poetry and using a simple song of a bird. "Ode to a Nightingale" is a very remarkable and enchanting poetic piece.

3.3 Further Notes on Thematic Analysis of a Poem

According to Barret (119), to identify the main idea a reader needs to work with the acronym RPM. First, **read** the poems aloud, when you can; second, **paraphrase**; and third, locate the **main idea**, which runs through the whole poem. These questions can help you identify the thematic preoccupation of a poem:

1. What is the subject - love, death, patriotism, nature, etc.?
2. What are the themes and how do they connect to one another?
3. How are the themes highlighted and what are the dominant images?
4. What is the poem's artistic intention - entertainment or education?

We have used the term, 'main/central theme'. This implies the reality of minor theme(s), which represents the secondary or subordinate theme. They are less significant and less enduring. A poem with a central theme of war can also display other minor themes like betrayal, fidelity, etc. For instance, the idea of migration and attendant loneliness tangentially manifest in "the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home, she stood in tears amid the alien corn" in Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale'. In addition, the prevalent issue of rural-urban migration marginally materialises in the "narrow abandoned hamlets" in Osundare's 'They Too are the Earth'.

Please remember that to engage in an objective and comprehensible thematic analysis of poems, you must deal with the entire poem. The overall idea and meaning of a poem is condensed in the entire poem. Every line of a good poem advances the theme and message of the piece and contributes to the development of such. Senanu, K. E. and T. Vincent (15) hold that:

A basic principle of organising or structuring meaning in poetry ... is that it is the entire poem which means something. In a successful poem, therefore, there is unity and coherence, whereby the parts throw light on one another and the poem as a whole.

Self-Assessment Exercise 6

Read David Herbert Lawrence's 'Snake'. What are the major and minor themes of the poem?

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, we have dedicated a lot of time and space to the analysis of poems, from a thematic perspective. The unit has defined and explained the concept of matter/sense/theme, especially as it relates to poetry. It has also engaged in practical analysis of selected poems (African and English) to demonstrate the topic under study, which demands a practical approach. In addition, this segment has given you some practical tips on how to analyse poems thematically. Furthermore, the unit has provided six self-assessment exercises to enable you practice independently. Please do not ignore the exercises. Remember the old saying: "practice makes perfect." As we conclude this unit, we must emphasise the need for you to read any poem you are required to study consciously and cautiously. This is the best way to read a poet's lips and understand the meaning s/he communicates. Thematic analysis of poem is a crucial aspect of ENG172: Introduction to Poetry. The implication is that you must take it seriously because it is a serious business.

5.0 Summary

The primary purpose of Unit 1 of Module 3 is to help you acquire the analytical skills towards identifying and discussing the matter/sense of poems. The aim of the unit is to teach you, especially in practical terms, how to undertake a thematic analysis of poems. Thus, it has:

- Defined and explained the concept of theme (matter/sense) in poetry.
- Discussed the essential aspects of the total critical process.
- Identified three basic questions necessary in an examination of a poem.
- Comprehensively analysed matter/sense encapsulated in selected African and English poems.
- Provided further notes on thematic analysis of poems.
- Included six self-assessment exercises.

6.0 Tutor-marked assignments

1. Define and explain the term theme and matter/sense.
2. Using ample examples, discuss the importance of theme as a major element of literature, especially poetry.
3. What are the primary preoccupations of Niyi Osundare in the poem 'They Too Are the Earth'?
4. John Keats' poem 'Ode to a Nightingale' has been generally described as a close examination of the reality of the human existence. Discuss this.
5. Explain, in detail, how the subject of Alfred Lord Tennyson's 'The Eagle' facilitates the poet's expression of his meaning.

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UNIT 2: ANALYSIS OF POETRY THROUGH MANNER AND METHOD

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1.0 Introduction

This is Unit 2 of Module 3. This unit, like its predecessor, is interested in analysis and that means examination of poems. Remember that critical appreciation or analysis is, in simple terms, a systematic process of analysing/evaluating/examining a literary text in order to understand it better and help others understand it too. Literary analysis examines the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of a literary text. In other words, it is interested in what the author says and how s/he says such. Unit 1 of Module 3 covers such analysis, from the perspective of the issues discussed (matter) and attendant sense (meaning). In other words, the previous unit is interested in what a poem says and means. This unit is concerned with how a poem says what it says; the manner or method. Consequently, our examination covers form and structure, language, figures of speech/sound like metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, anaphora, rhythm and rhyme, onomatopoeia, alliteration and assonance. The analysis is equally interested in tone and mood, as well as imagery/symbolism. It pays attention to technique and style.

Literature is a formal process that involves employing a variety of techniques and styles to communicate thoughts and ideas, share experiences and create meanings. Thus, poetic analysis goes beyond comprehending, explaining and discussing the different types of concerns, shades of ideas and forms of import contained in a text. It also involves observing and establishing how the interests and ideas are communicated and how different elements and techniques of poetry interrelate to create meanings. This means how the devices are used to reveal portions of human experience in a text. Poetic analysis offers perceptions and insights for better comprehension and appreciation of poems. Thus, how ideas and meanings are communicated and created become an essential issue in analysis. You need to understand that meaning represents the overall effect of the poem on the reader and the meaning engendered by a poem depends largely on the poet’s employment of literary resources, elements and techniques. For instance, David Herbert Lawrence’s ‘Snake’, a remarkable 20th century poem, communicates the poet’s encounter, at his water-through, with a snake. The experience enables him to discuss cosmic concord by relating the impact of modern civilisation and consciousness on the human being, especially in his/her

relationship with other non-human living creations of nature, epitomised by his subject, the snake. To get his message across to the audience, Lawrence chooses the free verse form of the poetry genre. The poem is structurally constituted by six parts/movements. Then he employs several literary techniques, like personification, repetition, simile and metaphor, to say what he needs to say, in a manner that elicits the desired emotional response from his audience. For instance, using simile and personification - “like a god ... like a king” and “the voice of my education said to me he must be killed” - he ennobled the snake and displays the antagonistic attitude of the modern person towards the animal. In using these devices, Lawrence applies the attributes of the human being to the snake to express its value alongside its jeopardised condition. The various elements and techniques the poet employs facilitate an effective communication of the already identified ideas and meanings. I am sure that the example above has helped you understand why you must also pay close attention to technique and style in analysing poetry. The responsibility of this unit is to help you achieve a considerable degree of competence in analysing poems, from the viewpoint of manner/method and this is what regulates our objectives in this unit.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the meaning and functions of techniques and styles in poetry.
2. Determine how a poet employs literary devices to disseminate certain ideas and make meaning.
3. Comprehensively discuss the literary techniques employed in selected poems.
4. Make an informed and comprehensive comment on the style displayed in selected poems.
5. Determine how techniques and styles are employed to communicate themes in given poems.
6. Establish the role of language in poetic construction.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Meaning of Manner/Method (Technique and Style)

A poem communicates its theme/concern and meaning in certain ways or manners. Such ways through which s/he expresses his/her interest is called method. Method represents the techniques and styles employed by a poet to construct meanings and communicate ideas, feelings and experiences. A poem communicates its theme and meaning using a variety of techniques and styles. As a student of literature, your duty also entails identifying and discussing the techniques an author (poet) uses to develop his/her meaning. Technique, in this context, refers to how the poet creates meaning. It has to do with manner/method – the way something is done; specifically, the way ideas and meanings are conveyed in a poetic text. Literary techniques are “specific deliberate constructions of language which an author uses to convey meaning. An author’s use of literary technique usually occurs with a single word or phrase, or a particular group of words or phrases, at one single point in a text” (Davidson 1). Literary techniques work to accessorise a piece of literature to make it more pleasing and make the inherent message clearer to the reader. Fiction, exemplified by poetry, employs several devices to convey its ideas

and meanings more interestingly. There are two categories of literary devices – literary elements and literary techniques. The first is made up of obligatory constituents of a literary text like theme, plot, language, etc. The second is optional and includes metaphor, simile, images, etc.

The primary/common techniques of poetry are imagery, symbolism, metaphor, personification, motifs – sequence of symbols/images, feelings, colours. These develop significance across the entire poem. For instance, in the poem ‘The Casualties’, by J. P. Clark, the death motif includes “burial, grave, kwashiorkor, dead, wounded” and they facilitate an successful expression of his interest in the consequences of war on all. Most of these techniques often function to create meaning; usually by association – applying the qualities of one object to another to communicate some original information about it. Now, let us go over to style.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Choose any African poem and identify the major techniques used to communicate the theme.

The method a poet employs to communicate meaning, feelings and tone in a poem is his/her style. Leech defines style as “the way in which something is spoken, written or performed” (10). In the words of Abrams, style is “the manner of linguistic expression in prose or verse – as *how* speakers or writers say whatever it is they say” (312). Style is concerned with an author’s use of words. That is, his/her choice of words, sentence structure and arrangement as well as figurative language. A combination of these establishes the tone/mood, symbols/images and significance in a poetic text. It is “how the author describes events, objects and ideas” (read.write.think 1) The explanation below is very appropriate and thus beneficial. It should facilitate your comprehension of the concept of style:

One way to understand literary style is to think about fashion styles. Cloths can be formal and dressy, informal and casual, preppy, athletic and so forth. Literary style is like a cloth that a text puts on. By analogy, the information underneath is like the person’s body, and the specific words, structures, and arrangements that are used are like the cloths. Just as we can dress one person in several different fashions, we can dress a single message in several different literary styles. (read.write.think 1)

Poets employ various styles to make their different appeals and the style distinguishes one poet from all others. Each poet’s style is influenced by context and culture and his/her attitude towards the subject and concern. To further buttress this point, let us use J. P. Clark and Wole Soyinka’s respective poems with the same title – ‘Abiku’. You must have read the two. If you have not, what are you waiting for? Go ahead and read both! This course challenges you to read as many poems as possible. Both Nigerian poets, Clark and Soyinka, explore the same *abiku* myth but display different attitudes to that same subject. In Soyinka’s, the persona is the *abiku* and his attitude and tone is almost impudent; but in Clark’s, the *abiku* is being addressed and in an emotionally pleading tone. The disparity illustrates the dissimilar attitudes of both poets to their common subject. Comprehension and interpretation of meaning represented in a literary text is largely influenced by the author’s style. A poem’s style involves all the choices – poetic

and technical - made by the poet to generate the desired significance and create impact that enhances the reader's total experience. Poetic choices include diction (choice of words), form (lyric, ode, ballad, sonnet, etc), subject matter and technical choices as punctuation, short and or long lines, rhythm and rhyme pattern, etc.

The poet can convey meaning through the preferred poetic form - sonnet, lyric, haiku, epic, etc. The forms bear implicit meanings. For example, ballads are associated with adventure, sonnets with love, and haikus with philosophy, while narrative poem tells a story. Epic is normally a poem about a national hero/great person. It is different from the mock heroic epic like Alexander Pope's 'Rape of the Lock' - which is a satire form. For instance, Ozidi saga, of the southern Nigeria Ijaw culture and Sundiata of the old Mali, as well as John Milton's 'Paradise Lost', are all classic epic works. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 'Paul Revere's Ride' is a good example of a narrative poem. In addition, a poet's style includes musical mechanisms like rhythm and rhyme. Consequently, a study of poems' method looks at various factors. In summary, manner/method closely examines the technique and style employed by a poet in a poem. It explores how literary devices are used to express ideas and create meaning. This is why, for you as a student of literature, unit 2 of this module is inescapable. To make things easier, you are provided with guidelines for comprehensive analyses of poems, from the perspective of manner/method.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Develop a personal comprehensive definition of style.

Practical Tips for Analysing Poems: Manner/Method

The suggestions below may help make your attempt at analysing poems less cumbersome and frustrating and thus more fruitful and fulfilling.

First, you **MUST** read the poem closely. Start from the title, which is the first clue of the poet's word choice you encounter in a poem and so it can influence your understanding of the poem. Find out the information it offers, the expectation it creates and how it helps you predict the content of the poem. At times, the category to which the poem belongs is included in the title. This is exemplified by John Keats' 'Ode to a Grecian Urn'. Some titles are satiric while others are suggestive of the content. For instance, 'Ozymandias' by Percy Bysshe Shelley suggests the subject as it goes back to history to tell a story of the very powerful King of ancient Egypt, Ozymandias (Ramesses II), to illustrate the transient nature of power/position, fame and success. However, the title hardly gives a clue to what the poet says about the subject. John Donne's sonnet, 'Death Be Not Proud' implies the poem's concern and attitude towards the perennial subject of death. Langston Hughes' 'Mother to Son' reveals the speaker and the person being spoken to. You can see that it will be helpful to find out if the title comments on the content and determine how the poet uses it to enhance the communication of his/her ideas and create meaning.

Analysing the technique and style of a poem requires identification, classification and examination of poetic techniques as used by a poet in the poem under study. To do this, you need to take note of these:

- a. Form (category): each category has its distinctive characteristics. For example, sonnet is written in 14 lines of 3 quatrains and a couplet.

- b. Structure: techniques used by the poet in arranging the poem on a page; like enjambment, repetition, caesura, and so on.
- c. Rhyme scheme: some poems are delivered in free verse and thus have no rhyme schemes.
- d. Figures of speech – imagery, metaphor, etc.
- e. Sound Devices like rhyme, metre, assonance, onomatopoeia, alliteration, and so on.
- f. Language style/Use of language: words employed for sound and meaning; like alliteration, repetition
- g. Word choices: word length, number of lines, images, senses, etc.
- h. Tone/mood: Tone reflects the poet’s feelings and attitude towards his/subject; his/her point of view and creates the overall mood of the poem; its pervading atmosphere, which is intended to influence the reader’s emotional response and facilitate an anticipation of the conclusion. This could be hopeful, ominous, vivacious, melancholic, bitter, condescending, loving, solemn, cheerful.
- i. Shift in the poetic experience.
- j. Opening and concluding lines.
- k. Impact of structure on meaning; changes in rhyme and or diction could tell of changes in meaning

Furthermore, to make your analysis even more comprehensible, you also need to pay attention to a number of issues. Consequently, identify the:

- l. Speaker, who could be the poet or another. For instance, the speaking voice in Okot P. Bitek’s ‘Song of Lawino’ is Lawino, who laments her husband’s alienation from his culture as a result of his exposure to Western influence.
- m. Movement and period covers the historical period (and persuasion) of the poem/poet. While John Keats is a Romantic poet and thus belongs to the Romantic era (late 18th to mid19th century), T. S. Eliot - author of great poems like ‘Marina’, ‘The Waste Land’ and ‘Journey of the Magi’, belongs to the modernist tradition (20th century).
- n. Purpose of writing, which could be to inform with facts, appeal to reason or emotion in order to persuade, entertain, etc.
- o. Literal meaning of words, which facilitates understanding of the primary ideas
- p. Connotative use of words involves deeper meaning/message/universal truth. For instance, the Ghanaian, Kofi Anyidoho, in ‘Hero and Thief’, uses words more connotatively than denotatively.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Identify the differences between figures of speech and sound devices.

Please understand the difference between form and structure. You need it to make an informed analysis. The disparity can be clarified using a painting or a house. Form is like a frame and canvass while structure represents the landscape in which the scene takes place. Form stands for a house, structure corresponds to the rooms (and Language represents the furniture).

When you have these details, you have the necessary information to develop a comprehensive literary essay. What next? We are going to examine two poems, from the stand point of technique and style. The poems are ‘A Poison Tree’ and ‘We Real Cool’. Both are selected for

their respective universal appeal and contemporary relevance. 'A Poison Tree' is one of the most popular poems of the eighteenth century English poet, William Blake. The poem is reproduced below.

'A Poison Tree' by William Blake

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe;
I told it not; my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veiled the pole;
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

Summarise the poem in your own words and identify the most recurrent technique.

Remember, you need to read the poem slowly, starting from the title. Examine the title closely. You must be curious. "A Poison Tree?" Can you anticipate the content through the metaphoric title? Both "poison" and "tree" are used symbolically to suggest a contaminated essence or substance. The image of a poisoned tree provides an early clue to the poem's interest in something unhealthy and harmful.

To start the analysis, let us first introduce the poem and describe its physical form and structure. 'A Poison Tree' was originally published in the 1794 *Songs of Experience*. It is a four-stanza poem with an aabb end rhyme scheme; (*friend, end; foe, grow; tears, fears; smiles, wiles, etc.*) this means that the poem has four sets of rhyming couplets; each quatrain constituted by a full rhyme. Each stanza runs into the next in a manner that creates a sense of 'one thing leads to another'. The observable cause and effect principle used by the poet creates a natural correspondence between actions, which develop over a period of time, and attendant impact of such. Thus, the movement facilitates the communication of its concern. 'A Poison Tree' has a predominant trochaic trimeter. Thus, each line has three feet and beat of DAdum DAdum Dadum .. Do you still remember syllable foot and metre in the last module? Look at lines 1 and 2.

*I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.*

Literary analysis also demands a concise synopsis of the text. Therefore, you need to understand what the poem is saying without ignoring how it says such. 'A Poison Tree' tells of a direct experience of the speaker; his/her respective relationships with a friend and a foe. That makes it a poem of experience. The experience is told from the speaker's perspective, thus, it lavishly employs the personal pronoun "I" and "my" in order to communicate that experience from its chosen viewpoint. The speaker was very angry with the friend. He/she expressed the feeling and it was nipped in the bud. Conversely, the same speaker was angry with his enemy but left it unexpressed and carefully concealed. The anger developed and ate the speaker up gradually and eventually ended in the death of the foe. The experience is mainly narrated using the past tense. However, it is concluded in the present tense thus: "in the morning glad I see/My foe outstretched beneath the tree." The choice of the tenses enables the speaker to recount a past experience without overlooking the attendant present event. How the poet says what he says should become clearer to you.

You must understand that your analysis can be enhanced by some knowledge about the poet's period and society. Blake lived in the 18th century English society where the state and church advocate repression of emotion while encouraging politeness and external tranquillity. Thus, his idea of self-expression departs from the controlling tendency of the era. The relationship of opposites within the first stanza could also be observed between his art and society. The poem, in this manner, becomes an allegory of suppressed emotion and its dire consequences on the society that promotes such tendencies. Based on this, one can suspect that Blake's style is influenced, perhaps unconsciously, by the discrepancy he observes between what should be the ideal and the dictates of his society.

A vigilant reader would have perceived that the poem is centrally concerned with the dire consequences of unexpressed human anger. It also deals with hatred and revenge. How does the poem convey these? The poem conveys these by using its speaker to introducing the subject of anger in confessing its presence in him/her. Then the speaker tells of the different attitudes to the emotion to the differing objects - friend and foe - as well as the benefits of expressing the feelings and repercussions of repressing it. The personae goes ahead to recount the nurturing of the emotion and the result on him/her and the foe. Thus, it vividly depicts the development and effects of anger, from the first to the last stanza, which represents the climax of such consequences. The concern is deliberately organised in the four stanzas to tell a complete experience, from beginning to end. Let us give a little more attention to the poet's use of stanzas. It is a significant aspect of his style. Please note that the stanzas convey different degrees of development.

The first quatrain introduces the subject and tells that the anger exposed vanished but the one repressed gestates. The second quatrain gives an update on the repressed anger. It is nursed "day and night" with hatred/bitterness and thoughts of vengeance. In the third stanza, it matures and bears fruit that commands the attention of the foe. In the last stanza, the entire process culminates in destruction of the foe, whose attempt at stealthily taking the fruit results in death. The last

stanza encapsulates the climax and conclusion of the poetic tale. Thus, each stanza signifies a major development in the speaker's state of anger. The movement is sequential and palpable. The poet employs the stanzas adroitly to present his concern and provide the necessary additional information that deepens the meaning of the poem. Significantly, the last stanza is also employed to display the foe as an enemy, in practice by his sneaking into the garden at night and stealing an apple. The speaker's gladness at his death makes him no better. That makes both of them guilty and this conveys the effect of anger on both parties. Consequently, the poisoned interpersonal relationship and its effect are systematically and sequentially portrayed in the four stanzas.

The poem represents a logical argument against suppression of anger. However, to intensify the meaning, the poem initially illustrates the gains of communicating the same emotion before it takes a destructive dimension in the first two lines. In those opening lines, the speaker says "I was angry with my friend/I told my wrath, my wrath did end." Please take note of how the first two lines depart from the rest. This will be discussed later. Having established the principal concern of the poem and the manner it is initially portrayed, it is important that we identify and discuss how the poem employs figures of speech and figures of sound to convey the identified experience and meaning. The literary devices employed by Blake to portray the consequences of anger include metaphor, rhythm and rhyme, imagery and symbolism, antithesis, alliteration, assonance, allusion, onomatopoeia, consonance, etc.

The poem is cast in metaphor. The mind of the speaker, contaminated by anger, is represented in "a poisoned apple" and this serves as the title. Therefore the poem has a metaphoric title. Moreover, the poem is an extended metaphor. The speaker's masked anger is a metaphorical tree which is planted in his mind – the garden. It is hence nurtured day and night and produces poisoned apple as its fruit. The result of the unexpressed anger is delivered using metaphor. "An apple bright" stands for the product of the speaker's nurtured anger. Metaphorically, the anger is planted in the garden of the speaker's mind and nurtured with fears and tears day and night and hidden behind deceptive smiles. His anger-garden bore a shiny apple which attracted the enemy who secretly gained access into the garden, plucked and ate the poisoned apple, and was found dead beneath the tree the next morning by the happy speaker. Thus, the consequences of repressed anger are largely communicated metaphorically.

The poem also employs visual images, and lavishly too. For instance, "and it grew both day and night"; "till it bore an apple bright" and "my foe outstretched beneath then tree," are all visual images. Please observe how the images make you visualise the pampered hatred, its fruit, and impact on others. The images, therefore, create vivid mental pictures of the "wrath" and its consequences in such a way that the reader 'sees' the anger lodged within. The use of images as such enhances the expression of the speaker's experience. In other words, the poem communicates its theme using images. In addition, the text contains images that are natural and connected to vegetation and some of these are tree, apple, water, sun and garden. Even day and night, growth and death are all natural phenomena. Through these images, the poem provides a vivid picture of the processes repressed anger goes through to become deadly; beginning, nurturing, development, result and consequences. Together, the images complement the poem's focus on human anger, which is a natural process.

Examine the first stanza again. Can you detect the poem's obvious employment of antithesis? This is another literary device utilised by the poem to communicate its interest. The first stanza of the poem portrays an antithetical approach of the speaker to the same strong emotion and their respective effects. In the stanza, the poet clearly displays his interest in the management of the human emotion of strong anger by depicting two opposing approaches as well as the impact of each on human relationship. That is part of his style. On one hand, the speaker discusses his/her feelings with the "friend" and it "ends." On the other hand, s/he suppresses the same emotion towards his/her "foe" and it "grows" and the effect is catastrophic. The poet thus utilises the antithetical construction as a style to demonstrate alternative attitudes: this is a lesson on a constructive approach to negative feelings. The two diametrically opposed approaches also function to express the duality embedded in the nature of human beings and this extends the meaning generated by the poem. Blake, therefore, externalises an innate human tendency using antithesis. Such construction offers the reader a broader image of the nature of anger and dramatises its capacity to devastate, rather than cultivate, interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, in that duality is found an apparent shift in poetic experience; from a constructive attitude to a destructive tendency. The shift is a method employed to illustrate possible responses of human beings to natural feelings. This also conveys a message on the concept of personal choice. Due to this contrast, the poem has been interpreted as an allegorical depiction of two sides of a human being – "peace" and "war," symbolised by friend and foe and "end" and "grow." The above explanations establish the poet's reliance on antithesis as a tool for communicating his concern.

The poem is structured on the principle of contrast, which is one of the techniques consciously worked into the poem. There is a combination of friend and foe, expression and suppression, morning and night, honesty and hypocrisy. Furthermore, the first two lines contrast with all the other lines of the poem, in terms of content. Again, the last two lines stand in opposition to all the others, from the perspective of tense. For instance, the complexity and hypocrisy woven into the speaker's nurturing of the anger contrasts with the simplicity and honesty of discussing it and getting rid of it. The simplicity is also symbolised in the brevity of the first approach; two lines. The juxtaposition emphasises the interpersonal conflict between the speaker and his/her foe. Using the contrast, the poet foregrounds the positive approach and raises it to the level of the ideal in order to present it as an antidote to unbridled anger, whose consequences are fully illustrated in the following three stanzas of the poem. This is one of the most important meanings engendered by Blake's 'A Poison Tree' and it is facilitated by the employment of principle of contrast. The first two lines of the first stanza suggest the best way to deal with anger while the rest illustrate the consequences of repressed anger on human relationships. The penultimate line is used to depict unexpressed wrath as the mother of vengeance perceived in the speaker's gladness at seeing the still body of his foe. Furthermore, the last line the poem fully displays the debilitating impact of the fruit of the poisoned tree in "my foe outstretched beneath the tree." Thus, the poem's appeal is further energised by the principle of contrast.

Please note the lavish employment of repetition of "I," "my" and "mine." The poem uses repetition as an instrument of personalising the action. By this method, the intrinsic nature of anger is defined and the attached secrecy dimension intensified. The focus on the person allows the poem to state its perspective on anger management as a personal duty of the one feeling the emotion. The personalisation is extended in the use of anaphora and parallelism "I" in every line

of the first stanza. In addition, the conjunction “and” is emphasised at the beginning of most lines of stanzas two and three. This literary device is termed ‘polysyndeton’ and functions to display how one action/thought leads to another. It, therefore, facilitates the communication of the sequential development of unexpressed anger and intensifies the themes and meanings.

There are other literary techniques which serve the poem in its attempt to communicate its theme and meaning. For instance, alliteration occurs in “I told my wrath, my wrath did end” and “sunned it with smiles.” *w* and *s* alliterate. Consonance is present in the italicised portions. Examine these: “... My wrath *did end*”; and “... he knew that *it was mine*”; “... *had veil’d* the pole.” Assonance – “And *I sunned it with smiles ... Till it bore an apple bright.*” The repetition of same vowel sounds energises rhythmic and rhyming patterns and enhances the tonality and musicality of the text. Moreover, the abab end rhyme scheme and the iambic metre pattern allow the poem to flow naturally and easily. Read it aloud again. The poem is easy to follow. It is pleasant to the ears and sounds like a nursery rhyme. These techniques essentially improve the aesthetic quality of the poem, even as they enhance the communication of concern and meaning.

The significance of the poem is also given eloquence by the inclusion of Biblical allusion. “Garden, tree (and) apple” and even the “foe” who “into my garden stole” at night all allude to Adam and Eve’s encounter with the serpent in the Garden of Eden and the subsequent loss of paradise in Genesis Chapter 3. This technique works to deepen the poem’s meaning as it articulates the consequences of the vice of anger. The moral message of the poem is intensified by the connection between the speaker’s anger-garden and the Garden of Eden. The biblical allusion makes the poem acquire a religious undertone of universal proportion. This is in tandem with the universal character of the theme and intensifies the poem’s perennial desirability. The tone of the poem is ominous, hostile, sinister and furtive, mostly achieved through the terms wrath, angry foe, night, stole, veiled, deceitful, etc. The anger motif is discernible in *wrath*, *angry*, *foe*, etc. The secretive deed, lodged in the mind of the poet personae, is effectively conveyed in the tone of the poem. It engenders a melancholic mood.

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

What does the religious allusion tell you about the poet’s religious exposure and persuasion?

No comprehensive literary analysis can afford to disregard language and choice of words because the primary tool of literature is language. Literature expresses itself through language. The poem uses words more denotatively than connotatively. The masked emotion is achieved through terms like fears and tears, sunned and smiles. This intensifies the poem’s view of anger as an internal phenomenon with external impact. We have already said that the poem is mainly cast in metaphor. The poem communicates in simple and short words, mostly monosyllabic and disyllabic words, which enable it to communicate the complex experience in a simple manner. Consider these two lines: “I was angry with my friend/I was angry with my foe.” Are they not practical definitions of simplicity? Blake’s lines, in the poem under examination, are reminiscent of Niyi Osundare’s poetic view that “poetry is/not the esoteric whisper/of an excluding tongue/not a claptrap/for a wondering audience/not a learned quiz/entombed in GrecoRoman lore” (*Poetry Is’ Songs of Marketplace* 3). Such constructions simplify poetry. The poem also

includes contracted forms; “veil’d” and “outstretch’d,” in lines 2 and 4 of the last stanza. The form parallels spoken speech and makes the poem more natural. The style corresponds with the content, which is a natural human attribute. Punctuation also serves to communicate meaning in the poem. This is used more for effect than grammatical correctness. How? Read the next line, please.

Self-Assessment Exercise 6

Identify how punctuation creates specific and necessary effects in the poem.

Blake’s language in the poem is simple, descriptive and straightforward. Critics agree on the simplicity of his language. For instance, E. D. Hirsch (275) submits that “Blake was capable of great verbal daring, but the hallmark of his lyric poetry is the contrast between the simplicity of his language and the complexity of his symbolic implications.” In addition, Cracchiolo, Margaret Anna (27) posits that “the simplicity of the poem recalls that of a nursery rhyme with a moral message ... a possible moral reading would be: if you are angry, do not repress your wrath or it would fester and end badly.” Indeed, it has a message. The moral is that hidden anger festers and destroys the carrier and human relationships, while discussed wrath flees and engenders internal and external freedom. The latter option has a therapeutic effect and the former a destructive effect on the individual and relationships. These angles are effectively communicated using appropriate literary devices.

The perceptive poem is concerned with a basic human feeling that demands proper management. It is an examination of the human person. The poem’s strength is ingrained in its concern with one of the major emotions of the human being and its consequences as well as its capacity to convey such convincingly. Therefore, “William Blake critically discusses the two opposing forces, uncovering the inherent weakness in human and the effects of these innate flaws through the use of extended metaphor and vivid imagery” (Ul Huda, Ali and Mahmood 81).

Another interesting poem selected to be studied in this unit is ‘We Real Cool’ by Gwendolyn Brook and originally published in 1960 volume, *The Bean Eaters*, which is her third collection of poems. Brooks is a multiple-award winning black woman who lived in Chicago until her death in December 2000. The poem is reproduced below. The subsequent analysis is shorter and less detailed than the first. This is because you are expected to get to work. The analysis only provides a guide. The implication is that you are expected to do a more comprehensive analysis of the poem, from the standpoint of method and manner.

‘We Real Cool’ by Gwendolyn Brooks

The Pool Players
Seven at the Golden Shovel

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die soon.

Self-Assessment Exercise 7

What do you understand from the poem?

This is an eight-line poem, in 4 stanzas of two rhyming lines each. The poem, which could be a chant or a song, succinctly describes the rebellious and riotous lives of a teenage gang; from being hip to ending dead. The short incisive poem primarily thematises juvenile delinquency and its consequences.

The poem's organisation is outstanding. It has an exceptional structure which includes an initial sub-title. The subtitle – 'The Pool Players/Seven at the Golden Shovel' – is a method that adds to the meaning of the poem by providing an initial setting for the poem's experience as well as an accompanying temperament. Please note that the meaning continues from one line to the next, without a pause. This epitomises enjambment. The poem is concerned with juvenile delinquency and its consequences. Brooks, in an interview, revealed that the poem was inspired by her chance meeting with a group of boys in a pool during her walk in her community. She adds that she thought: "I wonder what they feel about themselves?" Rather than speculating why they are not in class, she turned an actual scene into a poetic experience of 'Seven Pool Players at the Golden Shovel', by developing answers to the question she had wondered about earlier. Do you see how a common incident gave birth to a powerful poem?

'We Real Cool' employs end and internal rhyme. All the lines, except the last, end in *we* and there are rhyming patterns of *cool/school*; *sin/gin* and *june/soon*. According to Andrew Spacy (1), "it is the rhyme that binds together and holds tight, suggestive of the brotherhood of the gang." In other words, the rhyme functions as a lynchpin that ties together the entire poem and the technique collaborates with the subject to communicate the theme. It is also appealing to the young target audience, to whom the poem is primarily addressed. The musicality supplied by the rhythm is intensified by the poem's rap-like beat; an up tempo beat preferred by the young. The poem's musical quality and character may have been influenced by the jazz poetry convention developed by Langston Hughes, a popular American poet and leader of Harlem Renaissance. Jazz poetry has a jazz-like rhythm and adopts jazz music and musicians as setting and subject.

There are also other literary techniques used by the poem to convey its experience and create meaning. Alliteration is one of such. You can identify this in "lurk late; strike straight; sing sin; jazz june." Assonance is another as occurring in "sing sin; thin jin." These enable the poem flow freely and smoothly and enhance its musical quality. The poem also makes an allusion to the seven deadly sins, as perceived in the activities of the youth scattered across the four stanzas of

the poem. Again, the “golden shovel” of the sub-title, symbolises the flamboyant and care-free lifestyle of the seven youths which invites the shovel to cover the early graves.

All the lines, apart from the last, end in the first person plural pronoun, “we.” This is a deliberate style included for emphasis. It calls attention to the boys, the subject. The pronoun functions to keep them in focus, in the middle, from beginning to the end of the poem. The reader is informed about the activities of the *we* in the next line, after each “we.” Please examine the last stanza again - “We/die soon.” Is it not shocking, in its suddenness and disparity from the other lines? In it, the poem employs surprise as a method of conveying the result of youthful recklessness. It is almost unexpected, especially in comparison to the vivacity and arrogance of the preceding lines. That part represents the climax and vividly illustrates the consequences of juvenile delinquency. The line communicates in an abrupt manner that gives a clear lesson on self-consciousness and the price of human choices. The poem, through the line, seems to say that dropping out of school and living a wild street life is everything but cool and leads to doom.

What is your view of the language of the poem? Is it not brusque and almost brutal? Yes! That is the language of the young and daring. It is in tandem with the uncouth behaviour of the subject. The language portrays some lack of adequate education arising from dropping out of school. Consider “we real cool.” Language of the street! Reflected in the poem is the language of gangsters exuding daredevilry and audaciousness. The tone is flippant, excited, defiant and obstinate and portrays a devil-may-care attitude. The poem elicits a mood of alarm, worry, pity and sadness, especially in the last line. The poem is simple and short but contains a profound message with universal meaning. The poet’s success is embedded in her ability to discuss a crucial issue using few words and simple language. It is a poem a student like you should find functional, both academically and morally.

4.0 Conclusion

This unit has paid profound attention to the way a poet makes meaning. That is, how the experiences, ideas and message of poems are expressed. It has identified and examined how literary techniques are employed in selected poems. Unit 2 of Module four has looked closely at the styles manifest in selected poems and how these portray and enhance matter/meaning embedded in the text. It has also emphasised the nature and functions of these literary devices. The included self-assessment exercises have the responsibility of helping you understand the lesson by allowing you to test your comprehension of the unit intermittently. If you are yet to answer them, please go back and do so. Treat them like friends and you will gain from the relationship. Do not forget: “practice makes perfect.” Therefore, move towards perfection by analyzing as many poems as you can lay your hands on. Good luck!

5.0 Summary

This unit complements Unit 1 of Module 3. It is interested in analysing poems by primarily examining manner and method. The unit has:

- Defined and explained the concept of manner in poetry.

- Defined and discussed the idea of and method in poetry.
- Provided a comprehensive list of tips for analyzing poems from the perspective of manner and method.
- Taken you through a comprehensive examination of manner and method in William Blake's poem, 'A Poison Tree'.
- Analysed the poem, 'We Real Cool' by Gwendolyn Brooks, mainly from the standpoint of manner and method.
- Included seven self-assessment exercises.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. What is the meaning and essence of manner and method in literary analysis?
2. What do you consider as the controlling metaphor of the poem 'A Poison Tree' and why?
3. Identify and discuss the relationship between Blake and Brook's styles in 'A Poison Tree' and 'We Real Cool'.
4. How did Gwendolyn Brooks' employment of literary techniques facilitate the communication of experience and meaning in the poem, 'We Real Cool'.
5. Comprehensively analyse any of the poems studied in ENG172, from the perspective of technique.

7.0 References and Further Reading

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MODULE 3 UNIT 3: ANALYSIS OF POETRY THROUGH MEANING AND METHOD

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3.0 Introduction

Welcome to Module 3 Unit 3. I hope you have learnt a lot from the two previous units of Module 3. This unit, like units 1 and 2, is still interested in poetic analysis. However, it is concerned with manner and method vis-a-vis (that is, in relation to) meaning. We will examine how poems’ meanings are created by their manner/method. I am sure that you know that poetry is neither solely meaning nor method; it is both – meaning and method. That is why this unit studies poems from the angle of how meanings develop out of the methods employed by the poet.

Each poem says something. It expresses something using condensed language. That which it says has some measure of value, significance, importance or implication. It is thus meaningful. Those meanings are intricately linked to theme and conveyed using literary resources. The implication is that method and meaning have a symbiotic relationship in literature. Method is the vehicle used to generate and convey meaning. Our poetic analysis, so far, has respectively dealt with theme and method, in units 1 and 2 of this Module. A vigilant student would have observed, from the two previous units, that a poem’s concerns have further significance and implications revealed through literary devices – elements and techniques. This means that no comprehensive analysis can completely exclude one even when it is, principally, interested in the other. That is, analysis of poems, from the perspective of matter and sense, also treats, albeit marginally, issues of manner/method, and vice-versa. You can now understand why we said earlier that both are irretrievably linked. That close association is emphasised more in this unit. Consequently, meaning and method of poetry constitute the major concern here and the focus on both regulates our objectives.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the meaning and position of ‘meaning’ in poetry.
2. Discuss the relationship between method/manner and meaning in poetry.
3. Examine the relationship between theme and message.
4. Identify the meanings inherent in selected poems.
5. Identify, classify and discuss the method/manner employed in the selected poems.
6. Analyse selected methods, employed by selected texts, in relation to the meaning expressed in such poems.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Concept of Meaning in Poetry

Meaning is a word we use every day. How many times have you heard the question: “what do you mean (or) what is the meaning of that?” Have you ever asked yourself the meaning of the term ‘meaning’? Let us begin by engaging in a brief examination of the term, meaning. This will assist you in comprehending the content of this unit. Human beings strive to find meanings in different aspects of their world, existence and experiences. Scholarship also engages in methodical analyses, categorisations and explanations to discover and or develop meanings in relation to different fields of human endeavour. Arts naturally lend itself to indefinite interpretations. Literature is no exception. Classics like George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* and Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God* (fiction), William Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* (drama) and John Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost’ (poetry) have generated vast ideas, suggestions and implications, submissions and conclusions, in terms of the meaning contained in the texts. In literary analysis, we try to identify the messages embedded in a text. Poetic analysis is no different. It entails identifying and discussing the significance or implication enclosed in poems. This means that the poems have meaning contents.

So, what is meaning? Generally, the term denotes that which something signifies, suggests or designates. It is synonymous with sense and significance and related to implication. Michael Hauge posits that: “a message, by my definition, is a political statement. It is a principal that concerns people in a particular situation and is not universally applicable to any member of the audience” (1). This means the suggestions made by a poem could vary with the readers. It relates to each person specifically. Meaning is, therefore, the significance contained in a text as perceived by a given reader. That makes it subjective and particular. You can now understand why different analyses of one literary piece usually generate different meanings. This is because when two people read the same poem, they are likely to give two different interpretations. That is why Melissa Donovan says that “one poem ... can mean different things to different people ... the reader is left to draw her (his) own conclusions” (1). In other words, the same poetic construction can engender several and different interpretations and evoke different experiences. Please note that “the meaning of a poem is the experience it expresses” (Arp and Johnson 790). You also need to know that the human experience is constituted by ideas and therefore poems

also convey ideas. This is because the readers each approach the poem with his/her own different world of experiences.

In addition, poems convey experiences, ideas and emotions, from which several implications are derivable. The message of a work is usually expressed implicitly, or indirectly. It, therefore, exhibits complexity in its analysis, as it is constructed by the interface between several implications embedded in the elements and techniques of the work in question. The message of a poem is not readily identifiable. Why? You have been told already. This is because the message is hardly explicitly revealed in a specific sentence. Moreover, poems have hidden and deeper meanings or even tiers of meaning and that is what we are called to identify and examine through the methods used to communicate such meanings. Please always be conscious of the fact that responses to poems are elicited by the literary devices (and stylistic approaches) deployed by the poet. The same devices also give rise to different interpretations.

Self- Assessment Exercise 1

What do you understand by the term ‘meaning’ in poetry?

The above explanations must have told you that meaning, in poetry is naturally multifaceted. You must understand that the meanings discovered in a literary text may depart from the author’s intended meaning. Meaning, in a poem, could cover the poet’s intended meaning, the unintended meaning discovered by a careful reader, meaning provided by other works of the poet, or the poet’s life history and meaning suggested by the reader’s inadequate knowledge of the writer’s stories and other works. A poem can also generate several layers of meaning, as it can include deliberate secret and ambiguous, or even vague, meanings. Meaning is also subject to change across periods and regions. All these are different sources of meanings in a poem. In addition, analysis demands that we discover the meaning (what is being said) contained in a poem and why such is said. Moreover, some poems’ meanings are clear, others vague. There are also abstract poems. Your responsibility is to identify and examine the meaning elements of these. Thus, exploring a poem for meaning is an inevitable task in analysing poetry. Searching for meaning in poems is very essential, especially to a student of Literature like you. It entails a close reading of all the lines of the poem. Sometimes, you may need to read more than once to identify the hidden significance of a poem. Consequently, when it comes to the message of a literary text, you need to contemplate and to comprehend and this process cannot exclude the theme of the work.

3.1.1 Message and Theme

Message and theme are irrevocably linked but they are not the same, although both are, in many interpretations, used interchangeably. For instance, Lineberger defines theme as the “lesson or message” of a poem (1). A poem’s theme/concern/interest is noticeably different from its message/meaning or moral. So, what is the difference? Theme conveys universal truths that are general or common to all readers, but the message of a poem is hardly exact and relevant to all readers. K. M. Weiland (2016, p. 1) articulates the difference in simple terms thus:

Theme is a general principle, message is a specific example of that theme in action ... theme is the big stuff ... message, on the other hand, is found in the specific story situations that illustrate thematic principles. Your message is your story's theme in action. ... The most important difference to understand about theme and message is that theme is inclusive and message is exclusive.

For instance, if the theme of a poem is hard work and persistence, the message could be that a student who avoids hard work is courting failure and a miserable future. Thus, the poem, through the theme, appeals particularly to students. The poem 'Night', by the Lusophone poet, Agostinho Neto, "one of the twentieth century's most important African poets" (Pallister 137) can be used to illustrate this point further. The poem is concerned with colonial domination. However, lines like "dark quarters of the world," second line of the first stanza, suggest the living condition of Angolan people under the political and economic system of the Portuguese, who systematically impoverished and enfeebled the colonised. Many African countries, like Nigeria, even under colonialism, were not subjected under the inhuman urban life found in Angola. Colonialism is universal, but the impact is specific to the different countries, depending on who colonised them. Consequently, one of the main meanings of the poem, particularly to an Angolan reader, is the enervating impact of colonial control on the colonised and this derives from the theme of colonial domination. Thus, the poem generates specific meaning for readers from Angola, because of their peculiar experience and circumstances. Do you understand the relationship? The concern of a poem, which is inclusive, must be expressed in the message, which is exclusive. The implication is that while theme is relevant to all, message is relevant to specific readers and their particular conditions. In other words, the message of a poem is specific to each reader, while the theme applies to all readers.

However, there could be no theme without attendant messages. The theme of the poem is communicated through the message. This means that the theme is embedded in the message and the message in theme. Please take note of the relationship between both. Theme and message are inherently connected. Your analysis of a poem's message would be more coherent and incisive, and thus, beneficial, if it identifies the poem's moral and uses it to vivify the theme. Let us make this more practical by reading the seminal poem, 'The Vultures', by the Senegalese Negritude poet, David Diop. The central theme is colonisation of Africa by the British. So, what is the message(s). Please read the next line.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Read the poem 'The Vultures' and articulate the message(s) in clear terms.

From the above explanations and the exercise, you must have discovered that theme and message are not the same. A poem's concern is broader than the message. Theme is universal but message is specific. A message is a specific idea a poem elicits from the theme. For example, a theme of "religious bigotry" could have an attendant message that religious intolerance is a child of bigotry and leads to segregation and alienation. Literary works obligatorily have themes and the author's perspective and creative attitude to the problem, entrenched in the theme, is manifest in the manner such themes are developed. These also influence the meanings generated by such works. As a result, theme and message are naturally linked. The objective of reading a poem is to

discover some meanings. The meanings are also found in the form, structure and language of a poem. Poetic techniques function to communicate meaning. For instance, anaphora can inject emphasis, intensity or texture into a word or an idea to create meaning and implications. Consequently, message cannot be hacked out of method.

3.1.2 Message and Method

Literature operates subliminally; that is covertly. It makes suggestions, directly or by implications, communicated by literary techniques such as structure, form, repetition, parallelism, etc. Its messages are skilfully enrobed in imaginative experiences and conditions, poem, through literary devices, arouses intellectual, pragmatic and spontaneous responses of the reader. The message of a work of art is usually implicitly stated and characteristically implied by a mixture of methods, including contrast, metaphor, form and structure. Literary analysis entails a comprehensive examination of the suggestive or symptomatic intricacies of the literary elements and techniques like theme, language, images and symbols, etc. You can see that method and message are again closely connected. One cannot do without the other. That relationship is rooted in the fact that a poetic analysis should, obligatorily, examine how literary devices are employed to make meaning. That is why it is important to examine the method in the process of analysing the meaning inherent in a poetic text. This tells you the essence of paying close attention to meaning and method/manner in literary analysis.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Message and method are close associates. Explain the basis of that association in not more than 5 lines.

In the subsequent section of this unit, we will demonstrate the intricate relationship between meaning and method using two poems, ‘Still I Rise’ by Maya Angelou and ‘I’m Nobody! Who Are You?’ by Emily Dickinson

3.2 Literary Analysis Method vis-à-vis Meaning

The poems, already identified above, are selected primarily to help you improve your capacity to analyse literary texts, especially poetry. In addition, they are consciously selected to speak to you as a human being, towards helping you develop into a better person. The first poem, ‘Still I Rise’, elicits a more comprehensive analysis than the second, ‘I’m Nobody! Who are You?’ Did I hear you ask: “Why?” It is because the first functions as a model analysis while the second works as a guide, which will help you develop your own analysis, in accordance with our earlier agreement that “practice makes perfect.” Please pay concentrated attention to the poems and the following analyses.

3.2.1 Analysis of ‘Still I Rise’ by Maya Angelou

‘Still I Rise’ by Maya Angelou

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I rise.

Do you know that in 1994, Nelson Mandela read the poem – ‘Still I Rise’ - at his inauguration as the president of South Africa after 27 years in prison? ‘Still I Rise’ is a lyrical poem delivered in nine stanzas of unequal length and contained in Maya Angelou’s third collection of poetry, similarly titled *And I Still Sing*. The poem is generally classified as her greatest work and one of the best modern poems ever written.

Summary/Synopsis

‘Still I Rise’ articulates the feelings and attitude of the speaker, the poet, towards her oppressors. The poet, Maya Angelou, is a black female descendant of African slaves, living in an American world where she is denigrated on account of her race and circumstances. Nevertheless, she rejects her subservient status and sings the song that pronounces her victory over her circumstances. The poem employs various literary devices, including the lyric form, rhyme and rhythm, satire, metaphor and simile, to communicate its theme of triumph over obstacles of life, through self-assertiveness and self-confidence. Using this, the poem further constructs its messages of solid hope in untoward circumstances, consequences of discrimination, persistence and perseverance, positive attitude to negative conditions, etc.

The first stanza introduces the poem with the pronoun, ‘You’ and this is very significant. It reveals, and early too, that the poem is addressed to another/others. The another/other is an oppressor. Thus, unlike John Keats’ ‘Ode to a Grecian Urn’, the poem cannot be described as a private meditation. Then the stanza tells the speaker’s refusal to be daunted by the distorted history and low status ascribed to her by her oppressors, the ‘you’. The second stanza narrates her liveliness and self-confidence and the third the certainty of her victory. The fourth and fifth stanzas respectively describe how broken her oppressive world expects her to be and her self-confidence and vivaciousness. In the sixth stanza, her survival in the face of oppression is stated and in the seventh, her feminine powers and contentment. The second to the last reiterates the speaker’s resilience and the last speaks of new victory arising out of a painful past. The poem ends in hope.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

Summarise the poem, briefly, in your own words.

You need to understand the historical and cultural context of the poem. The speaker personalises black Americans. The poet, Maya Angelou, is an African-American woman and so she traces her history and, by extension, that of black Americans to “a past that is rooted in pain” and “ancestors” who are black slaves in America. Though born in post-slavery America, she experienced racial discrimination resulting from slavery. Again, she witnessed the several 20th century advocacy for racial equality by civil societies in America. The rebellious and audacious attitude of those black activists is apparent in the tone of the poem. Both experiences must have influenced her communication of her concern. The concern in turn engenders a number of meanings and these are communicated through the literary devices employed in the poem. Thus,

our discussion of the message/lessons/morals of the poem, in relation to methods, cannot afford to ignore its thematic preoccupation.

Message, vis-à-vis Thematic Preoccupation of ‘Still I Rise’

Let us start our analysis from the beginning, the title. Why not examine it again. Do you ‘see’ the concern of the poem there? Yes! The theme could be gleaned from the title. The title of the poem suggests triumph and that is the central matter discussed in the poem, ‘Still I Rise’. The adverb “still” is synonymous with *nevertheless*, *notwithstanding*, or *in spite of everything*. Of course, you know that “rise” means *stand up* and it is related to *overcome*, *prevail*, *conquer*, *triumph* and *surmount*. It says that the speaker, the “I,” prevailed, contrary to expectation and regardless of her intensely difficult situation, setbacks, hindrances and obstacles. This title elicits curiosity. As a reader, are you not eager to discover what the obstacles are and get more details on how the narrator overcame such?

Extending the message, partly revealed in the title and directed at another, the poem’s content, from the first stanza, thematises triumph, as a fruit of perseverance and persistence, over daunting obstacles and adversities of life embodied in slavery-induced racism and attendant hatred. Thus, it foregrounds its concern with prevailing against all odds thus:

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

In addition, the meaning implanted into the above stanza is stretched by the pronouncement of the speaker’s unexpected vivacity and sense of self-importance as well as its upsetting impact on her oppressor, in the following stanzas. These details solidify the central theme by demonstrating how she lives her life of “still I rise” instead of presenting an anticipated “weakened” posture demanded by her condition. Again, a related interest in dauntless hope, profoundly encapsulated in “hopes (which are) springing high ... with the certainty of tides” and in the likeness the sun and moon, is perceivable, especially in stanza three. This, once more, reinforces the theme of triumph best embedded in the oft-repeated “still I rise.” The pithy statement serves as a refrain and thesis as it portrays the speaker’s positive attitude towards her unpleasant existential condition. The dramatised hope inputs considerable value or merit into what should ordinarily be a meaningless existence. From this angle, the theme becomes more concrete and thus, meaningful, as an exemplar for readers whose existential circumstances are undesirable. The preceding argument is validated in the sixth stanza, which again adds more force to the interest and meaning of the poem, thus:

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

You will agree with Sangeetha (2016, p. 7) that the poem can be “interpreted as a call to assertiveness and pride for coloured people.” The implication is that as a Nigerian student, it should be very significant to you. Even as a black, you should raise your head and walk tall wherever you find yourself. That is the message! Thus, the poem is a lesson in the need for developing self-confidence and this is derivable from the theme.

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

As a Nigerian student, what do you consider the most inspiring line of ‘Still I Rise’?

The poem also displays interest in race and slavery, history, politics and non-violent rebellion. All these intensify the central theme by expressing the historical reality of the infamous trans-Atlantic slavery of 16th to 19th century, as a heritage of the speaker. They function to accentuate the inhumanity that stamps a marginal status on the speaker and justify her refusal to accept such. For instance, the gory tales and history of slavery, from the slave’s perspective, is adequately communicated in the last two stanzas of the poem thus: “out of the huts of history’s shame/...Up from a past that is rooted in pain ... Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave/I am the dream and the hope of the slave.” Again, the terms “hut,” and “ancestors” symbolise the pre-slavery rural African society, as represented by its housing (huts), and religion (ancestors). They are particularly but differently significant to Africans. For Africans at home, the terms signify the operational life disrupted by the Europeans, who facilitated slavery and divided the black race irretrievably. For Africans in diaspora, they could mean the total loss of home and freedom. The terms also imply their state of slavery and attendant alienation from an African root and even in the American home. There are three dimensions of our analysis you need to observe. First is how the same thematic preoccupations engender different meanings for two groups of people with varied experiences and existential conditions. The second aspect is the close interaction between theme and meaning. The third observation is how these meanings are implicitly stated.

If you have followed the analysis to this point, you will discover that the poem is a potent and invigorating statement on resisting racial, and other forms of, suppression, intolerance and injustice. Its interest in slavery announces hope to the oppressed and serves as a voice of reproach to the oppressor. It, however, speaks more directly and intensely to the marginalised and subjugated category of the human race. It is, therefore, more significant to a specific category of the human race. Consequently, one of the primary lessons derivable from the poem is that marginalisation and dehumanisation of a particular group of people is traceable to a sense of superiority and attached bias on the bases of difference: racial, ethnic, class, gender, religion, etc.

The poem is also a lesson in self-confidence and self-assertiveness. Another message is that the downtrodden, with the right attitude and conscious of their humanity, will surely triumph over all manners and levels of the apparent spitefulness embedded in slavery and oppression. It calls on the demoralised, the marginalised persons and class of the world to develop non-violent means of resisting humiliation, discrimination and injustice. From these perspectives, the poem has a universal appeal and is still meaningful to different classes of people. The meanings are conveyed through literary devices employed by the poem.

Message, in Relation to Its Method, of ‘Still I Rise’

The meaning of a poem, as well as its emotional effect, is connected to the form, structure and language of such a poem and these are established using literary techniques. It is important to identify these techniques. We have earlier established that the message and method of a poem enjoy a synergetic relationship. In other words, they have a mutually beneficial relationship. The meaning of a poem is typically implicitly expressed. This is fundamentally achievable through a combination of methods including form, structure, language, contrast, metaphor, simile, rhyme and rhythm, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, etc.

Maya Angelou’s ‘Still I Rise’ is a lyrical, autobiographical, African-American, feminist and political poem. You already know that a lyric poem expresses “the thoughts and especially the feelings” of the poet (Akporobaro 91). It naturally possesses a profound musical quality or tonal attribute which allows a reader like you to sing along. Lyric poetry exists prominently in the oral literature repertoire of several African societies like Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, in the present Nigeria. It is a common type in most rural/agrarian societies of the world. You may wonder why we accorded a little more attention to this form of poetry here. The answer is not far-fetched. We are discussing how meaning in a poem is enhanced by its method. Consequently, it is important to establish how the lyric form, chosen by the poet, enhances the already identified meaning of the poem. The form, by its nature and features, enables the poet to express her thoughts and feelings about slavery, as a female descendant of slaves in her stratified 1970s society of America. That is why it is also an autobiographical, African-American, feminist and political poem. The thoughts, in turn, reveal the theme of the poem, which is victory over daunting obstacles of slavery. The messages include that inequality, racial and otherwise, is a concomitant attribute of racial dominance and that, as an oppressed person, one must arise and overcome his/her circumstances in order to live a more fulfilled and satisfied life in a hostile world. Thus, concern and meaning are facilitated by the chosen lyric form. The form is naturally an appropriate means of teaching a valuable lesson on self-assertiveness and self-confidence, even in a dehumanising condition, using victory over slavery as a theme.

Furthermore, the arrangement of the poem enhances its meanings. The structure interacts with the form to convey meaning. In addition to suggesting the poem’s interest, the title, in its arrangement, is also significant. The speaking voice (“I”) is given a medial position in the three-word title. This places the poet between her undesirable circumstances as a “second class citizen” (Buchi Emecheta), a black descendant of slaves in a white dominated America, and her responsorial determination to conquer her world. The speaker represents the poet, Maya Angelou, a black American who directly experienced racial prejudice and intolerance in Arkansas and speaks from her own viewpoint. The title is, therefore, intensely meaningful to anybody living under oppression and suppression, as it invites such to “still ... rise” above such. It therefore becomes an effective means of introducing the concern and message of the poetry.

The poem is made up of forty-three lines organised in nine stanzas of seven tight quatrains and two end stanzas. The first stanza opens with an unidentified “you” and immediately recounts the “sins” of that “you.” The narrated grievous offences reveal him as the American white slave master. This means that the third person is not the reader. The pronoun complements the “I” as it identifies the receiver of the message. The “I” and “you” structure imposes a conversational appearance as well as protagonist versus antagonist scheme in which the speaking voice

(protagonist) directly addresses her oppressor (antagonist). The conflict in the poem is constructed upon this method. Therefore, the poem's lesson on the psychological and social consequences of a racially-induced asymmetrical relationship is conveyed through the method.

Note how the seven stanzas communicate the challenges of the speaker as a black American, with a crushing baggage of slavery and her attitude towards such. However, there is an apparent shift in stanzas eight and nine. Both are respectively constituted by six and nine lines. The alteration in the organisation of stanzas is accompanied by a shift in focus of the poem. In the last two stanzas, the speaker tells of the painful history of African slaves on American soil. By doing so, she recreates a common experience of the black race in the diaspora. The two deviating stanzas function as a tool of deepening the racial, historical and collective meaning of the poem. This group narrative extends the boundaries of her focus, from personal to communal, and creates a close link between both. The last two lines also function to provide a crucial background for the experiences conveyed in stanzas one to seven. Do you observe that both lines are cast in figurative languages? The poem's use of language exhibits a conscious choice that invigorates her themes and creates various associated meanings. In addition, the last stanza ends in three powerful stand-alone lines of "I rise." The repetition and terseness calls attention to the most important aspect of the speaker's thoughts, which is resilience. Those three lines represent the climax of the poem and the brevity and musicality of the selected diction communicates this with an unmistakable vigour. The same brevity is noted in the poem's preference for short words interspersed with only few multi-syllabic words like "sassiness" and "haughtiness." The result is that the poem is simple and easy to follow and this artistic choice facilitates a clearer expression of meaning. From the beginning to the end, the term "I Rise" is constructed into the blood stream and marrows of the poem and becomes her central message and an anthem for every black American and every oppressed citizen of the world. Do you observe how the structure is employed to communicate meaning?

The poem is suffused in figurative language that gives depth and vivifies its messages. I am sure you can identify a number of such.

Self-Assessment Exercise 6

Before you continue, identify at least 5 literary devices found in the poem under examination.

To communicate its meaning and celebrate her triumph over debilitating racism, 'Still I Rise' lavishly employs literary techniques like metaphor, simile, repetition, allusions, personification, hyperbole, synecdoche and metonymy. The poem is imbued with metaphor and simile. Metaphors like "I'm a black ocean. Leaping and wide (and) I am the dream and hope of the slave" function to describe the profundity of her indefatigability. The attribute is energised with similes epitomised by "but still, like dust, I'll rise" and "just like moons and like suns," "just like hopes springing high." The figures of speech convey a message of a dogged resistance to all forms and manners of suppression and intimidation towards victory. The black in the first line identified here alludes to her colour and implies her circumstances. In addition, the poem's invocation of 'moon and sun', which are natural elements related with the passage of time, communicates the certainty of her triumph in vivid terms. Again, a simile like "'cause I walk like I've got oil wells/ Pumping in my living room," resonates with many readers, as access to an oil well is a sure ticket to stupendous wealth. The image to a Nigerian like you is likely to be more

significant, what with several oil millionaires in Nigeria. The figure of speech lucidly communicates an essential meaning, which is that self-confidence does not depend on the fatness of the pocket or altitude of socio-economic status. and the message is interwoven into the theme of self-confidence. Thus, the poem's employment of the figurative language enhances the theme and message. Consequently, one can say that the messages are appropriately attired in fitting techniques.

I am sure you can identify the use of alliteration in the poem. Alliterative patterns like "does my sassiness upset you? ... Does my sexiness upset you?" serve as means of deepening the meaning content of the poem. Together with the proclaimed "haughtiness", the lines dramatise the speaker's energetic femininity and self-confidence as well as its effect on the oppressor. This animates the lesson of developing positive attitude even under negative conditions. Again, assonance, as a literary device, is employed in "welling and swelling" and "bitter twisted lies," to communicate the concern of the poem and attendant meaning. The first line, through the robust visual and auditory image of the rising tides of the "black ocean", displays the speaker's meaningful victorious rising from her disparaged existence, partly expressed in the second quoted line. These techniques, in addition, introduce musical properties into the poem by the repetition of consonant (alliteration) and vowel sounds (assonance).

You must have taken note of the personification of ocean and history as evident in "black ocean leaping" and "history's shame." Both solidify the message of soaring above humiliation created by the history of slavery, and by extension, prejudice. The same significance is again extended in hyperbolic terms like "you cut me with your eyes and you kill me with your hatefulness ... I am the dream and the hope of the slave." The exaggeration, as such, functions to convey resilience against all odds and this represents the principal message of the poem. Please pay attention to the violence entrenched in the verbs; "trod, shoot, cut, kill." The words effectively communicate different degrees of overt suppression in order to make the speaker's assertion of indomitability and invincibility more appealing to the reader. In other words, the poem uses the resources of language effectively. Consequently, the lines add more force to the thesis, "still I rise", as it challenges the reader to hope for the best and stand, in spite of the chilling hatred in his/her world. That is where the major meaning lies. Observe how method is employed to create meaning in the poem, 'Still I Rise'.

The text's deployment of poetic devices displays a conscious selection and combination towards effective expression of concerns of universal magnitude and construction of different levels of meanings for readers in specific untoward situations. Other devices like symbols and images, rhyme, rhetorical question and anaphora also facilitate communication of interest and significance in the poem. Anaphora tends to be the most employed literary technique of the poem. "I Rise," is the most repeated line and re-emphasises the speaker's ability to overcome the humiliation of racism. The concise line is very significant for its motivational quality. There is also preponderance of "I" and "You" and this intensifies the direct dialogue structure of the text. The style enables the poem to keep the protagonist in focus, without ignoring the antagonist. Did you take note of the rhyming scheme? "Still I Rise" has a predominant rhyme scheme of abcb; from the first to the seventh stanza. For instance, in the first stanza you have history/lies/dirt/rise. Please observe the b segment - lies/rise, similar to gloom/room, tides/rise, eyes/cries, etc., in

other stanzas. The rhyming pattern changes to abcc and aabb in the last two stanzas. Why not read aloud and enjoy the cadence? Isn't it entertaining? In addition, the alteration in rhyme scheme collaborates with the change in the poem's narrative focus as well as shift in the structure to tell the history of the black slave in America. Thus, it engages flashback as a method to intensify its theme through going back to the origin of slavery and associated horrifying pains of the incident. The two last stanzas, by vividly narrating the African origin of black slaves and their descendants, possesses special implication to black Americans and blacks in general. Moreover, the lines of the poem exhibits enjambment observable in "you may trod me in the dirt/But still like dust, I'll rise." The lines sound like a chant of the oppressed.

Furthermore, rhetorical questions feature several times, especially in stanza four. Let us examine it again.

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

You must have observed how the poet employs the questions to display what it considers her advantages and self-confidence as well as their discomfoting effect on the oppressor. This makes her message more pungent. For instance, she asks: "does my sassiness upset you?/ Why are you beset with gloom? ... Does my haughtiness offend you?/ ... Does my sexiness upset you?" This represents a trenchant attack on prejudice. The language is acerbic. Using sarcastic language, she mocks and ridicules her oppressors and renders their efforts at humiliating her useless. The use of interrogative language also questions the condition of the reality of slavery and the condition of Black- Americans. Therefore, the poem's diction enhances the expression of meaning. Note the effect of the hyperbolic terms in communicating her confidence and demonstrating the spoken "I rise." Her near-lighthearted attitude introduces humour into the poem.

To further convey self-confidence, the poem employs symbolism. Expressions like "you may trod me in the very dirt but still, like dust I'll rise" are very symbolic and serves as means of communicating the speaker's determination to use the dehumanising attitudes of her oppressors as a springboard for greater heights. Again, "oil wells, gold mines and diamonds" function to communicate the speaker's positive self-esteem. The deliberate choice of language and its effectiveness are apparent in these figurative expressions. They are affirmative statements symbolising rejection of racial discrimination and that is a lesson on developing a sense of self-worth, irrespective of perceived socio-economic and political limitations. Furthermore, "black ocean, ancestral inheritance "my ancestors" validate the 'Africanness' personified in huts and injects a large dose of a sense of Africa in the poem. This is meaningful in pronouncing the wealthy bequest, even when that is lost, of the culturally alienated and humiliated African-American blacks. Again, "sun, moon, daybreak" etc., symbolise time, also encapsulated in tides. Images of oppression and subjugation, epitomised in "did you want to see me broken?/Bowed head and lowered eyes?" equally beautify the poem as it conveys the speaker's refusal to accept the imposed downtrodden identity. The last stanza also makes allusion to slavery as "black ocean," referring to the black race, the racial identity of the African-American slave.

Self-Assessment Exercise 7

The poem, under study, also employs other poetic devices like metonymy and synecdoche. Identify these and how each enhances the message of the poem.

‘Still I Rise’ employs a combination of tones. The tone is primarily triumphant, proud and daring. It is also enchanting and inspiring as well as lighthearted but defiant, optimistic but acerbic, sarcastic, ironic, humourous/comical but angry. It exudes a celebrative mood that is in tandem with the speaker’s positive and contagious attitude as well as the themes and messages.

Let us end our analysis with a value judgment of ‘Still I Rise’ by Maya Angelou. ‘Still I Rise’ is a poem that speaks back at oppression and suppression and tells of injustices that deform the human world, like racism. The poem energises and ennobles the downtrodden. It is fundamentally animated by its sassy, defiant, brazen declaration of self- confidence, self-assertiveness and hope. It is a motivational poem that challenges one to turn pain into gain. Thus, it has an inspirational significance. The poem portrays inner strength in the face of devastating social and psychological circumstances. Her defiance and rebellion are fuelled from within, as indicated by “I rise.” That is why Sangeetha, S. (2016, p. 7) concludes that ‘Still I Rise’ is a “sublime, straightforward poem that acknowledges that we need not depend on anyone else’s opinion but our own.” In Barack Obama’s 2014 words, Maya Angelou is “a brilliant writer ... she was a story teller – and her greatest stories were true ... She had the ability to remind us that we are all God’s children; that we all have something to offer.”

The text is an inspiration to the contemporary blacks across the world. You know what? It is a poem that should accompany one on the journey of life.

3.2. Analysis of ‘I’m Nobody! Who Are You?’ by Emily Dickinson

‘I’m Nobody! Who Are You?’ by Emily Dickinson

I’m nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody too?
Then there’s a pair of us – don’t tell!
They’d banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!
How public like a frog
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!

Self-Assessment Exercise 8

1. Summarise the above poem.
2. Find out more relevant details about the poet.

The speaker is the poet herself and it is suspected that she is referring to her preferred private life. Even when she published, she did so anonymously. Perhaps, that preference for anonymity is what this poem is defending, in subtle terms. The first quatrain focuses on the “nobody” and the second on the burden of the “somebody.” In the first stanza, she states her obscurity and finds an associate in the reader who she assumes shares in her anonymity. She then invites the reader to a pledge of secrecy in order to protect their freedom from popularity. In the second stanza, she expresses the tediousness and busyness of public life and popularity as well as the attendant self-importance devoid of significant expressions. Using the image of the “admiring bog,” the poem describes the star-struck public that deifies the celebrities. You know what? In a world that glories in cheap popularity, enhanced by social media, it is remarkable that some value is identified in anonymity.

“I am Nobody! Who are You?” is a two-stanza lyric poem originally published in a collection with the title, *Poems, Series 2* in 1891. It thematises the advantages of anonymity as well as the pretentiousness and demands of popularity. The poem is delivered in a playful child-like tone and includes the reader in the poetic experience by making him/her a partner in a world liberated from energy-sapping popularity. It displays an erratic rhyming pattern, which is roughly abcb. Apart from line one, “I Am Nobody! Who Are You” oscillates between iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter. Do you still remember the lesson on metre? You need to keep it handy for a more informed literary analysis. Examine the two stanzas and you will know why the term ‘roughly’ is employed in the examination of the rhyme scheme. The text is a comical poem and satirises the pretentiousness and self-important postures of celebrities and the unmasked and collective adulation of their fans. In this, she accords positive meaning to obscure existence and teaches a lesson on humility and critical followership. It primarily employs short, simple and common words like frog, bog, tell, etc. to convey its meaning on the advantage of a private existence and conversely the burden of public life. This is very significant in the contemporary world of arrogant politicians, attention-seeking movie stars and athletes, and other successful and well-known professionals.

The poem’s use of language creates a bond of affinity between the poet and reader through the instrumentality of terms like “you” and “I.” This style and method engages the reader by giving him/her a considerable sense of self-importance, even when he/she is in the private domain. It facilitates the communication of gains of anonymity and thus, the poem’s meaning. It also engenders the poetic appeal of the text. The message of the poem is further conveyed using literary devices like alliteration, exaggeration, simile, anaphora, etc. For instance, “how public like a frog,” as a simile, functions to liken the public figures to croaking frogs. The comparison communicates the attention-seeking celebrities to expose and condemn their lack of depth, pride and arrogance. This intensifies the lesson on the burden of popularity and the value of humility. Is that all? Yes, but not for you! Please get to work. The above is only a guide.

4.0 Conclusion

Poetry employs literary devices to create meaning and discuss issues. Each poetic text portrays ideas, thoughts and experiences, which have the natural capacity to generate various meanings

for different classes of readers, based on their specific circumstances. The message of a poem is usually closely connected but different from its theme and is expressed by the methods adopted by such a poem. Meaning entails what a poem signifies or suggests; its sense or message. Theme is universal while message is particular. Do not forget that we earlier established that the reader of a poetic text makes his/her own interpretations and conclusions. Therefore, two readers can find different meanings in one poem, as the poem can suggest or imply different things to different readers. This means that meaning is relative and specific. In literary analysis, you are expected to illustrate how a given poem employs literary devices to convey messages. Your analysis must demonstrate the inevitable close connection between method and meaning.

5.0 Summary

Module 3 Unit four has:

- Defined and explained the concept of meaning in poetry.
- Examined the relationship between theme and meaning.
- Discussed the close connection between meaning and method.
- Comprehensively analysed how techniques are used to create meaning in Maya Angelou's 'Still I Rise'
- Examined the method/meaning link in Emily Dickinson's 'I'm Nobody! Who Are You?'
- Offered you 8 self-assessment exercises to enhance your study.

6.0 Tutor-marked assignments

1. Discuss the relationship between method and meaning using as many examples as possible.
2. What techniques did Maya Angelou use to convey her message in 'Still I Rise'?
3. What is Emily Dickinson's attitude towards popularity and public life and how does she express it in the poem, 'I'm Nobody! Who Are You?'
4. What are the similarities and differences between Angelou's "Still I Rise" and Dickinson's 'I'm Nobody! Who Are You?' especially in terms of form, structure, language and tone?
5. Analyse any classic poem you have studied, privately, as part of ENG172. Your answer must show the close relationship between theme and method.

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UNIT 4: FURTHER ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POEMS

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4.0 Introduction

This is Unit 4 of Module 3. Welcome! Module 3 is interested in actual analysis of poems. It is therefore, more of practicum than theory. The three preceding units have individually attempted to guide your steps on the road to objective and comprehensive analyses of poems. Unit 1 starts the journey from a thematic perspective. It defines and describes the concept of theme in poetry and provides you with robust guidelines on how to identify and discuss the major and minor concerns of a poem. The unit does this comprehensively and without ignoring the relationship between theme and message, as well as the obligatory and functional relationship between theme and style/technique. Unit 2 takes over in its interest in the style/technique of a poem. It therefore offers you practical tips towards a meticulous examination of the manner/method of a poetic piece. Thus, while the first unit answers the 'why' of a poem, the second responds to the 'how' of a poem. Unit 3 marries both aspects. In other words, the unit presents essential parameters for a productive study of both the theme and technique of a poetic work. It is, therefore, all-inclusive. If you have followed the three units closely, Unit 4 will not, in any way, be a problem. You will find it very helpful and easy to follow.

This unit necessarily intensifies what the three previous units of this module have offered you, albeit from a more practical perspective. As you have been told, it has its eyes on practice. It uses two carefully selected poems to re-emphasise and demonstrate the ideas and suggestions encapsulated in the preceding units and modules. The poems are 'Ozymandias' and 'The Snow Man'. The first was written by Percy Bysshe Shelley and the second by Wallace Stevens. Moreover, you have a set of three poems to facilitate your analysis. They are 'To His Coy Mistress' by Andrew Marvel; 'Siren Song' by Margaret Atwood; and 'The Starry Night' by Anne Sexton.

You need to understand that the selection of the poems is regulated by a number of factors, including concern, style/technique, author, age and influence. Does it mean that this unit is entirely about practice? It will be more accurate to say that it is largely about practical examination of poems. However, it also has a segment that functions as the door into that exercise. Unlike in the last chapter where theory occupies a larger space in relation to the two analysed poems, this unit gives a large chunk of its space to analysis, in a manner that places theory at the margin. Remember that this unit is primarily interested in practical examination of poems. It deals in actual study of given poems.

At this stage of your relationship with this module, you must have become strongly aware of the irreversible and irreducible link between matter and manner in poetry, and indeed other genres of literature. Your analysis should obligatorily display consciousness of that bond. This is irrespective of the interest – theme or technique/style. However, your essay's primary attention should be directed by what it is expected to demonstrate. For instance, you will not be expected to give the same level of consideration to theme and technique when responding to a question that demands thematic analysis of a poem. Nevertheless, your analysis is not expected to totally ignore the technique employed to convey the theme under discussion. You can see that both perspectives are mutually supportive and as such, the symbiotic association cannot be wished away by any study. This unit will therefore accommodate both aspects in its examination of poems. The exercise will also emphasise that permanent partnership manifest in works of literature, including poetry. Consequently, the aim of this module is to show you, more in practical terms, how to identify and discuss the themes and techniques of poems.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

1. Acquire an additional set of guidelines towards analysing poems.
2. Apply any or some of the recommendations in the analysis of poems, convincingly demonstrating how the poems convey themes and messages using elements and techniques.
3. Critique a poem's use of literary elements and techniques/style in relation to their effectiveness in communicating the poet's intentions.
4. Produce a comprehensive critical essay on a given poem(s).
5. Appraise, objectively, analyses (at least two) of poems, especially by determining the guidelines employed by such critical essays.

3.0 Main Content

You have been told that this is a practical segment of ENG172. However, it is important that we still take a few pre-practice details that will enhance our critical competence. You will meet some of the tips you have been given and receive new ones. The essence is to introduce you to further processes of poetic analysis before you encounter the poems in this unit. We are going to

depend on the suggestions of a few scholars to place you on a broader ground and you have a number of options to choose from. It is also intended to encourage you to engage in personal research towards developing the skill you require to become a seasoned literary critic. Remember that the 'What' and 'How' of a poem is at the heart of poetic analysis. Thus, the details supplied hereafter will display consciousness of both perspectives. A serious student will pay attention to both and try to develop an acceptable system of analysis.

3.1 Pre-Analysis Details

Like almost all fields of human enquiry, literary analysis follows some processes. Remember that a poem is an artistic construction. To objectively assess a poem, a student must engage in a close examination of the different parts of the poem. Each poem says something (theme) and that which it says has further implications (meanings). To say that 'thing', it selects a given form and, using language, builds a structure (technique). You must not also forget that the abiding relationship between form, structure and language could be interpreted using the house. The form could be likened to the house; it is the frame/canvass, while the structure represents the rooms, the landscape on which the episodes stand. It is the techniques employed by the poet in the construction of the poem. The language stands for the furniture.

The poet chooses a type of poem (form), such as sonnet, ballad, villanelles, dramatic monologues and dialogues, haiku and so on. Each form follows a set of conventions. For instance, haiku, as a poetic form, is a 19th century term for a 17th century development in Japanese literature. Haiku is an unrhymed poetic form comprising of seventeen syllables in three lines of five-seven-five. Examples of famous haiku poems include 'In a Station of the Metro' by Ezra Pound and 'The Old Pond' by Matsuo Basho. Have you met the two?

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Find the two poems and read each. Do they correspond with the above short definition of Haiku, and what is the primary concern of each?

3.1.1 Six Steps to Analysing a Poem

As you have been told, a poem can be analysed using some simple, easy-to-follow steps. Let us listen to some scholars. Condliffe provides a six-step approach to poetic analysis which you can adopt, partly or fully, depending on what you intend to achieve. This is represented below.

“How to Analyse a Poem in 6 Steps”

How to Analyse a Poem in 6 Steps

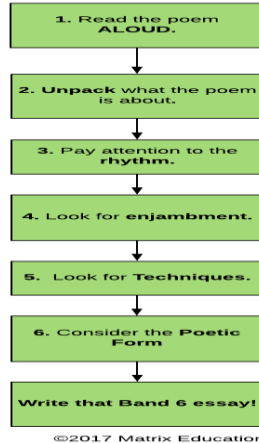


Figure 1: (Condliffe 2017)

First, **read the poem aloud** and do that more than once. Why would you do so? Simple! Sounds, (rhymes and rhythms) are important to a poem. That you already know.

Second, **unpack the poem** to know what it is all about. Poems describe objects, people, events, feelings, and experiences. It is, therefore, important that you find the subject by searching for the pronouns and proper nouns as they reveal the character in the poem. The subject whose perspective is portrayed in a play is the persona and is usually represented with the personal pronoun ‘I’. Do you still remember ‘Still I Rise’ by Maya Angelou, analysed in the previous unit? Why not pause here, go back to that poem and describe, in writing, Angelou’s perspective in one or two sentences.

Another aspect you need to give some time is punctuation. You can as well unbundle the stanzas and read as sentences in order to locate the meaning. Locate the motifs; that is, the recurring images and symbols. These are pointers to what the poem seeks to communicate. They are directly linked to the meaning of the poet.

Third, pay more than a fleeting attention to **Rhythm and Metre**. They represent the primary difference between poetry and other genres of literature. Poems go with sounds. Metre is becoming more absent in contemporary poetry but it is a major member of poetry. Meanings are also created in poetry using rhythm. Deviations from a chosen rhythm indicate significant idea in a poem. Examine an idea or image depicted at a point you observe an alteration in rhythm. Discussion on these will enrich your analysis. Go ahead and discuss them even when you find it difficult identifying the rhythms of a line or a poem or remembering their names. Do not let that discourage you.

Enjambment! That is the fourth. This is when a line of a poem is not stopped by punctuation (comma, colon, semi-colon, dash, period) and so spills into the next. Thus, a poem is described as enjambed when one line flows into the next due to absence of punctuation. It is an aural technique employed by the poet to create and communicate meaning. It could be employed to achieve a number of objectives in a poem. For instance, draw a relationship between two things,

differentiate two ideas across two lines, and foreground an object in either of the two lines. Your responsibility is to find out what the enjambment calls attention to.

The fifth step is **techniques**. Examine the poem's use of techniques. The meaning inherent in a poem is developed using a number of techniques. Thus, each technique is functional in some ways and to a certain degree. They are like servants performing given functions within a household. A critic needs to understand how these (common) techniques operate; what these represent within the context of the poem.

Lastly, the seventh step is to identify the **form** of the poem under examination. Poems are usually classified into forms. The forms have implicit meanings; for example, Haiku is connected to philosophy, Sonnet to love, and Ballad to adventure. Each has some conventions, which the poet follows or subverts.

In addition, Collins (2020) adds some more steps to the six above. He suggests that you examine the:

Theme: The central idea/interest and message of the poem, which is usually communicated through figurative language. The theme of a poem is closely linked to the subject matter. To identify the theme, examine the **content** and message. You may need to find the historical, social, political contexts

Language: Word choice and the arrangement of words, which influences the rhythm, as well as images. The language functions to create tone and mood in a poem. Examine the language: words are carefully selected and consciously employed by poets to create a desired meaning and emotional impact. Identify the importance and function of the words, especially figurative terms. Find out their meaning and how they contribute to the development and meaning content of the poem.

Structure: Poems are presented in lines and stanzas. It also employs line breaks, rhythm patterns, punctuation and pauses. All these determine how you read a poem.

Context: Who, what, why, where and when, together, reveal the context of the poem. The purpose of the poem manifests in these. You should know that these are the 5W Questions method.

Let us go a bit further. Look at the next set of ten steps! You will find it helpful. As you study it, find out areas of relationships (similarities and differences) between its content and what you already have above. This will help you determine what is most important and thus, where you need to accord more attention in your analysis of poems.

3.1.2 Ten Steps to Unseen Poem



Figure 2: Ten Steps to Unseen Poem (Bruff, 2018)

Furthermore, you must have observed that the suggestions provided above, that is, members of the steps, fall into the already two identified broad areas of what is said (theme and subject) and how (style/technique) it is said. Take a close look at the diagram below. You will find various aspects of the steps organised under their classes and sub-classes of 'what' and 'how' of a poem.

3.1.3 Analysing Poetry

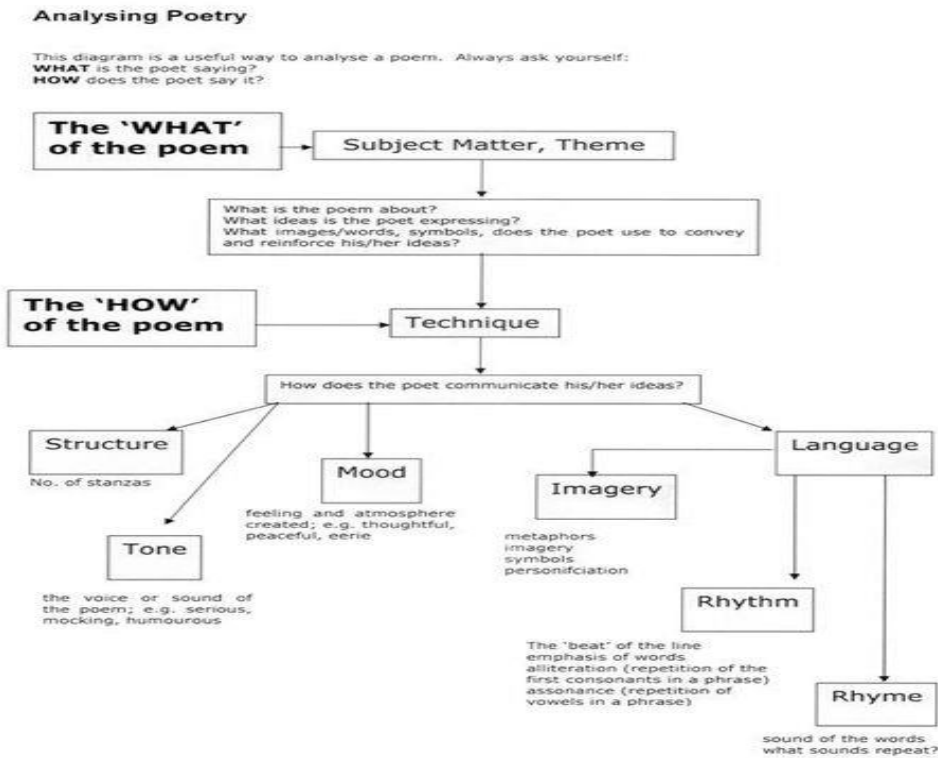


Figure 3: (Brown 2020)

The illustration above is self-explicit, is it not? Nevertheless, some students still grapple with certain aspects of technique. For instance, a good number of students can hardly differentiate between tone and mood. This is because both are closely related, are connected to the emotions a poem evokes, and are similar in nature, even when they are different. Please take note of the distinction between both.

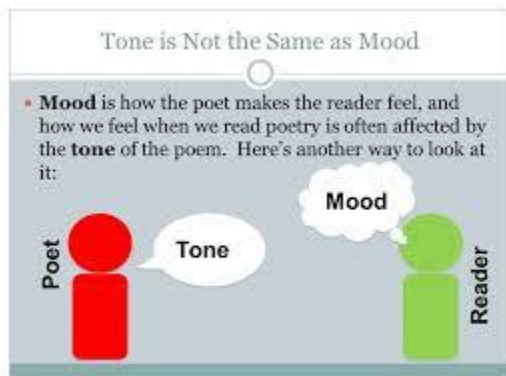


Figure 4: (Dalton 2020)

You can observe, from the diagram above, that tone is poet-dependent while mood is reader-dependent. Tone is the attitude of the author towards a subject, while mood is the reader's feelings, as evoked by the author through his/her work. "Mood is defined in poetry as the feelings or emotions that are evoked in the reader by the poem. Conversely, tone expresses the attitude the author has towards the subject or topic of the poem" (Greene 4). Both are given more attention in the next unit.

You may be wondering why so much time is accorded to tone and mood in this unit. This is because this unit is interested in practical analysis of poems. Consequently, a proper comprehension of tone and mood, as well as purpose, will enable you carry out a more meaningful analysis of a poem. It will equip you to study not only 'what' is said and 'how' it is said, but also 'why' it is said. You must agree that this will definitely facilitate a broader and deeper analytical perspective. You understand the implication, don't you? That means you are encouraged to acquire a more developed critical competence.

3.2. Selected Poems: Analysis in Practice

Two popular poems have been carefully selected for examination here. The poems are Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Ozymandias' and Wallace Steven's 'The Snow Man'. Every segment of the following analysis is very important. Please pay attention and follow each aspect of the analysis. The analysis draws, in no specific order, from the directions provided above. A vigilant student will identify these even when they are not expressly stated.

3.2.1 'Ozymandias'

Have you met the classic poem 'Ozymandias', written by Percy Bysshe Shelley? The masterpiece 'Ozymandias' is the first poem we will practice with in this unit. The poem is represented hereafter. Please read! Do not forget to read aloud as you are told in step 1 of Figure 1 and step 2 of Figure 2.

'Ozymandias'

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things:
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains: round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

The poem is a sonnet written by a prominent English Romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, in 1817. The Romantic Movement in England lasted between 1798, with the publication of William Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, and 1870, with the death of Charles Dickens. The seminal 'Ozymandias' was originally published under the pen name, Glirastes, on the 11th January 1818, in *The Examiner*, in London. That makes it a 19th century literary work. The title – 'Ozymandias' – is a substitute name. It is a Greek term for the ancient Egyptian pharaoh, Rameses II (1302-1213 b.c.e.), who ruled in the 13th century BCE, for sixty-six years. Rameses built several monuments and temples and amassed great wealth. His remarkable achievements and wealth earned him the title, 'Ramases the Great' and he was venerated, even after his death. In other words, the poem refers to a great Egyptian king.

The poem was part of a poetry competition between Shelley and a friend, who was also a writer, Horace Smith. Both read the historian Diodorus Siculus' (the ancient Greek writer) account of Ozymandias damaged statue, in his *Bibliotheca Historica*, which presents the base of the actual statue as comprising an inscription: "King of Kings am I, Ozymandias. If anyone would know how great I am and where I lie, let him surpass one of my works." Shelley was profoundly influenced by ancient Greek writings on Egypt, particularly the historian, Siculus. Shelley's 'Ozymandias' is therefore a poetic rendition of an already narrated tale. Perhaps Shelley, in writing the poem, attempts to surpass Ozymandias' work.

Synopsis

The poem gives an account of the ruined state of King Ozymandias' statue, as told by its speaker, who in turn heard it from an unnamed "traveller from an antique land." Thus, the traveller tells the speaker who tells the reader through the poet, Shelley, of the ruined state of the statue of a once powerful and haughty emperor, Ozymandias. The "trunkless legs" of the statue lie stuck, immobile and abandoned in the vast desert. The narration of the ruin is continued in the facial "visage" of the shattered statue of the emperor lying on the sand. The contempt and arrogance of power, displayed in the "wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command" are permanently engraved on the lifeless and immobile stone and reveals the cruelty of the heart lying beneath the face. The inscription at the pedestal introduces the emperor, the immensity of his power and paradoxically, his lost position and glory as well as his ruined works, encapsulated in "nothing beside remains: round the decay." The poetic episode is an ironic and dramatic representation of a disintegrated power and lost position.

Some critics suspect that the "traveller" is Diodorus Siculus, whose account of Ozymandias' statue inspired Shelley's poem. Do you think that the poem's speaker met the traveller while reading Siculus' description of the statue? Some other scholars trace Shelley's primary inspiration to newspaper reports that the huge head of the statue of Ramses II, that is Ozymandias, had been acquired by the British Museum. Your primary concern should be how the emperor's statue provides Shelley with a framework to discuss salient human issues.

Thematic Preoccupation

Shelley's 'Ozymandias' is interested in a number of issues revolving around man, nature and arts. The three concerns of the poem are the transience of human power, durability of arts, and permanence and potency of nature; all universal themes. All these are discussed through the subject, Ozymandias, as engraved in a devastated stone sculptor and described by an observant traveller, whose account is retold by the speaker. Swafford, Annie (2018, 1) posits that in the poem, Shelley "describes a crumbling statue of Ozymandias as a way to portray the transience of political power and to praise art's power of preserving the past." Swafford's reading, even when it tends to ignore the superiority of nature vividly portrayed by the poem, highlights two themes of the poem identified by this essay.

Following the suggestions encapsulated in the subject matter and theme box of Figure 3, as well as Figure 2, steps 4 and 10 and Figure 1 step 2, one can say that the poem is about Ozymandias, whose crumbling status is employed to convey the ideas of human power as transitory, pre-eminence of nature in relation to man, and resilience of arts. These ideas are conveyed and reinforced using imageries and symbols; that is technique. Please observe how the three are related and directly connected to the subject.

We have identified the transience of political power as one of the major themes of 'Ozymandias'. Even a casual reading of the poem exhibits the idea as the most prominent interest of the poem and that is why it is foregrounded here. The interest is conveyed in the statue of Ozymandias, whose overwhelming political dominance is conveyed in the enduring inscription at the base of the statue thus: "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings." However, the crumbling state of the mighty king is depicted in its "trunkless legs ... shattered visage" and this suggests that his power is everything but permanent. The name, with the power it evokes, has a paradoxical relationship with the dilapidated state of the statue. The shattered statue therefore displays what becomes of the mighty king over time. The poet not only portrays the ruin of the king but also the destruction of the "works" and kingdom of which "nothing beside remains." The works, which the emperor was so proud of, and the "decay" contained in the subsequent line expresses a harsh contradiction that deepens the idea of transience of power. The image of a ravaged kingdom is invigorated in the "colossal wreck," "boundless and bare" land – desert - surrounding the statue. This speaks of the utter devastation of a once powerful kingdom. The kingdom, like the king, is also a transient civilization and represents the several fallen empires of the world; "antique land(s)". The fate of the kingdom illustrates the crumbling of the foundation on which the emperor's influence rested. The implication is that both the power and its authorising structures are gone and thus not permanent.

You must understand that Shelley, in 'Ozymandias', interrogates and critiques rulers/leaders, including African political leaders, whose access to political power makes them smug. Such smugness is observable in the boastful self-introduction of Ozymandias and his haughty display of his works, which is reminiscent of the biblical Nebuchadnezzar's pride and punishment in Daniel Chapter 4. Ozymandias shattered appearance mocks his conceit best engraved in the "wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command." Did you note the contradiction embedded in "cold command?" The poet, by placing both words next to each other, vivifies the idea of a dead facility, an authority that existed in the past. The all-powerful king, in the statue, becomes but a collectible item; an "antique." The facial expression as well portrays the emperor as a tyrant and

the motionlessness suggests that such tyranny belongs to the past. By consigning the emperor's influence to the dust bin of the past and describing it as "lifeless things," the poem further energises the idea of loss of political power. His condemnable "passions" are forever "stamp'd" on his lifeless face and become a testament of his pride and excessive ambition based on a fleeting power. That is why Condliffe (2018, 1) observes that the poem is interested in "man's hubris." Ramses II, that is Ozymandias, expanded the empire of Egypt and constructed so many statues of himself in his Egyptian kingdom. Consequently, the poem tends to be Shelley's warning against arrogance and inordinate ambition. 'Ozymandias' is thus constructed to demonstrate the temporariness of life and fame and serves as a reminder that nothing in this world of ours is permanent. In other words, Shelley's attitude towards his subject implies the "relative impermanence of the physical world and the things we think are important in it" (Greenblatt, Stephen et al. 744).

Another issue explored by the poem is the permanence and supremacy of nature. Shelley's poem is concerned with the "sublimity and permanence of nature" (Condliffe 1). Do not forget that Shelley is a Romantic poet and as such, reveres nature and questions people's attempt at controlling it. Nature is symbolised in time, sand and desert, which all acted in the destruction of the statue, and by extension, the emperor and his empire. Thus, the devastated visage of the emperor's statue lies "half sunk ... on the lone and level sands (that) stretch far away ... in the desert." In that image, nature is displayed as superior to human beings who she outlives, like she does Emperor Ramses II and his empire. Moreover, the almost endless stretch of sand describes the effect of nature on a former seemingly formidable civilisation where the emperor held sway and therefore function to deepen the theme of perpetuity and dominance of nature.

In addition, the statue cannot withstand the passage of time. Though it survives the emperor, it is still destroyed over time, the way the king and his kingdom perished over time. The repetition of time (lines 3 and 14) illustrates its ability to conquer even the most powerful of human beings, like he almost does the head of the once powerful emperor who, like most people, ended beneath the earth. In the sand, the earth's "boundless" power and permanence is displayed in a manner that emphasises the limited ability of human beings. Thus, while the emperor arrogantly invites the world to "look on my works," nature, in time, silently displaying a vanished empire and power, proves that there is "nothing" to look at, except a "colossal wreck." Shelley's words aptly depict the massiveness of the ruin as an indication of the overwhelming impact of nature on human beings and their works. In these, the superiority of nature and the subordinate position of people in the nature-man relationship structure are once again established, in a manner that clearly ennoble nature. In this, Shelley's Romantic orientation in poetry construction becomes evident.

Shelley tends to employ the ruined emperor and his devastated kingdom to remind human beings that nature is patiently waiting to regain everything forced out of its hand by the different societies of the world, in the process of development and eventually claim humanity as well. This reiterates the contemporary campaign for an eco-friendly mentality that underscores the need to treat nature benignly. This attention to nature is also found in several poems exemplified by William Wordsworth's 'The World is too Much With Us' and Niyi Osundare's 'Ours to Plough, Not to Plunder' (*The Eye of The Earth*).

'Ozymandias' also expresses interest in the durability of the arts and from two art forms – visual arts and literature. Do you know the four major forms of arts? They are **Performing Arts**, **Culinary Arts**, **Visual Arts**, and **Literary Arts**. Poetry falls under the last; Literary Arts. You can observe that the poem, under examination, explores an art, a statue, to make its appeal. As such, art is a key member of the poem. The state of Ozymandias' statue and its setting speak of "colossal wreck" and "decay", but the surviving adroitly constructed sculpture functions as a monument of the emperor's power and empire. It outlives both the king and his kingdom and by doing so pronounces the durability of the arts, especially in its capacity to preserve the legacies of humanity.

Furthermore, the statue manages to freeze the "passions" of the dead emperor in its "shattered visage." The sculpture, therefore, vividly portrays Ozymandias' arrogance, pride, and conceit in a manner that illustrates his dictatorial disposition and energises the concept of the arts as resilient. These are observable in the "frown and wrinkled lip and sneer," which "well ... read (by) its sculptor" who dexterously engraves those into the sculpture. Thus, while Ozymandias is long dead, his temperament "yet survive, stamp'd on ... lifeless stone ... in the desert." This suggests that art brings to life that which is dead and therein lies its durability. The ability of the sculptor to clearly display all these passions is a testimony of the capacity of an art to portray and preserve human temperaments beyond the existence of such humans. Arts, in its durability, serves as an effective instrument of tale and preservation of history. Ozymandias' story, including feeling and attitude, and the history of his ancient empire, are narrated in the disjointed sculpture, which though damaged, outlives both.

Have you observed the subtle comparison between the statue and the words written on its pedestal? Read lines 10 and 11 once again: "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" That is the splintered statue speaking to the traveller who met it in the desert. In the two lines, story and identity of Ozymandias are provided in a succinct summary. The summary contains his name, unparalleled royalty and authority, as the tone reveals his excessive pride, all mocked in the decrepit statue and empire. This means that without the words, the monument would be anonymous. It, therefore, provides the key to a political tale of historical proportion.

You must also take note that the words' initial merits are preserved, and so it escapes the destruction that affects the statue to become the most outstanding remainder of the artistic expression. This again intensifies the idea of the arts as durable. The words are displayed as more lasting than the monument, as it survives both the emperor, his kingdom and even the monument. In other words, Ozymandias is immortalised more in words than in a monument. Remember, the poem is inspired by the words of Siculus. What does this tell you? Of course, that the monument, the emperor it represents, and his empire all endure in history because of written words. In addition, the fact that "these words appear ... on the pedestal" illustrates the foundational role of those words in that context. The attitude of the poet towards the two art forms is manifest in the different degrees of durability assigned to both. It suggests his perception of literary arts as the best way of preserving the history of people and their society for posterity.

Greenblatt, et al. (2006, 744) observe that by using the sonnet, Shelley is “drawing attention to the formal, artificial, or constructed nature of his work – just as a monument is a formal, artificial, constructed thing. But unlike the monument, the work of literature is not subject to time and decay.” The scholar also observes that the concept of literature as more lasting than other forms of art is a recurrent theme in pre-“Ozymandias” poems. For instance, in his *Odes*, Horace insists that he has crafted something “More durable than bronze, higher than Pharaoh’s/ Pyramids is the monument I have made/ A shape that angry wind or hungry rain/ Cannot demolish, nor the innumerable/Ranks of the years that march in centuries.” Moreover, Shakespeare’s Sonnet 55 expresses a similar position in: “Not marble, nor the gilded monuments/Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rime.”

Technique

The title, form, structure, language, mood, tone, symbols, images and so on, is, each, employed to convey the themes and contributes to the success of the poem. That is why we must explore the technique of the poem, as suggested by Figure 1, Step 5. ‘Ozymandias’ is concerned with a number of pertinent human issues which are still present in our contemporary human society. Shelley discusses these issues using certain techniques. At this point, let us examine his use of poetic techniques in the poem under study, as suggested by the second of the two major departments of Figure 3. The **title** will be a natural place to start from and it occupies the first step of Figure 2. The one word title, ‘Ozymandias’, is derived from the focus of the poem, Ozymandias, revealed in line 10 of the sonnet. As you have been told, Ozymandias is a Greek name for the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh, Rameses II, whose reign dates back to the 13th century BCE. Since the poem is interested in the transience of political power, it is only normal that it employs a subject whose huge political weight belongs to the past. In other words, the subject enables Shelley explore his chosen political theme. One can therefore say that there is natural relationship between the theme and the subject and that correspondence contributes to the success of the poem.

Let us extend the analysis by examining the form and shape as suggested by step 1 of Figure 2 and step 6 of Figure 1. **Form and Structure/Shape** belong to the technique category, as you can observe in Figure 3. The poem, ‘Ozymandias’, is a sonnet. Conventionally, a sonnet is made up of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter and the poem under study adopts these primary norms of the form. Nevertheless, Shelley’s ‘Ozymandias’ disrupts the form. Do you still remember movement and sound in poetry, studied under Module 2 Unit 4 of this study pack? ‘Ozymandias’ alters the rhyme scheme. It is important that you know that the Rhyme Scheme of the poem goes thus: ABABACDCEDEFEF. The rhyme scheme generally follows the Shakespearean sonnet, but its structure is more comparable to Petrarchan sonnet.

The Petrarchan sonnet is constituted by an eight-line octave which generates a condition and is followed by a six-line sestet, which comments on the condition. Thus, “while it’s not exactly the rhyme scheme of a Petrarchan sonnet, it’s closer to it than it is to a Shakespearean sonnet and uses the 8/6 line structure of a Petrarchan sonnet (Greenblatt, Stephen et al 744). Please go back to the fourteen-line poem. You will observe that lines 1-8 (octave) pay attention to the statue. It discusses the devastated condition of Ozymandias’ statue as told by the traveller through the speaker. Lines 9-14 (sestet) pay attention to the base and setting. In these lines, the poet comments on the already displayed statue by identifying the person it represents as well the

wreckage nature made out of the works he was so proud of. This is the Petrarchan structure. Did you observe that the sonnet form facilitates the effectiveness of the poem? In addition, its unique rhyme scheme displays an alteration which occurs as the poem develops. There is shift from an initial pattern to another and this suggests time progression which the poem preys upon to discuss the transience of political power, durability of the arts, and supremacy of nature.

The departure from the traditional sonnet convention, displayed in the form and rhyme scheme of the poem, “reveals Shelley’s interest in challenging conventions, both political and poetic” (Swafford 2018, 1). The breach of the poetic norms of the two leading sonnet forms (Shakespearean and Petrarchan), which the poem consciously chooses, could be interpreted as a reflection of the broken statue, which, like the poem, is a work of art. Shelley, as such, violates the tradition of the sonnet in order to make his poetic appeal.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

How does Shelley’s choice and manipulation of the sonnet form advance the lot of ‘Ozymandias’?

The speaker of a poem is equally important, as noted by Figure 2, Step 3. The poem, ‘Ozymandias’, makes its appeal using multiple voices. In the first two lines of Shelley’s sonnet, two **speakers** are presented. They are represented as “I” and “a traveller from an antique land.” This style of rendition is termed frame narrative. Frame narrative is a story in which the main story takes place. The poem’s narrator meets a traveller who narrates his/her experience in the desert. In lines 10 and 11, the voice of Ozymandias, the subject of the poem, is included and functions to introduce the subject and expose his obsession with his status and achievements. The traveller is saddled with the responsibility of reporting on the subject, Ozymandias, to the speaker who in turn transmits it to the reader. Thus, from the second line, the voice of the traveller, which dominates the poem, is heard through the speaker who introduces it with “who said ...” Within the overlaid structure of the poem, the speaker functions as a middleman between the traveller, who encountered the abandoned decrepit statue in an “antique land,” and the reader. S/he therefore separates the reader from the traveller. You need to note how this style works for the poem. The mighty emperor’s political influence, though overwhelming, is not a lasting phenomenon and only comes to the subsequent periods as a mere historical account. In the words “antic land,” the past is again reemphasised in a manner that illustrates the distance between the ‘then’ and ‘now’ of the text and further establishes the present irrelevance of the power. Shelley’s traveller, who alone saw the sculpture of Ozymandias, is neither assigned a name nor a gender. Perhaps, Shelley’s unnamed traveller was Diodorus Siculus whose account of the Ozymandias’ statue moved Shelley to eloquence. The interest of the poem is in the emperor, as seen from the eyes and perspective of the traveller. The term, “traveller,” is foregrounded in the poem and this manifest, early, the idea of life as a journey with a beginning and an end, in order to prepare the ground to discuss the fleeting nature of political power.

The traveler seems interested in art and the way it functions, but spends even more time describing the personality of the poem's third speaker: Ozymandias himself, through his words on the pedestal. Of all three speakers, the poem provides the most details about Ozymandias: he announces himself as a king whose concerns focus on his own greatness, power, and legacy. This attitude towards specificity is also observable in the meeting between the traveler and the

speaker. The poem neither says when nor where they met. Even the traveler met the devastated statue in an unnamed “antique land,” which, guided by the subject, is in an Egyptian desert. Nevertheless, it is an Egypt of the past; ancient Egypt, rather than the current Egypt of Shelley’s time. Consequently, the **setting** again re-emphasises the idea of a mighty political position that existed at a time in the past. The dual setting, one more than the other, receive a similar treatment given to the speaker. The element of anonymity therefore tends to a style consciously adopted by Shelley to discuss his interests in ‘Ozymandias’.

Have you observed the use of **Enjambment** in the poem? Figure 1 Step 4 advises you to do so. Look more closely at lines 2, 6, 12 and 13. Are there punctuation marks at the end of these lines? That illustrates the occurrence of enjambment. Note the proximity between 12 and 13, which have been identified as the “two consecutive enjambed lines” of ‘Ozymandias’. Let us take a deeper look at the four lines. Line 2, recounts the “trunkless legs;” 6 - the emperor’s “passions,” 12 and 13 the “decay” of which “Nothing remains in the “boundless and bare” desert. Each of the lines flows into the next where its sense is completed. For instance, line 6 needs line 7 to tell of the sculptor’s accurate reading of the emperor’s “passions which yet survive, stamp’d” on inanimate stones. The four lines each implies the relationship between time and the statue and by extension, the emperor and his empire. All - the emperor, his empire and his statue - are affected by time. The implication is that the enjambment facilitates Shelley’s communication of the superiority of nature, symbolised by time, over human beings and their works. The ruin is encapsulated in all the lines except 6, which engraves Ozymandias’ conceit, based on temporary influence, on the stone of times, perhaps as a warning against political tyranny and arrogance. The statue is intended as a monument for the preservation of Ozymandias’ legacy but the only things that remained of that legacy is a desert and his arrogance, pride and disdain for ‘lesser’ mortals.

The poem is one **extended metaphor**. The broken statue of the Egyptian emperor is a metaphoric representation of authority, royalty, fame, political power, might, legacy but ironically all those are extinct, as they are trapped in the past. The sculpture, the emperor it represents, and his empire are all battered by time. Thus, the statue is engaged to demonstrate the transience of political power and human civilization. Zaman and Chakraborty (2019, 69) perceive the poem as an “eternal metaphor for the pride and hubris and the short-lived existence of all of humanity, in any of its manifestations.” Consequently, metaphor is a technique that facilitates the communication of the theme of the poem.

Shelley’s poem depends heavily on visual images; pictorial images which appeal to the sense of sight. Think about the twin massive “trunkless legs of stone” standing in “the desert” and “shatter’d visage” half buried in the sand. Consider the “frown, and wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command.” Can you visualise the devastated statue of Ozymandias lying like an orphan in the desert? Thus, Shelley uses the identified images to convey the state of an arrogant emperor of whom remains but fragments of monuments showing his contemptuous personality discarded upon bare sand that has eaten all that makes him proud. In other words, the images contribute considerably to Shelley’s successful expression of his themes.

The poem is infused with **symbols**. The statue is symbolic in more ways than one. It symbolises the political systems and civilisations of the human society in the powerful ancient Egyptian

empire. Additionally, the statue symbolises those at the top of such systems: Ozymandias, the emperor with overwhelming influence. In the statue, the emperor's quest to be remembered by generations after his reign is expressed. Thus, it is a symbol of his desire for continued relevance. Nevertheless, the poor state of the sculpture symbolises the weakness and transitory character of such political statue and influence, in relation to time and nature. This impact of nature on the civilisations is also depicted in the sand which holds parts of the statue and mocks the boastful emperor. Moreover, the conceit, disdain and cruelty reflected in Ozymandias face symbolise the capacity of art to function beyond the intentions of its creator, as the emperor's intention was to immortalise his splendor and authority. Thus, the facial expression subverts the emperor's aim and the broken statue mocks his naked arrogance as it symbolises the downfall of tyranny. That is not all; the sculpture is a symbol of durability of art in relation to human beings, as the words inscribed at the base and untouched by time and nature, symbolise the superiority of words in relation to art in preserving the history of humanity.

Another prominent symbol found in the poem is sand. It symbolises the dominance of nature and resilience of time. The head of the statue is half buried in the sand and that means it no more stands where it should - above the "trunkless legs." Its position has shifted from the top to the base. I am sure that you can observe a relationship between Ozymandias' image and the twenty-foot statue of Saddam Hussein pushed down by American troops in April 2003, in Baghdad. Again, the same sand, over time, battered Ozymandias works and overtook the empire he was so proud of. Over time, his empire becomes a "colossal wreck" and turns into a "boundless and bare" stretch of sand, a desert. These further symbolise the impact of nature and time on human achievements, even those of great significance. The poem's employment of symbol is, therefore, deliberate and calculated to advance his themes of transience of political power, durability of arts and supremacy of nature.

What can you make out of Ozymandias' self-introduction, especially in relation to the state of the statue and the desert setting? Listen to it! "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings; Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" Is it not ironic? Those words, inscribed at the base of the ruined headless statue, injects a profound sense of **irony** into the poem. Irony is another technique which facilitates the poem's success. In the introduction, Ozymandias presents himself as the best of royalties. He deifies himself and tends to equate himself with the Biblical Jesus on whose robes and thigh were written "King of kings" (Revelation 19:16). This can as such be interpreted as a case of Biblical allusion and this sense is extended in his statue which parallels King Nebuchadnezzar's intimidating golden statue in Daniel 3:1. Ozymandias enrobes himself with greatness and might, but the disdain and tyranny engraved into his face is unmistakable. Ironically, all that is left of him and his great empire, with its great cities, monuments, palaces and so on, are shattered, motionless stone and bare miles of boundless sand. There is nothing to look at, except destruction and that mocks his arrogance and interrogates the quality of political power. Consequently, the dilapidated sculptor does not represent Ozymandias' eminence but his conceit and condescension. Shelley's mocking tone violates the aura of grandeur surrounding the statue. The devastation makes the inscription exceptionally ironic and instructive. It exhibits Shelley's mastery of the tool of irony in poetic construction. "The ironic comment issues a reassuring solidity on the transience of human power and accomplishment. The statue of Ozymandias sets an example for the other rulers, though not for his achievements but as a reminder to the same fate they are going to meet" (Zaman and Chakraborty 68).

Another aspect of the poem's use of irony you must not fail to note is the ability of the statue, made by a sculptor, to survive when all Ozymandias works perished with time. The implication is that art survives mighty civilisations. Taking it still further, the words are unsoiled by the natural elements that dealt hard blows on the statue and that means that words, as an art type, are more durable than sculptures, another art type. Irony, as such, intensifies the poem's themes, vivifies its overall meaning and regulates its tone.

Ozymandias' exaggerated conception of his royal splendour and political power and vast empire is juxtaposed with the relics of his statue kissing the dust in a desert where "nothing beside remains" to discuss the transience of political authority and other issues. The **muted irony** can hardly be ignored. This contrast is mainly responsible for the ironic tone of the poem. The irony is even fortified in the engraving on the base of the sculpture. The line "look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" tends to be an invitation to the powerful to behold the futility of human achievements and feel the attendant misery. Thus, in relation to human foibles, the irony elicits somber reflection rather than derision and this adds an admonishing tone to the poem. The poet's tone creates a depressing and pensive **mood**.

'Ozymandias' is also accessorised with **figures of sound** including assonance, consonance, and alliteration. These make the poem a pleasant read. For instance, "half sunk, a shattered visage lies", represents consonance. Note the recurrence of the /s/ sound and in "boundless and bear," "lone and level" and "cold command", the sounds /b/, /l/ and /c/ alliterate and so we have alliteration. These are memorable phrases that also exhibit consciousness of the poem's concerns. For example, the observed consonance is used in an expression that depicts the ruin of the statue, and by extension, the emperor's lost glory.

Furthermore, the poem's use of apostrophe and choice of words contribute significantly to its effectiveness. 'Ozymandias' apostrophises in "look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!" which is the inscription at the base of the sculpture. This iconic line is charged with weighty irony. Perhaps, Shelley's choice of this technique is influenced by his dependence on an ancient Greek text as apostrophe is a common member of older poems. It could be his tacit way of paying tribute to the corpus that inspired his work. Another interesting aspect of the poem is Shelley's conscious employment and arrangement of words/terms and sentences. His adroit manipulation of the resources of language is apparent in words like "desert, antique, vast, shattered, despair" and phrases as "half sunk, cold command, nothing ... remains and trunkless legs." Note the sharp contrast between lines 10 to 11 and 12-14. These techniques/styles facilitate the communication of the theme of the ephemeral nature of political power and splendour, durability of arts, and invincibility of time and nature.

What you have above is a comprehensive analysis of Percy Bysshe Shelley's classic poem 'Ozymandias'. The analysis is intended to show you how to analyse a poetic text from both the 'what' and 'how' perspectives. If you have interacted closely with it you will find out that it dedicates time and space to both theme, including meaning, and technique/style. It also identifies the guidelines it follows, from the set provided at the beginning of this unit. This is in addition to the guidelines already given in the previous units of this module. You will also observe that the study consults scholarly essays that are interested in different aspects of the poem. The essence of going this far is to provide you with ample perspectives, dimensions, interpretations and

examples for sophisticated analysis of poems. Now that you have been sufficiently equipped, it is your responsibility to demonstrate your competence. Consequently, from this point, you are expected to step forward and take a more active part in poetic analysis under the next segment of this unit. So as you read, also attempt all the exercises you will meet afterwards as we discuss our second selected poem, Steven's 'The Snow Man'.

3.2.2 'The Snow Man' (by Wallace Stevens; 1879-1955)

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

'The Snow Man' is a very popular poem written by an American modernist poet, Wallace Stevens. The poem was initially published in the magazine *Poetry* in 1921. 'The Snow Man' was reprinted in the 1923 *Harmonium*, which is Stevens' first poetry collection. The poem is one of poet's most popular short poems. What do you have to say about the first line of the poem? It starts thus: "One must have a mind of winter." It sounds like an advice but the term 'must' introduces an obligatory sense into the line. So what is the poem saying?

Synopsis

The poem gives a vivid and objective description of a winter setting, with the usual severity associated with the season. The poem that calls everyone, and no one in particular, to develop a warm attitude towards the coldest season of the year. The poem encourages the reader to separate the somberness of winter from misery. You can observe that the poem suggests a psychological approach and emotional response to a natural condition and its effect. At this point, you have to take over! Remember this is practicum; Get your writing materials ready.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Provide a concise synopsis of the poem 'The Snow Man' by Wallace Stephens.

Thematic Preoccupation

'The Snow Man' explores the ideas of perception. It interrogates the attachment of the mystery label attached to the season of winter. The poem does this by first dramatising an episode at winter. It then moves into discernment of the scene in order to demonstrate that it is, in itself, free from the gloom attached to it by human emotions. The poem explains what it takes to objectively perceive a cold winter scene and the world on their own terms and for what they are. In this, the poem calls for a review in the manner human beings perceive nature.

In other words, the relationship between nature and human perception. It is interested in the manner human beings understand nature, in its beauty, and its seasons. It represents an ideal approach, which should be celebratory, towards winter and advises the elimination of human emotions in order to observe the genuine beauty of nature. The poem discusses the qualities of the snow man; that person who must not impose human emotions and pains on a natural landscape.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

Mention three concerns of 'The Snow Man'.

Technique

Please do not ignore the natural connection between theme and technique. Your analysis must display consciousness of that.

The title, 'The Snow Man', tends to be imprecise, and thus ambiguous. However, the immediate appearance of the modal verb 'must' hardly permits an ambiguity as it presents an indispensable approach towards winter. The poem is introduced with an impersonal pronoun "one" and that makes it applicable to everyone. Therefore, the initial line of the poem makes the snow man everybody and no one in particular. The final lines of the poem associate the snow man, in "the listener," repeatedly with nothingness, in a manner that presents a metaphor, rather than a myth.

The title therefore enables the poem to address whoever, in "the snow man" as man is a generic term for humanity. In addition, snow is a natural partner of winter and is associated with coolness and objectivity. The poem tells human beings to perceive winter with a more objective eye and stop humanising it as anthropomorphizing it implies imputing human emotions on it. The poem suggests that nature, symbolised by winter, should be approached on its own conditions. It calls for a separation of the season of winter from misery, as implied in the purposeful separation of the two words. Both constituents of the title therefore work to suggest a better approach to a natural phenomenon as the poem calls for a shift in perspective.

In **form and structure**, 'The Snow Man' is a short, but powerful and stimulating, fifteen-line five stanza poem. As the stanzas each consists of three lines, it is a tercet. The poem is an unrhymed poem and that means that there is hardly any rhyme; free verse form, and no specific

meter is observed. “The Snow Man” appears like one sentence and one idea. Why not try reading it as a sentence. Can you decode the sense in each of the stanzas?

The poem opens by advocating “a mind of winter” for the eyes that would look at the ice and tree branches towards comprehending the season. For the poet such mind must resist the theatricals and emotions of human existence. It is an uncomplicated descriptive tercet. In the second stanza, the idea that one must “have been cold a long time” is added as another quality for an objective perception of the winter. The third stanza holds the heart of the message as the speaker advises the reader to unclutter the mind of the emotions that could hinder an understanding of nature as encapsulated in “not to think of any misery” in the “sounds” of nature. In the penultimate stanza, the poem holds that nature must be perceived on its own terms as “the sound of the land,” rather than human howls. The last two lines of the closing stanza are subject to several, at times contradictory interpretation. Perhaps, they say that the world must be closely observed to perceive the emptiness in the scenery in its true colour as “nothingness,” as observable in “Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.” Did you note the peculiarity of the final line? Observe the ingenious contrasting of two diverse meanings of the term nothing – “Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.” The binary senses enable the poet to conclude by reiterating his idea that the perfect observer will avoid the temptation of imputing an incorrect meaning unto a landscape but rather observe the emptiness, which is nature as it is free from human emotions like misery.

What is this poem saying? ‘The Snow Man’ communicates the idea that one must possess a mind, free from emotions to accurately and objectively perceive a cold winter setting, and by extension, the world, in order to understand it is, an empty landscape, significant in its own right, and free from human sentiments and the problems of the world.

The poem employs **Enjambment** lavishly and this works to allow one line and or one stanza flow into the next and that is why the poem reads like a single sentence. Look at stanzas 2-3 and 3-4. The lines in Stanza 4 are heavily enjambed.

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

Identify the enjambed lines and discuss how the technique facilitates the communication of the poem’s ideas.

Certain terms are **repeated** for emphasis and to express sameness and relationship. These include, “snow ... nothing that is ... sound ... same.” These give a sense of sameness and express relationship. For instance in stanza 3; “and not to think of any misery in the sound of the wind, in the sound of a few leaves” works to separate the human emotions of misery from the natural activities of winter and nature, which is the concern of the poem. **Assonance** is also observed in the poem, in sounds like /i/ and /a/ occurring in the following lines: “... listener, who listens in the snow” and “...same bare place”. The /l/ sound **alliterates** in “listener ... listens.” Again, study the last lines “And, nothing himself, beholds Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.” Did you observe an **anaphoric** usage? Please do not ignore the contribution of these to the advancement of the poem’s concern.

'The Snow Man' also conveys its interest and meaning using abundant **imagery and symbolism**. The poem's heavy dependence on visual and auditory images is remarkable. Additionally, his skillful employment of both is commendable. For instance, Images of "frost and the boughs ... pine-trees crusted with snow ... junipers shagged with ice" as well as "sound of wind" vivifies the idea of winter and its impact on the landscape. One thing worthy of note is the poem's successful appeal to one's sense of hearing. This is achieved by recurrence of certain terms and sounds exemplified by "sound (and) listen" as well as /s/ - in "same, snow, misery, must, frost" which all imitate the whistling "sound of the wind." Thus, the poet's **lexical choices** align with his theme and enable his idea appear more clearly. The poem's idea is further illuminated by the winter, which **symbolises** nature in its charming exquisiteness by which its merits are expressed in order to position it as worthy of being perceived on its own terms and free from human emotions. The snowman is a symbol of an ideal observer of snow, and, by extension, nature. He presents a back on which the poet writes out the characteristics of a model viewer of nature, who must perceive it from an objective perspective.

Self-Assessment Exercise 6

There are also other aspects of technique yet to be discussed here. Identify such and discuss comprehensively.

Self-Assessment Exercise 7

The three poems below are very popular poems in the history of English poetry. They are selected to help you try your hands on poetic analysis. Go ahead and analyse each. Please do not disregard any of the two aspects – theme and technique – and remember to demonstrate the close tie between both in your practice.

1. 'To His Coy Mistress' by Andrew Marvel.
2. 'Siren Song' by Margaret Atwood.
3. 'The Starry Night' by Anne Sexton.

4.0 Conclusion

Poetry discusses issues and creates meaning using poetic elements and techniques. The beauty of poetry is in the ability of the poet to make his/her appeal using available poetic resources. As a potential literary critic, it is your responsibility to read, comprehend, interpret, examine and assess a poem. You are also expected to identify the meaning and value contained in such poem(s). What is more? Your interaction with a poem should also help other readers understand and appreciate the poem better. Your duty demands training and that is what this course attempts to do by connecting you to pragmatic, simple and easy-to-follow suggestions towards poetic analysis. Furthermore, it shows you, in practical terms, what an objective essay should look like, using two archetypal English poems. The analysis of the first selected poem "Ozymandias" represents a comprehensive examination of both themes and techniques. Remember that both are Siamese twins and your study must, as much as is expected, display an awareness of that inevitable association. The second poem is approached in a manner that offers you ample opportunity to participate in poetic analysis. This is because this unit is practicum, as already stated several times. If you have followed it step by step, poetic analysis will cease to be a problem to you.

5.0 Summary

Unit 4 of Module 3 has:

1. Reiterated the essential relationship between theme and technique.
2. Provided additional guidelines towards a more professional analysis of poetry.
3. Engaged in a comprehensive thematic examination of the poem, 'Ozymandias', using the suggested guidelines.
4. Critically studied the techniques employed by 'Ozymandias', in relation to how they individually enhance the communication of concern and meaning.
5. Analysed the poem, 'The Snow Man', from theme and technique perspectives, the latter more.
6. Provided a list of three popular poems for students to practice poetic analysis with.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Discuss the contemporary relevance of the issues raised in of the poem, 'Ozymandias'.
2. Examine how Shelley's employment of irony, as well as symbols and images, facilitates the communication of his themes in 'Ozymandias'.
3. 'The Snow Man' is a popular poem written by Wallace Stevens. Discuss the poet's attitude towards nature.
4. Discuss, in detail, the thematic preoccupation of 'The Snow Man'.
5. Write an essay on the themes and techniques of any of the three classic poems provided in this unit for your practice.

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Module 3 Unit 5: Useful Literary/Poetic Terms

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5.0 Introduction

Welcome to the last unit of the last module of this study pack. This is Module 3 Unit 5. One thing you must have learnt in this course, ENG172, is that every work of literature, including poetry, says something in some ways. That which literature says and the way in which it says such have been identified, classified, defined and described by literary scholarship. In other words, they have been assigned different names. For instance, the central idea expressed by a literary text, like a poem, which is implied, is technically termed **theme/concern/interest**. Again, if a line of poem includes a comparison of two essentially dissimilar things using like, as, resembles or than, it is said to use **simile** and if the comparison is made without any of the four, it is termed **metaphor**. When a line of poetry exhibits repetition of similar or identical consonant sounds in a sequence of neighbouring words it is called **alliteration** and when the sounds repeated thus are vowels it is termed **assonance**. If a work of literature alludes to a familiar historical, mythical, religious or literary figure, place or event, **allusion** occurs. The writer's attitude towards his/her subject or audience is classified as **tone** and the prevailing feeling created by the poet in his/her poem as **mood/atmosphere**. Thus, in each poem you are expected to discover these. They are generally termed literary devices. A dexterous use of the elements and a combination of techniques in poetic construction generates desired meaning. Effective communication of meanings in poems is dependent on the poet's ability to effectively employ the several meaning making and enhancing devices (obligatory and optional) present in the literary box of a language. That makes them valuable features and constituents of a poem.

You can see that the differently termed devices are inevitable aspects and vital assets in the examination of works of literature, like poetry. For instance, in the analysis of the poem 'Ozymandias' in the previous unit, terms like 'stanza,' 'enjambment' and 'metaphor' are used to explain how the poem looks and conveys its meaning. The implication is that you have encountered and will continue to encounter these terms. You will meet them as you read critical essays and you will use them as you analyse works of literature, including poetry. You can neither avoid them nor ignore them. It therefore goes without saying that you need to be acquainted with these literary/poetic terms so that you can identify them in poems and determine how each facilitates the communication of the poem's concern and contributes its overall meaning.

The responsibility of this final unit of ENG172 is to define and describe some of those literary/poetic terms, using examples in order to make it more practical so that you can understand them better. Moreover, the examples are intended to help you 'see' the terms, in forms of elements and techniques or devices, at work. Bringing them close to you in that manner will surely enable you to discover their respective contributions to the development and success of the poem. That means that this unit is also interested in their functions. The literary terms discussed here are not chosen in terms of their primacy over others but because they are some of the most frequently used in literary analysis. You are expected to study so many others that are not discussed here so that you can produce sophisticated and sound poetic analysis. The recurrent occurrence of the literary terms in analyses of poems in the previous units of this module have already established their critical significance in literary analysis.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

2. Explain the meaning of literary terms and establish their relationship with literary elements and techniques.
3. Distinguish between literary elements and literary techniques.
4. Identify literary devices in poems and discuss their contributions to the success of the poem.
5. Explain the relationship between related literary devices.
6. Discuss the importance and functions of literary devices in poetry.

3.0 Main Content

3.1. Literary/Poetic Terms

Term is a name for something. It is a word, phrase or expression. Literary term is therefore a word, phrase or expression used in the description of devices employed in literature. For instance, a group of lines that form a separate unit within a poem is termed stanza. It is to a poem what paragraph is to prose. Stanza as such is a literary term and a poetic term. Poetic terms are literary terms employed in writing poems. Literary/poetic terms as such describe devices used in literature.

Literary Devices

A literary device refers to any particular element or technique employed by literature. They are properties and or attributes of literature and can be distinguished, identified, classified, interpreted and/or examined. Literary devices, therefore, include literary elements and literary techniques. It is therefore an umbrella for both obligatory and optional aspects of a literary piece.

3.1.1 Literary Elements

These are the universal components of literature. They are obligatory members of a literary work and are found in works of all times and places. They include theme/subject matter, character, setting, language/diction, plot and tone. Every poem has a theme and diction. Thus both are literary elements, rather than techniques.

3.1.2 Literary Techniques

Literary techniques are particular literary resources present in a language and which the writer employs to communicate. These techniques manifest in forms of either single words or phrases. They also occur as a given group of words/phrases. Literary techniques are encountered at one definite point within a text. These are not universal components of literature and are therefore not essentially available in every work, unlike the elements which are found all around a text. They belong to the optional category. This means that a work of art may or may not contain examples of such techniques. For instance, while techniques like synecdoche and onomatopoeia are found in some poems, they are totally absent in others. Both synecdoche and onomatopoeia are literary

techniques, rather than literary elements. They are meaning-enhancing devices and spice up the poem, when correctly employed.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Identify the major features of literary elements and literary techniques.

In poetry, words/terms, phrases, sounds and forms function as meaning-conveying devices. Thus, they amplify the literal sense of a word. Consequently, a poem's appearance, meaning and sounds are influenced by the device/technique employed by such a poem.

3.2 Definitions and Examples of Specific Literary/Poetic Terms

Sixteen literary/Poetic terms are defined and explained hereafter. Please pay attention to the definition, description and examples. They are arranged in alphabetical order to assist you locate each easily.

3.2.1 Anaphora

Anaphora, as a term, means 'to carry up or back,' in Greek. It is one of the oldest techniques used by poetry and it is a device of repetition. It entails the repetition of the same expression, which could be words, phrases or clauses at the beginning of two or more lines. The repetition is mainly for emphasis and it enhances the rhythmic quality of a poem. This is demonstrated in Joanna Klink's poem "Some Feel Rain," in which the phrase "some feel" is repeated.

Some feel rain. **Some feel** the beetle startle
in its ghost-part when the bark
Slips. **Some feel** musk. Asleep against
each other in the whiskey dark, scarcely there.

Read it aloud and note how the repetition turns the poem into a melodious piece.

The literary technique permits variations. This means that the repeated words, phrases or clauses can manifest slight variations and such variations can even function to intensify its effect. William Blake's short poem "London" displays this type of slight alteration of repeated terms.

*In every cry of every Man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear*

The slight adjustment is obvious. It vivifies the poet's idea that every inhabitant of London is a victim of the self-imposed prison arising from human imagination.

Anaphora is closely related to Epistrophe, which entails the repetition of the same word or phrase at the end of consecutive clauses or lines and mostly for rhetorical purposes. When both anaphora and epistrophe are used at the same time, another device termed symploce is created.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Find an English poem which exhibits the use of symploce.

3.2.2 Alliteration

This literary technique is often employed in poetry. This entails the repetition of a speech (consonant) sound in a succession of contiguous words. Alliteration is restricted to consonant sounds. This implies that alliteration is relevant to only consonant sounds “and only when the recurrent sound begins a word or a stressed syllable within a word” (Abrams 2005, p. 9). Example can be found in John Keat’s ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ thus: “perhaps same song that found a path” and in the last stanza of Edgar Allan Poe’s celebrated poem ‘The Raven’ thus: “And the raven never fitting, still is sitting ... And the *lamp-light* over him streaming ...” The italicised /s/ and /l/ sounds alliterate in the poems mentioned above. Alliteration occurs more prominently in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s very popular ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’. Take a look at this.

The fair *breeze blew*, the white *foam flew*,
The *furrow followed free*
We were the first that ever burst
Into the silent sea.

Can you identify occurrences of the alliteration in the italicized sounds; /b, f, w & s/?

The device is often employed by poetry, which emphasizes sound and rhythm, for aesthetic purposes as it injects musicality into a poem. It also makes a poem memorable. That is why it is a common feature of oral literature which facilitates memorisation and recalling. In addition, alliteration is employed to connect related words as well as highlight specific feelings, phrases and or meanings.

3.2.3 Allusion

Allusion is a casual or passing reference to a well-known historical, literary, religious, mythological person, place or incident. Authors usually allude (refer) to a real or fictional person, place or event already familiar to the reader in order to bring their ideas closer to their audience and solidify their themes. Allusion entails an indirect mention of such person, place or thing and is usually employed metaphorically, even though it could be used ironically. The reference could be direct or indirect but is without obvious identification. English poetry generously exploits biblical allusions as demonstrated in T. S. Eliot’s popular poem, ‘The Waste Land’ and Percy Bysshe Shelley’s ‘Ozymandias’. Excerpts from Robert Frost’s iconic poem, ‘Nothing Gold Can Stay’, represented below, further dramatises the use of allusion in poetry.

Then leaf subsides to leaf iconic
So Eden sank to grief
So dawn goes down to day
Nothing gold can stay.

Eden is familiar to a lot of people. It is therefore possible that a reader of Frost's 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' is already familiar with the biblical incident at the Garden of Eden in the Bible. The poem thus alludes to the Biblical Garden of Eden to convey the idea that anything and everything could be lost as nothing is everlasting. You can perceive that the biblical allusion vivifies the theme of the poem.

T. S. Eliot's epoch-making poem, 'The Waste Land' relies much on literary allusions. One of such is present in the portrayal of April as "the cruellest month." The clause makes an indirect reference (alludes to) the opening sentences of *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. However, Eliot's concept of April is antithetical to Chaucer's which portrays the month as a happy one in which "sweet-smelling showers" are present and which is occupied by tales and pilgrimages.

At times, students confuse allusion with allegory and foreshadowing. In the former, characters, events and places perform representational functions. They stand for real incidents or conditions. Do you still remember *Animal Farm* by George Orwell? The novel is a quintessential allegory. In foreshadowing, an indirect reference is made to something, mainly unpleasant, that will occur in the text.

3.2.4 Assonance

Like alliteration, assonance entails repetition of sounds but unlike alliteration which is interested in consonant sounds, assonance is concerned with vowel sounds. It refers to the "repetition of identical or similar sounds – in a sequence of nearby words" (Abrams, M. H. 2005 p. 9). This is different from rhyme which is interested in correspondence of vowel and consonant sounds as in 'fate' and 'late'. Assonance is exemplified by 'late and fake. Assonance is a poetic technique that functions within the lines of a poem to embellish a poem and as such is a significant tool in the hands of a poet. A good example of the manipulation of assonance in poetic construction is observed in the first stanza of Dylan Thomas' 'Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait'.

The bows glided down, and the coast
Blackened with birds took a last look
At his trashing hair and whale-blue eyes;
The trodden town rang its cobbles for luck.

Observe the repeated italicised vowel sounds occurring within the lines of the poem. Those are examples of assonance. They enhance the musical quality of the poem.

3.2.5 Apostrophe

Here someone absent is addressed with an exclamation. Consider the two lines below culled from Billy Collins' 'To a Stranger Born in Some distant Country Hundreds of Years From Now'.

O stranger of the future!
O Inconceivable being!

The poem is addressed to an unnamed stranger. The next excerpt is from a traditional Yoruba Ijala chant, 'Salute to Elephant'. The poem addresses an animal, the elephant. The first three lines go thus:

O elephant, possessor of a savings-basket full of money
O elephant huge as a hill, even in a crouching posture.
O elephant, enfolded by humour; demon, flapping fans of war.

3.2.6 Caesura

Caesura (plural – caesurae) is a Latin word for 'cut' and is a deliberate pause, break, or pivot within a line of poetry which plays a role in the rhythm of line. Thus, it is a break in a verse or metrical pause and marks the end of one verse and beginning of another. It is a strong pause that usually occurs in the middle of a line of poetry but at times it is also observed close to the beginning or end. Thus, there are three types of caesura based on where it occurs in a line of poetry. The first is Initial Caesura, which appears near or at the beginning of a poetry line. Medial Caesura is the second type and most popular and it occurs in the middle of a line of poetry. The last is Terminal Caesura and refers to a pause which appears at the end of a poetry line. A line that has a pause at its end is also called an end-stopped line.

Caesura is a quality of poetry shared by other genres of literature. It is normally expressed in punctuations like exclamation marks, periods, question marks, and mostly dashes and double slashes (/). The pauses could serve aesthetic functions, create a dramatic pause between a phrase and another or give the reader an opportunity to take a breath. Remember Emily Dickinson's "I'm Nobody?" observe the several examples of medial caesura in the excerpts below.

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you - Nobody - too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! They'd advertise - you know!

Caesura is also found in the first stanza of "Walking Wounded" by Vernon Scannell. Take a look at the second line of the couplet.

The mud and leaves in the mauled lane
Smelled sweet, like blood. // Birds had died or flown ...

You must have observed an enjambed line above. Enjambment is a common poetic device and is discussed later here.

3.2.7 Consonance

Here a succession of two or more consonants is repeated. However, there is a change in the intervening vowels. In other words, the consonant words exhibit close similarity but the

preceding vowels differ. A good example could be found in the last stanza of W. H. Auden's four-stanza poem, "O Where Are You Going?" represented below.

"Out of this house" – said *rider* to *reader*,
"Yours never will" – said *farer* to *fearer*,
"They're looking for you" – said *hearer* to *horror*,
As he left them there, as he left them there.

The italicised words at the end of the lines above epitomize the employment of consonance in a poem. Consonance usually occurs at the end of the lines of a poem and is at times referred to as either half rhyme or slant rhyme.

3.2.8 Enjambment

We have used this term in our previous analysis. When a line of poetry flows into the following line, without a pause, it is called enjambment. It is also termed run-on-lines and you can guess why. One line, without stopping, runs into the next. In other words, an enjambed line continues across a line break. The term is derived from an 18th century French 'encroach' or 'stride over.' Thus, the line that runs into the next lacks punctuation at the end and this is deliberate. Enjambment is a poetic device. It can hardly be found in other forms of writing. Good examples of enjambed lines could be found in the poem 'The Bounty' by Derek Walcott.

'The Bounty'

Between the vision of the Tourist Board and the true
Paradise lies the desert where Isaiah's elations
force a rose from the sand. The thirty-third canto

cores the dawn clouds with concentric radiance,
the breadfruit opens its palms in praise of the bounty,
bois-pain, tree of bread, slave food, the bliss of John Clare,

Note that the three lines of the first stanza, express enjambment. The second stanza is different as the lines are punctuated. Did you also note that apart from the first two lines, all the others started with small letters? This is poetic license in action!

Usually, an enjambed line of poetry hardly makes a complete meaning, though it contains its own sense, and therefore depends on the following line for the completion of its sense. It therefore functions to inspire the reader to read into the subsequent line. Enjambment, is a poetic device used to inject dramatic contradiction or ambiguity into a poetry line.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Identify the relationship between caesura and enjambment.

3.2.9 Hyperbole

You must have heard of this popular literary device called hyperbole. The term is derived from the Greek word ‘overshooting.’ It is a figure of speech in which an idea, fact or possibility is boldly and significantly exaggerated. The exaggeration is not intended to be understood literally but figuratively. The exaggeration is used to achieve ironic, serious or comic effect; used for heightened or dramatic effect. Hyperbole, which entails exaggeration or overstatement, is the opposite of litotes which has to do with understatement, and for effect, as it is usually employed for irony. Andrew Marvell's poem ‘To his Coy Mistress’ employs what M. H. Abrams (2005, 128) describes as “ironic hyperbole”

[His] vegetable love should grow
 Vaster than empires and more slow;
 An hundred years should go to praise
 Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
 Two hundred to adore each breast,
 But thirty thousand to the rest;
 An age at least to every part,
 And the last age should show your heart.

The poem is an exemplar in the use of hyperbole. Observe the number of years - in hundreds and thousands - the poet would dedicate to praising different parts of the coy mistress. The poem contains remarkable and daring exaggeration. Note the ironic tone introduced by the last line.

3.2.10 Imageries

Imageries are employed to create images in the reader’s mind in order to vivify experience through the senses. The senses are the physical facilities through which human beings acquire information about their physical world. Thus, one perceives and appreciates the world through his/her senses; experiences the world through the senses. Consequently, evocative images initiate the reader into experiences illustrated in the text and foster a direct bond of sympathy between the characters/narrators and readers. Imageries make a piece of poem compelling and come in different types.

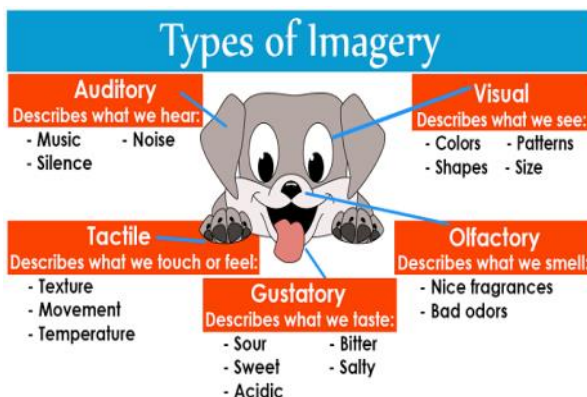


Figure 1 Literary Terms, 2015, June 1.

As you can see from the diagram above, there are five major types of imageries dependent on the five human senses. They are Visual (sight), Auditory (hearing), Tactile (touch), olfactory (smell) and Gustatory (taste). Kinesthetic (movement) is also a type of imagery employed by authors.

- Visual: These appeal to the sense of sight. It includes, colours (bright red, pale sharp yellow, dull green), sizes (large, tiny, monstrous), shapes (oval, tubular, circular, square), and patterns (jagged, zigzagged, straight, polka-dotted).
- Auditory: In this class are imageries that describe sounds; what is heard, such as pleasant sound (music, birdsong, chorus, hymns), noise (gun-shot, crying, shattered glass, slap), silence (weird silence, calmness).
- Gustatory: This relates to the sense of taste, exemplified by bitterness (unwashed bitter-leaf), sour (lime and lemon), sweetness (honey, sugar, candies, chocolates), others are spiciness and saltiness.
- Olfactory: Olfactory imageries refer to what is smelt, like odour (rotten meat, body odour, smelly gutter), fragrances (roses, well-spiced food, drinks, perfumes).
- Tactile: This describes what the reader feels by touching. Texture (smooth, rough, ragged), temperature (burning heat, chilling cold, dampness), touch (hugging, hand-holding, kissing, bare feet on a cold floor),
- Kinesthetic (movement).

3.2.11 Metaphor

This works by comparison. One thing is compared to another, seemingly different object. Therefore, it represents a direct and vivid comparison of two different things. It is, therefore, some type of analogy. It differs from simile in that it eliminates “like/as” which is employed by simile. In metaphor, the comparison is stated without modifiers or conjunctions. Writers employ metaphor to expand the reader’s comprehension of his/her world. Have you read the poem, ‘Hope Is The Thing With Feathers’? It is a poem written by Emily Dickinson and it extensively employs the literary technique of metaphor.

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all."

In the above poem, hope is compared to bird, using a metaphor. In addition, hope is equipped with feathers and a capacity to sing wordless tunes and “perch in the soul.” It as such personifies hope. One can identify the feeling of hope, as described in the poem. Thus, the metaphor facilitates an effective communication of the poem’s idea of tenacity and invincibility of hope.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

Metaphor has been classified into types, based on how it is used. Identify at least four types and discuss them, with examples.

3.2.12 Oxymoron

This occurs when two seemingly contradictory words/terms are intentionally juxtaposed or placed close together, to form a kind of rhetorical antithesis. Pointed foolishness, etymologically, the technique creates a sharp contrast and dramatic effect in poetry. Terms like small giant, wise fool, eloquent silence, controlled chaos and adult child are oxymoron. An oxymoron can occur within a phrase, clause or sentence. In poetry and other genres of literature, these usually disclose a paradox or a hidden truth. The lines below are excerpts from the poem 'Lancelot and Elaine' by Alfred Lord Tennyson and is used to express true love in the face of the pull towards unfaithfulness

The shackles of an old love straitened him,
His *honour rooted in dishonour* stood,
And *faith unfaithful* kept him *falsely true*.

The italicised terms express Lancelot's faithfulness to Guinevere as well their unfaithfulness to Arthur, her husband. Thus, the terms reveal a hidden truth and as such have deeper significance.

Oxymoron can be confused with terms related to contradictions such as "paradox," and "antonym." Juxtaposition. In oxymoron, two seemingly contradictory terms are juxtaposed to create a deeper meaning but in **antonyms**, two opposite words are paired but without a novel or deeper meaning. Juxtaposition, as a term, refers to the side by side placement of two things in order to highlight closeness or contrast. In **Paradox**, two or more self-evident true items are juxtaposed as contradictory. The statement is, therefore, self-contradictory but illuminates the truth. The two terms are simultaneously true and untrue. Paradox is a literary and a logical device, the former more.

3.2.13. Mood

The feelings or emotions that are evoked in the reader by the poem, using words, images and descriptions are termed mood or atmosphere. It is the overall emotions created in the reader by the author in a work of art. Put in a simpler manner, it is the general or prevailing atmosphere created by a given work of literature. Mood is created through a number of methods such as the theme, diction, setting and tone. Mood and tone are closely connected because the former is created, by the author of a work of art, through the former. Unlike tone, mood generates the emotional setting in which the audience is enveloped. Mood refers to the feelings of the reader but tone that of the author. Mood is therefore associated with the audience. **Terms that create positive mood include** amused, blissful, calm, cheerful, ecstatic, energetic, happy, optimistic, sympathetic. Those employed in the expression of **negative mood are** annoyed, cranky, depressed, frustrated, gloomy, indifferent, melancholic, pessimistic, sad, and so on. Mood enables the reader participate in the feelings of the character or speaker and assists the reader situate him/herself, psychologically and emotionally into the work's setting. The closeness between the reader and the work enhances comprehension of the message and meaning expressed by a work of literature.

3.2.14 Stanza

Stanza, as a literary device, is a concomitant quality of poetry. It is defined as “a group of lines in a poem separated from other lines by a space” (Padgett 1987, 194). Conventionally, a blank space separates each stanzas from the others in a poem. It is a recurrent and systematic grouping of poetic lines, which typically has a set length, pattern of metrical form and rhyme. Stanza is an Italian word for room and designates a pause and is also called strophe. Stanza is to a poem what the paragraph is to prose. Please note that the number of sentences does not determine the number of lines in a stanza as some lines are parts of a sentence while others are complete sentences. It is important to note that a line in a stanza is not necessarily the number of sentences. Some lines are a complete sentence; some lines are only part of a sentence. The form of a poem, that is the way a poem appears on a page, is made up of the number of lines in each stanza as well as the length of each of the lines. A stanza can close at the end of a complete idea but it can also terminate in the middle of a sentence. Do you still remember caesura and enjambment?

3.2.15 Symbol

An image or symbol that stands for something else is termed a symbol. In literature, setting, incidents, characters and objects can serve as symbols. Each plays a representative role and as such is symbolic. Therefore, symbols have two levels of meaning. At the surface level, the meaning is literal but at the deeper level, it is figurative. In poetry, symbols are used for their figurative values. When a work consciously employs serious and sustained symbols in its attempt to imply or represent other ideas or objects, such is termed symbolism. You must understand that symbolism departs from allegory, which unlike symbolism, occurs in a work through narrative. In other words, “a symbol is a trope which combines a literal and sensuous quality with an abstract and suggestive aspect” (Thrall et al. 1960 p. 478). What is trope? Trope describes a unique employment of image, terms, word or expression to create a given effect. According to F. B. O. Akporobaro (2015 28), “Trope designates a special usage of words in which there is a change in the basic meanings.” He further identifies four major types of tropes and they are: image, symbol, simile and metaphor.

The first stanza of the poem, ‘To the Virgins’, by Robert Herrick contains a symbol in its first line. “Rosebuds” symbolises youth and attendant benefits and fun, which lasts but for a while.

Gather ye rosebuds while you may,
Old Times is flying away;
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

2.16 Tone

Tone is “the emotional coloring, or the emotional meaning, of the work, and is an extremely important part of the full meaning of a poem” (Perrine 1991, 123)." You need to understand the author’s attitude because it is essential in the interpretation of a poem. That is why Perrine (1991, 123) insists that "We have not really understood a poem unless we have accurately sensed [...] its author's attitude." Once you determine the tone of a poem, you discover the author’s intention and analysis becomes easy. Tone and voice are not the same. Voice is the general character of

the work and it is consistent, unlike the tone which can shift. For instance, the author's voice, in a work, could be friendly, sarcastic, and so on.

Let us emphasise this; Tone could be serious, mock serious, satiric, humorous, playful, somber, brash, and so on while Mood could be cheerful/jolly, festive or mysterious, ominous, fearful, provocative, whacky, gloomy, and so on. Please note that within a poem, the mood can shift. 'The Woman Hanging from the Thirteenth Floor Window' by Joy Harjo, is a good example of such shift in mood. In such a case, it is important you identify why the change occurs and where it begins, and perhaps ends. The terms employed by both also vary. On one hand, tone goes with words like confident, cheerful, enthusiastic, jovial, romantic, compassionate (positive tone words). Others include furious, bitter, derisive, diabolic, harsh, sarcastic, scornful, haughty, solemn, sober, serious, shocked (negative tone words), as well as detached, objective, candid, matter-of-fact, authoritative, baffled, reminiscent, sentimental, scholarly (neutral tone words).

Read the poem below. It is taken from the second stanza of the four stanza Edgar Allan Poe's incantatory poem, 'The Bells', which is interested in the cycle of life of the human being.

'The Bells'

How it swells!
How it dwells
On the future! How it tells

There are so many other literary/poetic terms that are neither discussed nor mentioned here. Please find them and study them. It pays to study using poems. That makes it more practical. There are also other literary/poetic terms you need to get acquainted with. Some of these are: more useful. You do not have to search too far. They are everywhere, in hard and soft copies.

4.0 Conclusion

Literary terms are obligatorily participants in literary analysis. The essence of literary analysis is to examine the ideas expressed in texts and how those ideas are conveyed. In doing this, the critic/student looks closely at how poets, and authors, use literary devices to convey meaning. Literary devices consist of literary elements and literary techniques. While the former belongs to indispensable class the later belongs to the optional category. There are several literary terms. A good number of those like metaphor, simile, symbols and irony occur in all the three genres of literature. However, there are some that are specific to poetry, like enjambment and stanza. Familiarity with these terms, their meanings and functions, facilitates good analysis of a work of literature like poems.

5.0 Summary

Module 3 Unit 5 has:

- Defined and explained literary terms as a central aspect of literary analysis.
- Discussed literary devices.
- Established the relationship between literary elements and literary devices.
- Identified and explained sixteen literary devices, using copious examples.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Discuss, extensively, the nature and functions of literary devices.
2. Using examples from your best classic poems, discuss the relationship between oxymoron, paradox and juxtaposition, as literary techniques.
3. In your own words, summarise the relationship between tone and mood, using any of the poems studied in class.
4. Select four of the literary devices studied in class and discuss them.
5. Using appropriate literary terms, examine the techniques employed by Robert Frost to communicate his themes in the poem 'Fire and Ice', reproduced below.

'Fire and Ice'

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.

From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favour fire.

But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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